

**THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPERIENCES OF LEARNERS WHO HAVE UNDERGONE THE
LOSS OF A PARENT AT COLLINS CHABANE MUNICIPALITY SCHOOLS.**

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***Dissertation submitted to the Higher Degree Committee of the School of Health
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By

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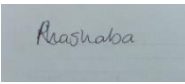
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2024

DECLARATION

I RIRHANDZO MASHABA hereby declare that the dissertation titled “**The psychological experiences of learners who have undergone the loss of a parent at Collins Chabane municipality schools**” submitted by me, has not been submitted previously for a degree at this or any other university, that it is my own work in design and in execution, and that all reference material contained therein have been duly acknowledged.

Signature: 

Date: 14 August /2024

DEDICATION

***THIS RESEARCH IS DEDICATED IN MEMORY OF MY LATE PARENTS,
MR. H. MASHABA AND MRS. TC MASHABA
(MAY THEIR BEAUTIFUL SOULS REST IN PEACEFUL PEACE).***

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Thanks to the Lord for providing me the courage and direction on this journey. Everything in this world occurs at the exact moment that the Lord has decided.

ABSTRACT

A parent's death is a significant life event, and children must absorb, grieve, and deal with their feelings and emotions in their own way. During learning, a learner should be in a good state of mind and emotional well-being to be at the optimal level of learning, and the area of learning must be conducive. School performance may suffer as a result of the drawn-out and painful process of grieving and sorrow. The purpose of the study was to examine the experiences of students who have undergone the loss of a parent at Collins Chabane Municipality Schools, Limpopo Province. The phenomenological design was the main emphasis of the qualitative research methodology. Purposive sampling was the method used by the researcher to choose twenty (20) participants. The researcher stopped collecting data when no new information was expected to be added to enhance the study's findings. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather study data; the interviews were documented in Xitsonga and, after that, transcribed into English. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was utilised to examine the information. The outcome of the research was useful in sharing knowledge about the experiences of loss with the learner. In exploring the coping skills and identifying the protocols put in place to support the learners going through the experience of losing a parent, the research centred on examining the perspectives of students who have undergone the loss of a parent at Collins Chabane Municipality Schools. Additionally, moral precepts like informed consent and confidentiality were observed in that study, and the recommendations were based on the findings.

Keywords: Behaviour, Counselling, Effects, Fear, Grief, Learning, Loss, Parents, Psychological, Stress and Student.

ACRONYMS

AIDS -	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
COVID-19 -	Corona virus
GBV —	Gender Based Violence
HIV -	Human Immunodeficiency virus
POPI ACT -	Protection of personal information Act
PTSD -	Post traumatic stress disorder
WHO -	World Health Organization

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Childhood parent loss is a regular occurrence. “Nine (9) out of ten (10) children experience the death of a close family member or a friend, and one (1) in twenty (20) children experience the death of a parent” (Schonfed & Quackenbush, 2019). Any student of any age finds death to be a difficult period. When a parent passes away, school-age children frequently grapple with their first encounter with death. They lack the expertise and time to develop coping mechanisms. Furthermore, many children find it difficult to witness their surviving parents struggle to come to terms with the loss of their spouse and start the process of moving on. “Youngsters learn from adults, so if the surviving parent is struggling to cope, the youngster is probably going to have trouble too. The strain of modifications and adjustments frequently impairs a child's capacity for focus and socialisation throughout the school day. A major supportive role that the teacher and other school personnel can play for the bereaved child (www.econdolence.com, 2019).

The United States Census Bureau states that (USCB), “About one (1) out of twenty (20) children experience the loss of a parent before they graduate from high school. “There are over 120,000 orphans in America and another 400,000 children who live without permanent families. Progress in school is an area impacted negatively by stress, the change, and instability of a child's life”. Studies have shown that these children are at risk of slowed academic progress, heightened behavioural problems, and an increased potential for dropping out of school without a diploma.”(USCB, 2019).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

There are 3.7 million orphans in South Africa, according to estimates. Nearly half of them have experienced parent loss due to illnesses linked to AIDS. Gender-based violence has also added to the number of children who are left without parents. These children are living in our communities” (Khumalo, 2019). Through observation, the orphans do not complete their schooling, and they add to the statistics of teenage pregnancy. In our communities and local schools, learners who have lost their parents are identified as problem makers; they vandalise the school property and end up dropping out of school.

Several cases have been reported in schools where a student has lost a parent during the school year of 2019. In some rural and peri-urban schools, there is a tradition where the learners are asked to bring a contribution that will be offered to the grieving family for the funeral arrangements. When the learner goes back to school after the funeral, they will likely experience a range of feelings that come with losing a loved one. The feelings that the learner may exhibit after the loss of a parent are fear, anxiety, confusion, disbelief, sadness, guilt, and anger, even though they did nothing to cause the loss. In some cases, the students who have experienced parent loss do not have any support structure or they do not know how to share their feelings; in this case, we find that the learner acts out grief through their behavior; they can be disruptive in class or be withdrawn; they might start bed wetting, being too sensitive or clingy, and sucking the thumb.

It has been identified through the researcher's observation that the schools in Collins Chabane Municipality do not have school counselors on site to conduct bereavement or debriefing sessions with the students. In private and government schools in urban areas, students and teachers have access to a school counselor available to assist with emotional support.

The problems to be researched can be formulated as follows:

- ❖ What challenges are learners experiencing after the loss of a parent?
- ❖ What are the effects of the loss on the learners?

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Children are the future of this country, and education gives our children a chance to live a better life and to be able to achieve their dreams. If the emotional well-being of our learners is taken care of, we will raise more responsible and healthy adults. Research in this field might benefit learners, as they are the ones who experience the phenomenon. It may give the learners a platform to share their experiences and expectations on how the situation can be handled in the future, which may benefit other learners who might go through the same experience. Learners may be able to talk without judgment and express their feelings to someone outside of their caretakers or teachers.

School is where the learners spend most of their time, and the learners need to feel safe and secure in school, especially when they have lost a parent. The school might benefit in the sense that they may reflect on the way they handle or interact with the learners who have undergone the loss of a parent. The schools in Collins Chabane Municipality can look at their protocols and

adjust them to benefit the school and the learners who need emotional support. The research may be a pool of knowledge. The study's conclusions can be released, and the information may be made available for other academics who would like to do future research on the topic. The information may also assist the Collins Chabane Municipality to be aware of the needs and services that they can add to the schools.

The research may benefit policymakers, which are educators and parents, who are represented by the School Governing Body. It may help them to relook at the school policies and include certain aspects that can be beneficial, improved, or even changed to help Students who have experienced parent loss. When a school has policies that are written down, it can be known what to do when it is reported that a parent has died, and when the student returns to school.

1.4 STUDY AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1.4.1 AIM OF THE STUDY

The study's goal was to explore the psychological experiences of learners who have gone through parent loss at Collins Chabane Municipality Schools.

1.4.2 OBJECTIVES

- ❖ To find out the difficulties faced by students who have experienced the death of a parent at Collins Chabane local municipality schools.
- ❖ To explore the effects of loss of a parent on learners at Collins Chabane Municipality schools.
- ❖ To identify if schools have protocols written down to assist learners after a loss of a parent.

1.5 DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. Educator: “The word educator was preferred to teacher and was aimed at encompassing all personnel with an educational role to play” (Booyse, Du Plessis, 2015) - A person who teaches, especially in a school (dictionary.com).
The phrase is used in this study to describe a person who educates students. They give Intellectual, moral, and social instructions.
2. Grief: “comes in many forms, not just through the death of family and friends but also in the feelings of loss that come with the inevitable life changes” (Worden, 2018)—keen

suffering and extreme sadness, especially because someone you loved died (idoceonline.com).

In this study, grief is an emotional in reaction to a parent's passing to death.

3. A learner is simply regarded as the recipient of the required information (Booyse, Du Plessis, 2015)—a school pupil (dictionary.cambridge.org).

In this study, a learner refers to a 13- to 19-year-old, who has undergone the passing of One parent or both parents in the past 5 years and is attending school in the Collins Chabane Municipality Schools.

4. Grieving “is to accept the fact that the individual has passed away, is no longer with us, and will never come back”. (Worden, 2018). “When something or someone you love is taken away, it causes you emotional pain” (Helpguide.org).

In this study, grieving refers to mourning the death of someone or feeling distressed due to the loss of a loved one.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

Chapter 1: presents a discussion of the context of the study, background and problem statement. This Chapter also presents the Aim, Objectives, and Key questions of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical framework

Reviewing of the literature related to the topic, information found from articles, past research done on the topic, articles, books and journals.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter focuses on the methods that were used in collecting data, sampling of the participants, the population and research design.

Chapter 4: Presentation of findings

This chapter provides the findings gathered during the research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Summary, Conclusion and recommendation of the study

This chapter focuses on explaining and evaluating what was found during research interviews, conclusion of the dissertation and presentation of the overall findings, limitations, recommendations and suggestions for future research.

2 CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This part reviewed earlier research that was relevant to the current study and covered a variety of subjects, including the influence of parents on learners, international perspectives, African perspectives, and South African perspectives on learners living with a single parent or without their parents, challenges faced by learners living without their parents, as well as an overview of the literature review.

2.2 THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN THE LIVES OF LEARNERS

Commonly, the role that parents play in raising their children is crucial. (Pajow et al., 2021). Education and parental involvement in their lives cannot be ignored. Sipasi et al. (2022) indicated that the function of parents in the lives of children is to show compassion and act as motivators. In other In other words, parents—whether via biological or social relationships—are a child's father or mother. Parents bear the duty of rearing learners as well as meeting their requirements. "It's also critical to remember that parents' roles and their children's success are intertwined." (Keles *et al.*, 2022; Lampus *et al.*, 2022). When women, in particular, develop a solid bond with their children, they provide a sense of security and are readily available to meet their child's needs. Sipasi *et al.* (2022) mentioned the idea that the role of parents is to encourage the child to become an extraordinary person, although there are pressing challenges in life. Nanlohy *et al.* (2021) suggested that parents also play a part as motivators in the world of a learner's education and social life.

2.3 INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON LEARNERS LIVING WITHOUT THEIR PARENTS

In India and Mexico, "one of the most crucial elements in fostering learners' cognitive and non-cognitive talents in early life is parental care." (Mao *et al.*, 2020). Numerous studies have demonstrated the detrimental effects of early parental neglect on children's daily behaviours, health, and academic achievement. Lan *et al.* (2019) have shown that children's educational

outcomes are significantly harmed by parental absence. “This literature indicated that abandoned learners are less likely to attend school and have lower cognitive and academic exam results. Different Hukou types, parent education levels, and genders are all affected differently by parental absence; girls, students whose parents are educated, and urban students are more affected than other student groups.” (Mao *et al.*, 2020). Further analysis indicates that “the risk of being dissatisfied or depressed increases when parents are not there, which lowers the mental health of students. Pupils who experience parental absence typically have worse self-esteem regarding their behaviour and college experience, which includes being more prone to tardiness, receiving less appreciation from the head teacher, and experiencing difficulties with social interaction and class integration.” (Wu & Zhang, 2017).

In India, only 24% of students who are living without their parents are able to complete their education while also fulfilling their parental responsibilities; 10% of students are illiterate, and 66% of students drop out of school to take care of their siblings. The lives of children without parents or with a single parent are at danger of school dropouts because of a lack of finances or an incapacity to balance the tasks of maintaining a household and attending school at the same time, claims Kijo-Bisimba (2011:139).

2.4 AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE ON LEARNERS LIVING WITHOUT THEIR PARENTS

Orphans and vulnerable youngsters are classified as a disadvantaged population in the majority of African nations (UNAIDS, 2010). According to Wambui *et al.* (2023), children in Africa who experience parental death or absence for a variety of reasons may be left defenceless and vulnerable to psychological and physical issues; these challenges are exacerbated when the children have to raise themselves without their parents. Given that HIV/AIDS is Kenya's leading cause of adult mortality, the country's orphan population is certain to rise in the coming years. Because they live in constant fear of abuse and neglect, children living in orphanages are among the most vulnerable groups in society.

Although the government is concerned with protection and nursery, Tanzania, like any other nation in the Sub-Saharan region, faces the difficulties of having orphans and vulnerable children. HIV/AIDS in families is one of the things that makes kids become orphans. Because parents or carers from extended families do not make enough money to survive, Tanzania's orphan crisis is made worse by poverty. More than 140 orphanages are thought to exist in Tanzania (Majaliwa, 2020). Forty of the facilities (or 28.6%) are located in Dar es Salaam (Makuu, 2019). Non-governmental organisations and religious institutions manage the majority of these centres. There has been a claim, though, that Tanzania's orphanage operations have

not fulfilled their stated goals. The most of them are still in residential or institutional care, despite other youngsters surviving and dying on the streets, which serves as evidence for that position (Mukuu, 2017).

Orphaned children residing in institutions such as the Child and Youth Care Centre (CYCC) experience a variety of psychological difficulties, including physical punishment, isolation, stigma, segregation, inadequate attachment, and a lack of affection (Vedasto, 2015). For example, Zanzibar's institutionalised orphanage care was insufficient since it did not meet the children's social and psychological requirements. According to Juma (2008), this attitude resulted from a lack of affection, attention, social networks, and security. According to UNICEF (2006), the majority of the psychological difficulties that orphaned children in institutions faced were caused by a lack of resources, the institutional setting, and carers' incapacity to effectively manage the psychological needs of the children.

Another issue orphaned youngsters deal with at the centres is depression. Masmass et al. (2012) define depression as a profound melancholy that has detrimental long-term repercussions on students' development and health. When parents die, for example, their children mourn not only their physical loss but also the love, care, and security they were giving.

Many times, vulnerable kids and orphans have no one with whom to share their sorrow. It can be helpless. Children may develop depression as a result of inadequate assistance in adjusting to life without their parents and a lack of support during the grieving process. When a child is in a circumstance where they could be abused, neglected, hungry, or sick, they may experience a great deal of loneliness, fear about being separated from their siblings, or suffer from the loss of their parents. They might also lament missed possibilities for a very long time. In addition, it's possible that they don't have a person who talks to them, listens to their needs, or shows them affection and comfort.

2.4.1 THE PHENOMENON OF CHILDREN LIVING WITHOUT THEIR PARENTS IN AFRICA

In African countries, the highest percentage of children living without their parents is found in nations where HIV infection is widespread. Most of these are in Southern Africa, and they include Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe, according to Soudien and Alexander (2003). In countries such as Zimbabwe and Zambia, the phenomenon of children living without their parents includes a wide range of emotional and psychological issues. Orphans are susceptible to anxiety due to their lack of autonomy and incapacity to make decisions (Sharif & Haider, 2020). According to Pillay (2016), there are a number of reasons why children become

fatherless or motherless, including divorce, death, HIV/AIDS, and poverty. When parents are unable to support their children, the children are more likely to become homeless and become victims of child abuse, such as neglect, discrimination, and domestic violence. Daniel and Rukundo (2016) discovered, for example, that orphans who joined institutionalised centres such as Child and Youth Care Centres (CYCC) were incredibly young. As they get older and realise that their carers are not their biological parents, they get curious about knowing their real parents. It appears that a few of them struggle to refer to any of their carers as moms or fathers.

2.4.2 AFRICAN CULTURAL CONTEXT ON LEARNERS LIVING WITHOUT THEIR PARENTS.

According to Yuda and Munir (2023), the extended family serves as a traditional social security system in Africa, protecting its most vulnerable members. According to Nkomo (2006), this means that every child in African culture is the community's duty. Hunter (2000) goes on to say that being a parent is not always a singular function. According to Makiwane (2004), parenting involves societal duty on both a mental and physical level. Therefore, many people can play the role of parents without having any genetic connection to the learners, even in situations where biological and social reproduction are separated. Ebot (2022) states that social responsibility is the process of ensuring that children are raised with a civil and kinship identity and status (including domicile and inheritance), socialised, and trained through formal and vocational education, or by offering companionship or domestic aid. Additionally, it guarantees sponsorship into the adult community through initiatives like helping someone launch a business or initiating them at puberty. Therefore, biological parents are not the only ones who have social obligations.

According to Haffejee and Levine (2020), child-rearing methods in the African environment involve actions related to offering emotional support and lowering stress, in addition to keeping the child secure and free from injury. It was also discovered that these activities fostered constructive human development and offered a reasonably secure setting for experimentation. Lack of this care in the early years has a lasting effect on a child's physical health as well as their social and cognitive development. Mafumbate (2019) hinted that the extended family system has been undermined recently by societal developments such as migratory labour, the cash economy, demographic shifts, formal schooling, and westernisation.

The prevalence in Africa of learners living without their parents appears to be the main obstacle preventing child-headed families from successfully integrating into the extended family (Bhengu, 2021). A growing number of children are living without their parents as a result of the rising rates of sickness and mortality among adults due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, poverty, violence, criminal activity, motor vehicle accidents, and, more recently, problems from the Corona Virus

2019 (COVID-19). In addition to being made to think independently and take care of themselves financially, children are also pushed to drop out of school, become exposed to various sorts of abuse, and, in some cases, seek employment in order to care for their siblings (Stone, 2022). Being a child and being made the head of a household has many ramifications and can be a violation of the child's rights in many ways. According to Bhengu (2021), a few of these violated rights are those that are in the child's best interests, such as the right of a child to meaningfully participate in decisions that affect them, the right to property and education, the right to basic nutrition and health care, shelter, freedom from torture and inhumane and degrading treatment, and the right to access medical, legal, and social services. It is consequently crucial to address the issue of child-headed households in South Africa by implementing, among other things, a human rights response. The following are the direct effects of residing in a child-headed family.

2.5 SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE ON LEARNERS LIVING WITHOUT THEIR PARENTS

South Africa leads the world in the percentage of pupils living without their parents because of the quick rise in illnesses like HIV/AIDS, which force an increasing number of children to live without their parents. Following the death of their parents, orphans have behavioural issues such as rising absenteeism and dropout rates, quickly declining student performance, and questionable cleanliness, all of which irritate teachers on a regular basis. Family members are unable to help these orphans since they are also struggling because they are unemployed and low-income.

The growth in adult morbidity and death rates as a result of variables like HIV/AIDS, poverty, violence, and auto accidents has been linked to South Africa's growing orphan and child vulnerability rate. According to Leatham Marongwe (2014), the frequency of epidemics like AIDS in South Africa over the past 25 years has led to an increase in the number of child-headed households—homes where children live without their parents. Adult carers have died as a result of this, leaving children orphaned and forced to take on adult responsibilities. According to Pote et al. (2021), child-headed families are a common occurrence in all nine of South Africa's provinces; however, this study has concentrated on KwaZulu-Natal (KZN).

According to available research, orphans undergo emotional and psychological traumas after their parents pass away, which increases their risk of poverty, exploitation in the homes of their relatives, and denial of educational chances. According to Popoola and Mchunu (2016), there is growing evidence that older orphans may have worse psychosocial outcomes because their poor mental health outcomes persist into later adolescence. Furthermore, older orphans have a higher risk of dropping out of school, which is heightened by a lack of kin support (Pillay, 2018).

Different reasons for the high risk of school dropout are documented. For example, being a maternal orphan renders a child nutritionally vulnerable and susceptible to school dropout (Molla et al., 2015), and when orphans are in child- or youth-headed households, they are more likely to suffer negative impacts on their educational needs (Newlin et al., 2016). Older siblings, in particular, drop out of school to find employment to take care of the younger siblings (Gubwe et al., 2015).

Emotional pain arises when a parent dies. The orphans have a propensity to withdraw and isolate themselves, and they are vulnerable to long-term psychological issues such as despair, rage, anxiety, and depression. Their inability to cope with their sense of loss is what causes these psychological issues (Pillay, 2018). Long-term bereavement is a sign of hidden grief for those who reside in homes headed by children or teens (Treglia et al., 2022). Adjusting to the duty of caring for their siblings unprepared and without kin support is another major obstacle and source of pain for orphans leading families (Ntuli et al., 2020).

The difficulties faced by orphans in homes headed by children or teens, who are portrayed as vulnerable because of HIV/AIDS, have received a lot of attention (Datzberger et al., 2023). Lethale and Pillay (2013) contend that while data suggests individuals exhibit significant resilience in their academic and personal lives despite the odds, literature generally paints a grim picture of the experiences of orphans in such households. Resilience, according to Johnson and Arditti (2023), is the ability to adapt positively in the face of severe adversity or risk factors that are known to be linked to unfavourable results. In the context of orphans, resilience is a positive adaptation or a useful weapon for survival following parental death (Collishaw, 2016). There's evidence that, although orphans in child- or youth-headed households experience a lack of food security, poverty, and strained extended family relations, they are resilient and become independent agents and decision-makers in their own right (Thwala, 2018).

There is not much writing in South Africa about the welfare of young orphans in particular. Furthermore, a critical understanding of the distinct experiences of orphaned kids and young adults is imperative, given the proliferation of these populations as a result of orphans' natural maturing process (Nyathi, 2022). Not realising that because they are not eligible for the same solutions that are available to younger orphans, orphaned youth confront more detrimental obstacles than their younger counterparts (Popoola & Mchunu, 2016). For instance, despite their vulnerable circumstances—such as being the head of their household—HIV orphans in South Africa lose access to the social grant system once they are 18 years old. Moreover, studies have indicated that this group has a greater chance of dropping out of school. (Pillay, 2018). Early school leaving is associated with psychological distress among orphans.

2.6 CHALLENGES FACED BY LEARNERS LIVING WITHOUT THEIR PARENTS

When children take on adult roles and obligations as carers, they and their siblings are faced with a variety of difficulties (Eggert et al., 2021). "S'lungile et al. (2021)" present an overview of the challenges faced by orphans and students living without parents, especially those who are managing their households". These difficulties include socioeconomic effects (physical needs, substandard housing, health care services, and financial support), psycho-social effects (coping with parental illness, bereavement, emotional experiences, and lack of safety), social support systems (support from extended family, siblings, educators, and the community), and role change (reversing roles, physical and daily care, and the decision-making process).

2.6.1 LEARNERS LIVING WITHOUT THEIR PARENTS AND CHILD HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

"People may go through a wide range of feelings known as loss and sadness when a parent passes away" (Rando, 2004). Students in households headed by children face a variety of challenges, such as inadequate access to health care, financial, psychological, educational, and medical issues. One characteristic of child-headed homes is the absence of a well-organized "well-being system" (Chademana & Van Wyk, 2021). Before, people thought that there was no such thing as child-headed homes since it was often believed that members of the extended family could readily take care of orphans (Bhengu, 2021). Physical (somatic and physiological) expressions. Depression, hopelessness, anxiety, guilt, rage, animosity, and loneliness are examples of affective manifestations (Bower, 2005). Preoccupation with the departed, hopelessness, helplessness, self-reproach, and low self-esteem, a sense of unreality, and memory and concentration issues are examples of cognitive manifestations.

Children raised in child-headed households receive insufficient socialisation, and it's possible that this contributes to their low academic achievement as they have no one to help, inspire, or encourage them. Ritcher and Desmond (2005) assert that better student achievement and ownership are the outcomes of parental involvement in their children's education. Children will not make much progress without their parents. When Pillay (2016) concluded that children would suffer if their parents were away, he also brought up this point.

The heads of homes headed by children work as children to provide money for the household's needs. According to a study by Tsegaye (2007), many children in child-headed homes endure extreme financial hardships, which frequently pushes them to engage in risky child labour. The same Tsegaye (2007) survey also discovered that a sizable portion of girls work as domestic

workers, primarily as maids, and that the majority of heads of child-headed households support their families through daily labour and small-scale trading. Children in urban child-headed homes are more vulnerable to situations of exploitation than children in rural regions. The precarious living conditions and constant need for income to support themselves exacerbate their vulnerability to financial exploitation, dangerous jobs, forced labour, and physical assault. The educational difficulties faced by early adolescents who are the heads of households because their parents are migrant workers in the province of Limpopo were examined and detailed in research conducted by Matseke (2001). The results showed that early adolescents face a range of difficulties in their schooling.

2.6.2 SOCIO-ECONOMIC EFFECTS ON LEARNERS LIVING WITHOUT THEIR PARENTS.

Agere and Agere's (2020) research report claims that little has been done by the government or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to lessen the financial hardships faced by orphans and impoverished youngsters from child-headed homes. According to Daundasekara et al. (2022), children's socioeconomic needs include food, shelter, safety, health, education, and supervision. The cost of living is impacted when parents with HIV/AIDS are ill for an extended period of time. The family's income declines while the amount needed for medical care increases significantly (Karpman, 2020).

According to Tsegaye (2008:28), students who live without their parents deal with a variety of illnesses and health issues, including dermatitis, diarrhoea, respiratory infections, poor nutrition, and stomach pains. An orphan's already precarious financial circumstances are likely to get worse upon the loss of a parent (Callegari & Fedder, 2022). The consequences of poverty, neglect, migration, housing issues, malnourishment, homelessness, disruptions in schooling, and criminal activity are examples of socio-economic hazards (Cluver & Gardner, 2007b). Because they lack birth certificates, children living in poverty also find it difficult to qualify for and receive social grants (Chakona & Shackell 2019). Findings by Lone and Lone (2021) indicate that the risk of HIV/AIDS, increased abuse, inheritance loss, and economic challenges all have an impact on these children's welfare and health. In agreement, Chademana and Van Wyk (2021) assert that the financial struggles faced by orphaned households result from a lack of resources, the additional burden of caring for ailing parents, and coping with bereavement following their departure. Mulenga (2022) contends that, in addition to receiving financial assistance, children's rights against child labour and abuse must be upheld. Awino (2010:34) agrees, asserting that the financial strain in these kids' lives has caused them to acquire more knowledge than their classmates. As per the statement of one participant, they have initiated hazardous business ventures such as manufacturing illicit alcohol, which may result in legal

action and imprisonment. Children who are raised without parental guidance often borrow money to make ends meet, which leads to complications when people refuse to lend to them in the future because they are unable to repay the loans. Based on Leatham's research (2005:88), parents should assist their households, but in order to do so, they must have access to money, according to Awino (2010:33). When a parent dies, the child's head is supposed to lead the family, but their decisions in life are always influenced by their financial situation (Bridgman & Von Fintel, 2022). Similar surveys state that because child-headed households earn less than non-orphaned households do, they are more susceptible financially.

2.6.3 PHYSICAL NEEDS OF LEARNERS LIVING WITHOUT THEIR PARENTS

Following the death of their parents, children have a variety of physical demands. They lack sufficient food, clean water, and shelter, and they are unable to secure the financial means to cover medical costs while unwell. Children in child-headed homes lack basic necessities including money, food, clothing, shoes, and even some household objects like dishes and cupboards, according to research by Ibebuike (2014:77). The majority of participants mentioned that they are malnourished because they do not obtain enough food because of financial restrictions and unemployment, which is supported by Goronga and Moyo (2013:722) and Nyaradzo (2013:100), who claim that the majority of participants describe being undernourished as a result of not eating enough food because of joblessness and financial hardships.

Without human supervision, Briggs (2020) asserts that orphans are incapable of caring for themselves. Everybody needs necessities like food, clothing, blankets, and furnishings. The child in charge of the household is particularly burdened because all of the siblings rely on him or her to take action to improve their circumstances. Alem (2020) agrees, saying that these kids don't have access to basic necessities and live in poverty. Children are finding it difficult to survive without the care and supervision of adults, according to Nziyane and Alpaslan (2012:297).

Dlungwane (2007:54), who supported this point of view, stated that young people in charge of their homes struggle on a daily basis to feed both themselves and their siblings. For most of her participants, food insecurity is a big problem. Masondo (2006:45) also points out that in return for food, young people perform piece jobs and assist their neighbours by doing their shopping. Other children receive meals from their peers' kind and understanding parents (Masondo, 2006:45).

2.6.4 PSYCHO-SOCIAL EFFECTS ON LEARNERS LIVING WITHOUT THEIR PARENTS.

Shimelash Yasegnal (2023) asserts that being the leader of a home has a number of psycho-social repercussions connected to problems like parenthood at a young age, witnessing parents suffer from a fatal illness, and parenthood itself. Le Roux-Kemp (2013:5) presents a report that is comparable to this one, endorsing the theory that children suffer from extreme trauma as a result of losing parents and seeing them die. According to Wenham (2021), children who are the heads of their households encounter common challenges like poverty, stress, and a lack of access to education. However, in the absence of adult support, these problems can worsen and seem to never end.

Ayieko (2003:1), a researcher who has studied child-headed households where the single parents have died, confirms that there is no guarantee of normal psycho-social development for children growing up without parents or other adults in their families. Additionally, the children's sense of security is threatened, and religious and cultural teachings are not instilled. Makuyana et al. (2020) state that a sign of resilience is when members of the child-headed family express their high level of self-satisfaction, indicating that life still has significance despite the trauma and stress brought on by parental illness and death from HIV/AIDS. Life is still regarded as having significance.

According to Dikariasty and Seruni (2022), there is a strong emotional need for support, which supports the need for love, safety, and self-assurance. Other emotional experiences that research participants reported to Goronga and Moyo (2013:724) included not having a confidant, which made it difficult for them to pay attention in class. Leatham (2005:108) agrees, stating that young children need emotional support for a variety of feelings, such as fear, vulnerability, and grief. According to Mogotlane et al. (2008:54), children who have experienced traumatic events following the death of their parents have other requirements that are classified as psycho-social needs and are in critical need of counselling.

Mequanint and Bezabih (2022) attest to the fact that parents conceal their HIV status due to the continued stigma attached to the virus, which makes it difficult for the children to deal with the disclosure when a parent passes away. She continues by saying that students who grow up without their parents experience great psychological trauma since they are unable to adequately grieve because they must gather their strength and support their siblings. According to Oliveira (2022), these kids struggle to manage their psychological requirements, and as a result, their behaviour gradually shifts. They meet with the incorrect crowds in an attempt to communicate these feelings. According to Mbambo (2005:36), children who lead houses are deprived of affection, safety, nurturing, and emotional support. These kids occasionally feel exposed and dangerous (Ngidi & Mayeza, 2023). Ismayilova et al. (2023) claim that children experience mental distress as a result of the trauma of losing both parents. As per Campodonico et al.

(2022), trauma is a typical emotional response to an anomalous occurrence seen by ordinary individuals, and it possesses the capability to impede their regular functioning. According to Ibebuike et al. (2014:73), six individuals reported feeling emotionally upset due to the recollections of their parents' deaths. A number of them witnessed the agonising consequences of HIV/AIDS and its complications as their parents, who were terminally ill, suffered and ultimately passed away. According to Korevaar (2009:76), emotional issues might arise later in life if stress is not managed early in life and if you do not have the necessary assistance.

Zepinic (2022) observes that children endure ongoing suffering as a result of being reminded of their parents' deaths on a regular basis. This is corroborated by Korevaar (2009:29), who observes that orphans exhibit symptoms of sadness and post-traumatic stress disorder. According to Mohamed El-Said (2022), children who live alone have a lot of stress in addition to having no emotional support, which can lead to psychological issues. He goes on to say that other possible stressors include not receiving enough care, disease in oneself or one's parents, experiencing several losses, living in poverty, having interrupted education, uncertainty, stigma, and social isolation.

2.6.5 THE EFFECTS OF CHILDREN LIVING WITHOUT THEIR PARENTS ON SCHOOLING

All youngsters must receive an education in order to develop fully. Children must receive a free education from the government. The education of children raised without parental guidance is significantly impacted by the death of a parent. He goes on to say that when parents pass away, surviving children often have financial difficulties covering expenses for additional educational requirements such as school uniforms and fees. Gouge et al. (2023) provide support for this, stating that children's absenteeism rates are rising as a result of financial hardships related to basic school supplies. The participants' academic performance shows that some students leave school early, while others arrive quite late. This has an impact on their performance because they miss most of the early morning lessons. Others find it difficult to focus and communicate because they are preoccupied with their circumstances. Masondo (Ntuli et al., 2020) goes on to say that when parents pass away, their children get so traumatised that the trauma impacts their academic performance and causes them to repeat grades or even drop out.

Awino (2010:36) suggests that participation in and access to all school activities is the most important factor in a child's development. However, this becomes unachievable because these kids have limited resources and are unable to pay for some educational expenses, including school fees, textbooks, and supplies. Students who are parentless forfeit their education in order to take care of their younger siblings, which causes them to experience additional stress because they have to put everything on hold, including their education (Leo, 2022). These kids

run the risk of dropping out of school since the parents' deaths cause them to be disturbed frequently.

According to studies, students from child-headed homes are more likely than students from typical households to attend school sporadically. For instance, Zimbabwean research discovered that 40% of school-age children living in households headed by children did not send their children to school (Walker, 2002). According to a study by Diago (2020), many students from child-headed households were forced to drop out of school, either permanently or temporarily, in order to take care of sick family members or handle domestic duties. In India, two-thirds of child household heads had dropped out of school, according to similar results (HIV/AIDS Alliance, 2006).

2.6.6 LEARNERS LIVING WITHOUT THEIR PARENTS AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES.

In a study published in 2021, Büchele discovered that children from child-headed homes were more likely to exhibit behavioural issues like tardiness, truancy, reading comprehension difficulties, and disregard for teachers' advice. The study went on to say that low attendance or absence can make some students feel badly about going to school. As was previously said, students from child-headed households rarely attend class, which has an impact on their academic performance. Büchele (2021) also hinted at a moderate correlation between secondary school attendance and academic achievement. As stated differently, attendance has an impact on academic achievement.

It has been found that the child-headed family structure has detrimental consequences on academic achievement in addition to psychological ones. For instance, when orphans cannot afford school supplies like uniforms and pocket money, they become sad (Makathimo, 2022). According to Kwatubana and Ebrahim (2020), educators in certain schools recognise a number of issues that impact kids living in child-headed households. Among the main issues impacting students from child-headed households are aggressiveness and disruptive conduct; other issues include sexual abuse and difficulty focusing in class. Such children's lives are moulded by adults' insufficient support and care. They are consequently susceptible to exploitation, physical and psychological abuse, hunger, poverty, and illnesses.

According to Bonal and González (2020), a student's academic performance is influenced less by the structured instruction they get in school and more by their social and domestic environments. He goes on to say that a person with high intellectual capacity may not do well due to a variety of non-intellectual issues arising from physical living conditions and the home environment. To date, the majority of research on how orphanhood affects education has

concentrated on enrollment and access rather than academic performance and outcomes, which ultimately influence a person's chances of success in life (Diazgranados-Ferráns et al., 2022). There has been conflicting research on how orphanhood affects academic performance. While some studies contend that being an orphan increases a child's likelihood of dropping out of school, others attribute poor educational outcomes to poverty or the nation's generally low school enrollment rates rather than parent death.

Students who live without their parents may not receive enough socialisation, and their low academic achievement may be explained by the lack of parental guidance, support, and motivation. Yang (2023) asserts that increased parental involvement in the classroom raises student achievement and sense of ownership. Children will not make much progress without their parents. This was also mentioned by Kyaruzi (2022) when he said that children will suffer if their parents are not around. According to Poueslen (2006), in order for a child to be able to function in social situations, they need to be taught and socialised within the family. Their schooling is impacted by this; they might eventually stop attending altogether. As a result, these kids might have unrealistic expectations for the future. On the other hand, a counterargument regarding low school attendance was observed in Kenya, where children in households headed by children did not attend school due to burdensome household responsibilities.

2.7 THEORETICAL-BASED LITERATURE

The five phases of mourning that people normally go through after losing a loved one were the subject of the researcher's investigation in this study: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

2.7.1 KUMBER-ROSS'S FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF AFTER THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE.

According to this theory, the initial period of denial lessens the intense anguish of loss. Denial slows down the process and makes us take it one step at a time. During this stage, we are attempting to comprehend and assimilate the situation at hand. When a learner loses a parent, it is common for their behaviour to change. They may prefer to spend more time with friends than family to seek support. This may lead to risk-taking behaviour as a way to escape the feelings and reality of the situation. For example, they may turn to drinking, drugs, or engaging in sexual activity as a source of comfort. This is followed by anger, which is characterised by frustration and irritability. The anger may also be directed at God, a friend, a family member, or oneself. The bargaining stage is common when we recall times we wish we had behaved differently. Learners might blame themselves for the death of a parent, even if it has nothing to

do with them. The depression stage is characterized by patients showing irritability or sadness, psychomotor retardation, sleep disturbances, social withdrawal, hopelessness, worthlessness, and possibly suicidal ideations. Learners during this time have difficulty concentrating at school and are easily distracted and forgetful; we notice being unsettled in class, a change in performance, and not wanting to go to school without support. They might end up dropping out of school or being disruptive in class. Finally, acceptance takes time and requires support from the remaining caregiver. In this study, the learner cannot manage the bereavement's emotional toll unless they have accepted that the loss has occurred. Learners need to be assured that they will be safe and taken care of. They need someone to listen to them and acknowledge their feelings, whether they are sad, angry, or scared. Learners still need to do the things that learners their age do, like listening to music, writing poetry, engaging in physical activity, and reading.

The DABDA (Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance) has been under increasing scrutiny in the past few years. The model is an established framework for understanding loss and mourning, and it has cultural and historical significance. Based on the DABDA concept, several further models have been created. Kubler-Ross' stages of death and dying have drawn criticism for being very rigidly enforced and developed without adequate proof.

Kubler-Ross and her colleagues qualitatively developed their notions through in-depth conversations with almost two hundred patients who were terminally ill (Corr. CA. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, 2020).

Some opponents claim that science does not justify the researcher's use of "stages" in her study. Additionally, some argue that the concept of "stages" is applied too strictly and in a linear manner. However, the researcher's objective was to describe a set of behaviours and emotions that a patient may experience when facing the end of life. Her aim was to improve the understanding of both patients and carers by describing these experiences.

In a prescriptive rather than descriptive context, the "acceptance" goal of the model might be understood as requiring the patient to go through each step in order to proceed. According to this viewpoint, there is a linear progression through the stages, and some stages are innately less adaptive than others. It is possible for carers to believe that their role is to help patients transition between these phases. Since each person grieves differently, forcing a patient through the stages of the grieving process may be damaging.

"Readers should be aware that many patients experience the stages fluidly, often exhibiting numerous symptoms at once and moving between them nonlinearly," as suggested by Dr. Kubler Ross and others. Note that there can be a protective role for each stage of mourning and that each individual's experience will be unique (Ross Rothweiler B. and Ross K., 2019). Based on Kubler-Ross's model, Bowlby and Parkes offered a theory of sorrow that highlighted the nonlinear nature of grieving and described four stages of the process. The phase of shock and disbelief revealed that the term "denial" was substituted in the first phase because of its negative implications. During this stage, the mind can become unresponsive or numb due to a stressful situation, resulting in an altered reality. As time passes, the patient's mind begins to adapt to the new reality and enters a phase where they start searching and longing for something. In the DABDA model, this phase is strongly associated with the stages of anger and bargaining. The patient may attempt to reject the new reality and question its cause. The disorganisation and repair phase is closely associated with the depression stage of the DABDA model. fluidly, frequently expressing multiple symptoms at once and transitioning between them in a non-linear manner. Note that there can be a protective role for each stage of mourning and that each individual's experience will be unique (Ross Rothweiler B. and Ross K., 2019). Based on Kubler-Ross's model, Bowlby and Parkes offered a theory of sorrow that highlighted the nonlinear nature of grieving and described four stages of the process. The phase of shock and disbelief revealed that the term "denial" was substituted in the first phase because of its negative implications. During this stage, the mind can become unresponsive or numb due to a stressful situation, resulting in an altered reality. As time passes, the patient's mind begins to adapt to the new reality and enters a phase where they start searching and longing for something. In the DABDA model, this phase is strongly associated with the stages of anger and bargaining.

The sufferer can try to deny the new reality and wonder what caused it. The DABDA model's depression stage and the disorganisation and repair phases are closely related. The patient is showing signs of apathy and depression, but they have embraced their new reality in full. A restored sense of identity throughout the rebuilding and healing phase shows that the patient is beginning to move over their sense of loss and begin to feel in charge of their own destiny. Consequently, the patient no longer displays depressive symptoms.



Figure 1: Kubler-Ross Grief Cycle

2.8 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

Since parents are typically the children's primary carers and are in charge of making sure they uphold strong family values, it is likely to raise concerns about how children acquire values, beliefs, and other practices if they are not there. During the early stages of development, a slimmer child needs the love, care, and protection of their parents because their environment plays a crucial role in determining how that child develops. Living conditions that provide security and foster psychological well-being are essential for orphans (Christopher & Mosh, 2021). Regretfully, not every child meets the aforementioned needs. A student who does not have parental involvement faces challenges related to low self-esteem, mental stability, poverty, and group. friendliness and a deficient sense of morality. Because of a lack of parental supervision, absenteeism from school and the number of school dropouts will continue to rise. This has a negative impact on the learners' future and robs them of their entitlement to an education due to their circumstances.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The components of the research technique applied in this study are covered in this chapter. The tools utilised for data collection, the study's environment, sampling protocols, and study design. It provides information on the procedures to be followed in collecting data and the plan for data management. Ethical considerations used in the study are additionally discussed.

3.2 STUDY DESIGN

According to Maree (2016), "research design refers to a plan or strategy of how you intend to conduct research". This explanation states that the main goal of research design is to specify the best possible operations to carry out in order to address research questions under specified circumstances.

3.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Creswell (1994) defines a "qualitative study as a process of investigating social or human problems by constructing a comprehensive, holistic image using language. This method involves gathering detailed viewpoints from participants and conducting research in a natural setting". "Through the use of a qualitative research approach, the researcher was able to comprehend social or human problems by assembling a complex, comprehensive picture through the reporting of specific information viewpoints and carrying out the study in a natural environment." (Gray, 2018).

This study's primary motivation for employing a qualitative method was to encourage discussion in order to comprehend the human experience, and to pose issues that are difficult to quantify. You get a better understanding through the firsthand experience. It is cost-effective and as a researcher, you can probe and be able to identify specific themes and patterns in learners who have suffered the death of a parent.

In this study, the researcher's goal is to investigate the psychological effects that learners who have suffered losing a parent by employing a phenomenological approach as it is best suited for this study, by allowing the researcher to gather sensitive and intimate data experiences amongst the participants' own experiences of the loss of a parent. The study approach is

typically carried out in an inorganic setting, by making the researcher the primary tool for collecting and analysing data.

3.3.1 PHENOMENOLOGICAL DESIGN

This method seeks to comprehend and analyse the significance that participants assign to their daily lives. Creswell (1998) and De Vos (2015), “regard a phenomenological study as a study that describes the meaning that experiences of a phenomenon, topic, or concept have for various individuals”.

As the purpose of phenomenological design is for the researcher to fully understand a phenomenon's core by looking at the opinions of those who have gone through it. Phenomenology is concerned with individuals' unique experiences. After the research is done, the researcher will look back at the research and search for patterns. In the present study, the scholar used a phenomenological design with the rationale that it helps to comprehend the meanings that people have and to adapt to fresh concepts and problems as they appear as it collects information that is regarded as normal.

3.4 STUDY SETTING

The setting describes the area where the information was gathered. The research was conducted at schools around the west of the Municipality of Collins Chabane. It is a town council in SA. It was created by combining parts of two local municipalities Thulamela and Makhado following the August 2016 municipal elections. The location of the municipality is Malamulele, It is in the Vhembe District and Limpopo Province of South Africa. The majority of the schools are in rural areas, and the learners do not have access to resources. “Collins Chabane Municipality is approximately 1551.93 km² in land, and the population total is estimated at 328,636. The municipality has one provincial road: R81 to Giyani, R524 to Thohoyandou, and Punda Maria Gate to Kruger National Park. The majority of the people are Xitsonga-speaking tribes” (Wikipedia, 2020).

Collins Chabane Municipality is a location that is low lying it is susceptible to flooding due to the sandy grey soil structure and the lack of mountains. The town experiences dry subtropical weather, with particular humid subtropical environment. “The Vhembe TVET College's Shingwedzi Campus is currently operating in Collins Chabane municipality. The Malamulele Area is home to 45 high schools, five of which are located in the town: Okani Commercial College (closed), Mahlahle Combined School (section A), Malamulele High School (section C),

and E.P.P. Mhinga Secondary School (section C). Some are public or government schools, whereas Mahlahle, New Era, and Holy Rosary are private primary schools. In the neighbouring villages, there are often two primary schools per high school, for a total of ninety to one hundred primary schools. Additionally, every village and town has more than ten pre-schools. Tsonga culture is known to be a colourful ethnic group. The Tsonga people are known for their beautiful, bright, colourful traditional clothes and the big skirt that they wear to dance to high, energetic music. They enjoy eating indigenous food. The Tsonga people are big on agriculture for food production. Collins Chabane Municipality has a hospital, and the villages have an average of 1 clinic” (Wikipedia, 2020).



Figure 2: A map showing the geographical settings for the local Municipalities of Vhembe District. (<https://Municipalities.co.za/map/129>)

3.5 STUDY POPULATION AND SAMPLING

3.5.1 TARGET POPULATION

The research participants for this research comprised of learners who have experienced single parent loss or both parents in the previous five decades. They reside also are learners at the schools around the province of Limpopo; Collins Chabane Municipality. As the participants were from the ages of 13 to 19, and they were black African students, both girls and boys. Participants were freely willing to take part in the research.

3.5.2 SAMPLE AND SAMPLING

The sample is defined “as a small portion of the total set of objects, events, or persons that together comprise the subject of the study” (De Vos, 2015).

Here, non-probability sampling was applied. Non-probability sampling is defined “as an approach in which not all people have equal chances of being selected in the sample” (De Vos,

2015). Interviews were conducted with learners who have personal experience to the phenomenon of losing a parent or the two parents to dying. Not every learner who has experienced the loss of a parent had an identical probability of being included in the case study because there was no detailed records of all the learners who had lost parents in Collins Chabane Municipality schools.

Purposive sampling has been chosen as Creswell & Poth (2018) note that this is an effective method of gaining insight into people who have experienced a specific phenomenon. Discussions with the school principal and teachers helped the researcher find additional study volunteers. Twenty people in all were chosen to take part in the investigation. Twenty (20) the researcher used participants to gather enough information and get an in-depth understanding of the topic from different participants. The nature of the topic also played a role in the number of respondents, as it is a sensitive topic. The following were the requirements for taking part in the study: learners aged 13 to 19 who were learners at Collins Chabane Local Municipality and who had lost a parent. The schools that would have learners participate in the study would be in both rural and periurban locations in Collins Chabane municipality. The researcher approached higher elementary and secondary educational institutions, as well as schools that gave permission and had learners who had lost parents would be part of the sample. They would be added regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, colour, or religious affiliation, were included in the study.

3.5.3 INCLUSION CRITERIA

- Those taking part in the study were students who had undergone the loss of a parent at the Collins Chabane Local Municipality Schools and were freely willing to participate.
- Ages 13 to 19
- Passing of one or two parents
- Boys as well as girls

3.5.4 EXCLUSION CRITERIA

- Not all the learners would be able to participate.
- Learners who lost their parents who are below 13 and above 19 would not be included in the study.

3.6 MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENT

“Measurement instruments are methods used by researchers to obtain data from respondents for research purposes. Different types of measurement instruments can be used by researchers for their studies, depending on the nature of the research that is to be carried out “(Yaya, 2014).

For this study, the measurement instrument that was used was the interview guide. Maree (2016) defines the “interview guide as a list of questions the researcher intends to ask in an interview. Semi-structured interviews were used, and the researcher drafted a set of questions to guide the interview”. The participants answered questions from the researcher, and the answers were recorded by the researcher. An opening question, “**How old were you when you lost your parents?**” was used to begin the interview; further questions were asked to go further. Which were easy and encouraging, which made the participant feel comfortable and open up. The materials that were used during the interviews were a tape recorder, paper, and a pen.

3.6.1 DATA COLLECTION

The researcher approached learners who had been identified by the educators at schools as individuals who lost their parents to participate in the research. Every learner who had been identified and was willing to participate obtained a letter containing details regarding the research, the consent forms, as well as the guide in response to the queries. In this research, the instructor collected data onsite, where the participants were. To get the information, a semi-structured interview was conducted.

3.6.2 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

The scholar took the written permission, consent, and assent forms to different schools and presented the research to the school principal so that they could identify the learners who had suffered from losing a parent in the school. The scholar had to get consent from the caregivers for the learners who were younger than 16, as they had to give consent. The principal signed for learners who do without legal guardianship or parents. The willing participants signed the forms. The purpose and goals of the research, along with the agreement forms, were talked about. They were given time to ask questions. The research was conducted at the schools in a private room. The study was carried out during the time among the pandemic, and strict coronavirus protocols were followed; masks, a face shield, and hand sanitizers were available. Bottled water and pocket tissues were provided for the participants who needed them during the interview. A tape recorder was utilized by the researcher. A notepad, pen and a tape recorder to help record the interview to save time and avoid asking the participants to repeat themselves. The notepad was used to write about the participants’ actions and atmosphere during the research. The

Semi-structured interviews were used by researchers, where a set of questions were written down beforehand to guide the interview. One-on-one interviews took place in Xitsonga and were subsequently translated into English. The interview didn't take more than an hour.

3.7 PRE-TESTING

Howitt and Cramer (2017) state that pre-testing is an experimental procedure that is conducted to prepare for the entire study. The purpose of pre-testing in qualitative research is to determine whether research participants can provide the necessary data. The researcher conducted an in-depth interview with two learners of different ages at a peri-urban school and another in a rural area. This aided the investigator in testing for effectiveness among questions and finding out if they would be able to achieve results that could lead to a meaningful conclusion. The researcher checked whether the participants could understand and answer the questions. Where necessary, changes were made to the questions to simplify them for the participants to be able to understand them. Some changes that were made include making sure the participant was sufficiently close to the recording for clear audio.

3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

In qualitative research, trustworthiness is paramount, whereas in quantitative research, validity and dependability are crucial metrics. The final step in evaluating data analysis, findings, and conclusions is to determine their credibility. As a result, the researcher must always be aware of the methods that can be employed to evaluate the reliability of the data analysis. Guba in Maree, (2016) "proposed four criteria that he believed should be considered by qualitative researchers in pursuit of a trustworthy study".

3.8.1 CREDIBILITY

Credibility deals with the question: "How congruent is the finding with reality? How do I ensure the reader will believe my findings? In the literature, several strategies are discussed to ensure the credibility of the research. Several strategies are taken into consideration to ensure credibility in research, and they include:

- ❖ The adoption of well-established research methods
- ❖ A research design that fits the research question
- ❖ Credibility is also enhanced through the development of an early familiarity with the participants.

There were frequent debriefing sessions between the researcher and the superiors. The researcher kept reflective notes and member checks. Credibility was further enhanced through the use of a thick description of the phenomenon under scrutiny” (Maree, 2016). Peer debriefers, also known as peer researchers, are academics, other researchers, and the researcher's peers at the University of Venda were allowed to comment and give feedback on the research project. This assisted the researcher in recognizing the flaws and shortcomings in the research methodology, filling those gaps, and rectifying the identified mistakes.

3.8.2 TRANSFERABILITY

This shows how one set of findings can be used to a different environment and is viewed as an alternative to external validity. It can be difficult to generalise, or apply, the conclusions of qualitative research to different contexts. Lincoln and Guba state in De Vos (2005:346) “that the researcher needs to present sufficient descriptive data to address the problem of applicability, yet the burden of demonstrating the applicability of the findings to another context rests more with the investigator who would make the transfer than with the original investigator. Strategies can be implemented to enhance transferability, although generalising findings were not the main aim of this exploratory study”. To enable the researcher to provide descriptive and in-depth data in this report, particular concepts and models shaped the study's data collecting and analysis.

3.8.3 DEPENDABILITY

“The application of the research design demonstrates its dependability. These consist of the reflective evaluation of the project and the practical specifics of data collection. As the study is carried out, the original research plan may be modified and strengthened by the addition of new data sources and data-gathering strategies. To achieve dependability, documenting the category labels you create, the revisions you make to categories, and any observations you note concerning the data as you work with the text is also valuable. The analysis process should be documented so that another person can see the decisions that the researcher made, how the researcher went about the analysis, and how he or she arrived at the interpretations” (Maree, 2016). Giving the reader a thorough explanation and a full account of the events during data collecting aids in helping them visualise the research study's surroundings and form their own opinions about transferability. To guarantee dependability the researcher in this study maintained a journal detailing choices made during the research process, particularly in relation to the gathering and analysis of data, as this would facilitate the understanding of the researcher's logic by others. A thorough explanation of the study's objectives, the researcher's responsibilities, and the criteria used to choose participants, and the environment in which data were gathered were given. An independent coder was utilised to validate the interpretations

made. To further assure reliability, the research supervisors verified the categories and interpretations one more time.

3.8.4 CONFIRMABILITY

Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe conformability as the degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the participants and not by the researcher's bias, motivation, or interest. To increase conformability, check by reducing the effect of researcher bias. To reduce the researcher's bias, the researcher needs to admit their predispositions. The more they become involved with the research participants and with the study, the greater the risk of bias creeping into the study. Because researchers develop relationships with the research participants, they are tempted to see what they want and genuinely miss things that do not conform to their expectations (Maree, 2016). To achieve conformability in this study, a co-analysis of the data was done; others who were familiar with the analysis were asked to confirm the accuracy.

3.9 PLANS FOR THE DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS

In this study, an interpretative-phenomenological design was used. "Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a qualitative approach developed within psychology for the examination of personal lived experience. IPA aims to explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world and the meaning that experiences, events, and states hold for participants. The participants are trying to make sense of their world (Smith, 2017). An important focus is also to try to bracket "the self" out and enter into the other persons perspective and experience; in other words, to truly see the world through the eyes of others" (Maree, 2016).

The process involves two simultaneous steps, which are analysis and preparation. The following tasks are included in these steps:

1. Familiarization – The Researcher started by reading the data several times to get familiar with the data and started looking for basic observations or patterns. This also includes transcribing the data that was collected with an tape recorder during the interviews and making notes.
2. Revisiting research objectives. The researcher revisited the research objectives to check if the themes are useful and identified the questions that were answered through the collected data.

3. Creating a framework for coding: In this process, sometimes called indexing or coding, the researcher defines general concepts, ideas, and behaviours and gives them codes. Following the identification of the themes, the researcher coded all of the data.
4. Finding connections and patterns - "After carefully examining the data that had been gathered, the investigator began to recognise themes, search for the most typical answers to the questions, locate information and trends that could address research questions, and identify areas that could be further investigated" (Bhatia 2018).

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

3.10.1 PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE STUDY


Ethics is a set of moral principles that are suggested by an individual or group, are subsequently widely accepted and offer rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants, and students" (De Vos, 2015).

Permission to perform the study was sought from various University of Venda structures, including the Department of Psychology, the School of Health Sciences, and the Executive, to UHDC, and finally Clearance from Ethical Action Committee. UNIVEN provided the investigator with guidelines concerning ethics to follow. The study's permission to be conducted was sought from the Education Department in the district, the educational institutions in Collins Chabane municipality, and the participants. The individuals involved should understand what the findings of the research are about and why it is being done and no one must get hurt in the process to get the information for research. In this study, the following ethical standards were upheld:

3.10.2 ETHICAL PRINCIPLES TO BE OBSERVED

3.10.2.1 AVOIDANCE OF HARM TO RESPONDENTS

According to Dane (1990) (cited in De Vos, 2015, P.58), "the ethical obligation rests with the researcher to protect subjects against any form of physical discomfort that may emerge within reasonable limits from the research project. Emotional harm is often more difficult to predict than physical discomfort". "The participants were informed beforehand about the potential impact of the investigation. Such information offers the respondent the opportunity to withdraw from the investigation if they wish" (De Vos, 2015). It was explained to the participants that they might not discuss topics on which they felt uncomfortable. In addition, the participants were told that they could end the interview at any time if they felt uncomfortable doing so. Participants who

indicated psychological and social issues, as  as those who displayed emotional stress, will receive referrals for professional help from a clinical psychologist or social worker.

3.10.2.2 INFORMED ASSENT AND CONSENT

“Obtaining informed consent implies that all possible or adequate information on the goal of the investigation, the procedures that were followed during the investigation, the possible advantages, disadvantages, and dangers to which respondents might be exposed, as well as the credibility of the researcher, should be rendered to potential subjects or their legal representatives” (William, 1995; De Vos, 2015). The goal was explained to the participants of the study and why it was done. The rules were explained to them, even if they were not interested. The informed consent and assent forms were prepared in plain English so that participants may grasp it without being confused by technical jargon. The participants were offered the freedom to enquire and to leave the research at any moment.

Keeping these guidelines in mind, the researcher gave participants complete information regarding the goal of the study, the subject matter of the interview, the use of a recorder, and the publication of the results. A letter of informed permission and a statement of participation were required to be signed by the teenage participants (Appendix C). Since these people were minors, written permission from their guardians or parents was necessary (Appendix C)

3.10.2.3 DECEPTION OF RESPONDENTS

This is the point where the volunteers are mislead or given false information on the purpose of the study. To avoid deceiving respondents, the researcher did not fail to disclose complete details regarding the study to the participants.

3.10.2.4 VIOLATION OF PRIVACY

“Privacy is to keep to oneself that which is normally not intended for others to observe or analyse. Every individual has the right to privacy, and it is his or her right to decide when, where, to whom, and to what extent his or her attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour will be revealed” (De Vos, 2015). The participants were made aware that their personal information would not be made public. No cameras were used.

3.10.2.5 ANONYMITY

“Anonymity means that no one, including the researcher, should be able to identify any subject afterward” (Babbie, 1990). “The scholar notified the participants of their anonymity on the cover letter and through verbal communication” (De Vos, 2015). The participants were told that, in order to identify respondents, numbers would be used instead of names.

3.10.2.6 CONFIDENTIALITY

It is essential to maintain the anonymity of participants and their data unless they provide full consent. No names should be used. The researcher must protect the participants’ right to privacy by using confidentiality. In order to maintain participant confidentiality, their true names were not included on the surveys or when composing the reports.

3.10.2.7 RELEASE OF THE FINDINGS

“The findings of the study must be introduced to the public in written form. Care should be taken that no biased language is used regarding gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic group, disability, or age” (Creswell, 2003).

The participants were informed of the findings. It is not only the researcher who gains knowledge, but the participants as well, and the community at large. The research would be published, and copies thereof would be made accessible through the University of Venda Library, along with a copy for the school where the research was conducted.

3.10.2.8 VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

The individuals who responded to the questionnaires voluntarily decided to take part in the data collection. Every guarantee was provided to participants so they knew they may stop participating whenever they wanted without having asked for an “explanation. Thus, at any time in the carrying out of a research project, if a participant decides for any reason that he or she would like to stop participation, this wish will be respected “(Maree, 2016).

3.11 PLANS FOR DISSEMINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF RESULTS



Upon completion of the research, when the data has been analysed, the researcher plans to use the information to have a discussion with the schools to present the conclusions drawn from the participants' experiences. A roundtable presentation would be held to stimulate discussion on the topic. The findings would assist in starting a conversation and making the learners feel comfortable talking, and the educators might be given training on how to support the grieving learners. A journal article would be published at the conclusion of the research, and the data would be accessible inside the University of Venda Library and schools where research was conducted.

4 CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The gathered data's analysis and interpretation are provided in this chapter. The researcher was able to gather detailed information about the learners' experiences and understanding of the phenomenon under study thanks to the responses. The methodology used to collect data in this section is fully discussed in Chapter 3.

4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF THE SELECTED PARTICIPANTS


The individuals taking part in this research are learners at a secondary level of different ages, boys, and girls, who have lost parents through deaths that lead these learners to remain under the custody of relatives; in some cases, they are under the guidance of their grandparents, either grandmother or grandfather, cousins, aunts, uncles, or whoever in the family takes care of them. Some of these learners are heading their families after losing their parents, and they take care of their siblings. One of the learners indicated that:

"I am left with my grandparents as a guardian, taking care of everything concerning my life; for example, my grandmother is the one who is providing food and clothing and making sure that I can attend school." **Participant G.**

The other learner indicated that:

"Since we lost our parents, I am heading the family, looking after my siblings of different ages. I am forced to be a parent, but on the other hand, I am still a learner. I am responsible for making sure that my siblings have food on the table, they have clothing, and that they can have all the things that are needed for school." **Participant D.**

Table 4.1: Biographical information of the selected participants

PARTICIPANTS	CATEGORY	GENDER	 LOSS PARENT(S)	EXISTING PARENTS
A	Learner	Female	Mother	Father, Stepmother
B	Learner	Female	Mother	Uncle
C	Learner	Female	Mother	Grandmother
D	Learner	Male	Mother & Father	Siblings
E	Learner	Male	Mother & Father	Aunt
F	Learner	Female	Father	Mother
G	Learner	Male	Mother & Father	Grandmother
H	Learner	Male	Mother & Father	Grandfather
I	Learner	Female	Mother	Father
J	Learner	Female	Mother & Father	Cousins
K	Learner	Female	Mother & Father	Siblings
L	Learner	Female	Mother	Stepmother
M	Learner	Female	Father	Mother
N	Learner	Male	Father	Mother
O	Learner	Female	Father	Siblings

PARTICIPANT A

The learner lost her mother, who was very sick. The mother was in and out of the hospital, and she passed away at home while she was discharged to fully recover at home. The participant stays with her father. The participant had a runny nose, and she indicated that she fell sick when her mother went to the hospital. The participant is affected in such a way that she doesn't go to school because of her recurring flu and her sore tummy. The participant takes care of the household, and after her mother's passing, she had to grow up quickly.

PARTICIPANT B

She stays with her grandmother from her mother's side of the family. The grandmother has taken over the role of being a parent; she does everything for the participant. She has good support from her aunt and grandmother. She is the only child, and she aspires to be in the medical profession after school. She is doing well at school. Her mother was working in Johannesburg, and her grandmother was her everything; she was the woman who raised her. She wishes her grandmother could be open to talking about her mother and keeping her memories alive. Her mother was a victim of gender-based violence and was killed by her boyfriend. She has accepted the death of her mother; she is a jolly young lady, and she does not ask about him.

PARTICIPANT C

She lost her mother, who died during the rife of the COVID-19 pandemic. She has a twin sister, and they are very close. They stay with their grandmother. Their brother stays in Johannesburg, and he is a security guard. He helps where he can financially. The participant had to repeat Grade 12 because her Matric results would not qualify her to apply for the course that she wanted. The participant is a shy lady, and she indicated that she doesn't have friends, but her sister is her best friend. She loves the church, and she finds comfort, guidance, support, and encouragement from the church. She has focused her attention on her schoolwork because she wants to have excellent results to qualify to study at a university.

PARTICIPANT D

Both his parents passed away. He stays with his paternal grandmother; she has been taking care of him since he was still a baby, as the mother was not married to his father and she was working and was not in a position to take care of her boy. His mother passed away while giving birth to the lastborn. The learner looked very well taken care of. He is registered with the social worker to get funds and financial support. The participant failed a grade, but he indicated that his school performance had nothing to do with his mother's passing.

PARTICIPANT E

His mother passed away. The mother was staying in Johannesburg because of work. His sister took over the role of being his mother. He is registered with the social worker to receive financial assistance. His mother was very sick before she passed away. The learner indicated that he failed last year, and he also failed other grades before. The participant looks like a troublesome child in class. After failing, he had to register at a school close by. He doesn't have much to say about his mother, as he says they were not very close. The participant did not know about the social work services offered at his school.

PARTICIPANT F

During his childhood, the participant's connection with his father was not very close, but when she started high school, the father started showing interest in her, and they were building a good relationship. She was still looking forward to greater things coming out of their relationship. The father had a shooting illness that killed him. She is sad because her father assisted her financially. She is now going to a local school because her mother cannot afford to pay for transportation for her to go to the school in town as she is not working but running her small business. She is currently improving her matriculation results, as she did not pass well because of her father's passing. She could not concentrate in school because of grief.

PARTICIPANT G

He has a father, but they do not have a relationship because the grandmother does not want him to have a relationship with him, as he denied him while her daughter was pregnant and she had to suffer to raise him. But as a boy child who is now a father, he wants to have a relationship with his father. After his mother's passing, he got involved in drinking, smoking, and staying out of school. His grandmother does not trust him, even though he is trying to do good, as he once stole her things.

PARTICIPANT H

His mother passed away in front of him. The boy has anger issues, and he is always fighting with other learners at school. He is staying with his grandfather and brother; they had to be separated from the younger sister because she is still young and needs maternal support. The learner participant was expelled from a previous school after fighting with another learner. The participant hangs out with older kids and lacks parental supervision as the grandfather is an old man.

PARTICIPANT I

My father died of complications after surgery in the hospital. She is devastated and teary. She feels she is robbed of her best friend, as she was Daddy's girl. The death disrupted her family as she had to take care of her mother, who fell into depression after her father's passing. She saw a therapist. It affected her school performance. She studies but quickly forgets what she has learned.

PARTICIPANT J

Both parents passed away in a motor vehicle accident while going to Johannesburg for work. She had to go stay with her grandmother after her parents' deaths. Lots of adjustments are needed as she left her friends and life behind. Losing her parents meant she had to grow up quickly and be a parent to her brother, who is withdrawn. The participant was teary and still in pain. She wishes that if one of her parents had survived, then it would be better.

PARTICIPANT K

Her mother passed away. After her mother's passing, she became friends with the wrong crowd. She started drinking and going out at night because she had nobody to answer to as her strict mother was gone. She felt being with friends was good for her. She ended up falling pregnant and failing at school. Her peers are at university, but she is back at school and wants to focus on her schoolwork.

PARTICIPANT L

Both parents passed away within a short period, leaving the participant to head her family and be responsible for her siblings at a young age. It is hard for her to do the home chores and also do her schoolwork. She looks tired, but she still smiles through it all. The brother misused their money while he was drinking and having parties at home with the girls. Her schoolwork was affected as she could not focus because her home was turned into a tavern. She tried to commit suicide just to escape her reality. She got help and went through counselling. Now she is in a better place in her life.

PARTICIPANT M

She is left with her father and stepmother. Her mother passed away. Her father remarried after her mother's passing. She felt it was too soon for him to get a new wife; she felt her needs were not met, and she did not get the attention that she needed. She wishes her mother was still around, as the father has continued with his life as if her mother were never around. At first, she was separated from her younger sister, but now they are back together, and she is happy about

that. She changed schools to be closer to her mother and because of financial challenges, but she is getting along with the stepmother.

PARTICIPANT N

Father had cancer, and he subsequently passed away in the hospital. She received counseling. Her father was her role model. She saw her father fade away, and that traumatised her. The participant tries to be strong, but she is still hurting.

PARTICIPANT O

The parent committed suicide after suffering from depression. The father was working, and he lost his job. The participant was at home when he committed suicide. They are expected to live independently in a house without parents.

Most learners who have gone through parent loss struggle with mental issues like sadness, low self-esteem, and aggression. They also struggle with an inability to focus, which leads to substandard school performance and unhelpful conduct like skipping class, arriving late, cheating on tests, and abusing drugs. Children suffer the most when families split up.

Learners whose parents have passed on or are not there but are being taken care of by their stepmothers or stepfathers become vulnerable to being used as cheap labourers after dropping out of school, and they are subjected to both physical and sexual abuse since the majority of the stepmothers or stepfathers have no biological attachment to them. Thus, the lack of love and care for them results in mistreating the children and pushing them off the limit in their daily lives.

Three main themes emerged from the study objectives which were,

- To explore the challenges experienced by the learners who have undergone parent's passing
- To explore effects of loss of a parent on learners
- To identify if schools have protocols written down to assist learners after the loss of a parent.

Three themes emerged, along with twelve sub-themes. The following table gives an overview and description of the objectives, themes, as well as subthemes:

Table 4.2: Objectives, Themes, and Subthemes

Objectives	Themes	Subthemes
To explore the challenges experienced by the learners who have undergone the parent's passing.	Factors contributing to death of parents on learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diseases as a contributory factor • Road Accidents • GBV(gender based violence)
Explore effects of loss of a parent on learners.	Challenges faced by learners living without their parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Parental Support • Bullying at schools • Lack of Resources • Psychological Effects • Loss of a parent on learners
To identify if schools have protocols written down to assist learners after a loss of a parent.	Strategies that can help learners to cope well after loss of their parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving specialists • Engaging religious and cultural people • Awareness Campaign and workshops • Initiating programmes at schools.

4.3 THEME 1: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE LOSS OF PARENTS ON LEARNERS

In trying to establish whether the participants knew the cause of death, they were asked to share what happened to the parent who passed away. The researcher's responsibility was to establish if the individuals involved had any information about their parent's passing, which would make it easier for them to answer the other questions that would follow.

4.3.1 SUB-THEME 1: DISEASES AS A CONTRIBUTORY FACTOR

Currently, most learners who have lost parents attribute the loss to different types of diseases. Most of the chronic diseases affecting families, for example, diseases like diabetes and cancer, hypertension, and AIDS and HIV are prevalent in the study area. The other dangerous types of diseases that affect the Collins Chabane area are malaria and tuberculosis. Collins Chabane is

prone to malaria because it is next to Kruger National Park and Mozambique. Diseases such as tuberculosis are also dangerous, leaving most of the children without parents because they are transmittable. In the case of HIV/AIDS, once one parent is affected, it becomes automatic that the other parent may be infected too. Another category is those children who have HIV-positive, infected parents who remain in the looking after their siblings following the death of their parents pass away. These children become problematic as they cannot cope on their own without proper supervision. Incurable diseases are depriving most learners of their parents, as there is not much awareness going around for parents to know how to deal with incurable or transmittable diseases. The most psychologically disturbing situation is when one of the learners states that:

My parents died in front of me, not having done anything that I could do since I was a child. The thought and the memory remaining in my mind are haunting me up-to-date that I am unable to understand, concentrate, and listen, and also to find closure on the passing on of my parent
(Participant H).

My mother had cancer, and she did not tell me or my siblings about it as she was a single mother. She suffered in silence, and she could not share her journey with us. We only found out at the hospital that she was terminally ill, and she only had a week to live because her organs were failing. It broke me, and I had trouble focusing in class, so I ended up failing my grade that year.
(Participant E).

My father was only sick for a very short period; he had a heart attack. I spoke to him on the phone, and he was ok, but later I got a call that he was in the hospital, and he later passed away. Death took away my best friend, and I am currently living in fear that I will also lose my mother
(Participant K).

I saw my mother battling to breathe because of COVID-19. My mother fell sick, and when she was rushed to the hospital, they could not assist her because all the beds were full and there was no medication for COVID-19. I think she needed oxygen to help her breathe, but the hospital could not provide her with the machine as they were overcrowded and understaffed and had no resources. I cannot get her breathing out of my mind. Sometimes I am woken up by a nightmare that I am suffocating
(Participant C).

4.3.2. SUB-THEME 2: ROAD ACCIDENTS

Road fatalities have deprived most learners of their parents. In most cases, a single parent or both parents traveling in one vehicle involved in car accidents do not survive. The fact that most parents travel to and from work daily puts their lives in danger, in that they travel each day to work to try to fend for their children. Most accidents happen regularly on the roads, leaving most of the parents injured or dead, thus depriving learners of their parents, who should take care of them until they are independent.

One of the learners indicated that: *I cannot do away with the thought of losing both parents when there was a bus accident that happened when my parents were going to work. It was a double loss that took place, which cannot be removed from my mind. It remains painful for me to depend on other people knowing that my parents were able to take care of us since they were both working in town* **(Participant J)**

Following the accident, I had to adjust to my new life, away from my friends and the surroundings in which I grew up. Losing my parents forced me to mature quickly, take on greater responsibility, and be able to share with other family members while staying with my grandmother **(Participant L)**

4.3.3 SUB-THEME 3: GBV (GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE)

In some cases, incidents happen within their families that deprive learners of their parents. Incidents that happen within families include parental quarreling, fights, unfaithfulness, and cheating, and these are some of the contributory factors to violence where one parent may injure or kill the other parent because of jealousy or misunderstandings. Most of these incidents within families are instigated by family relatives who do not accept partners of their relatives as part of their families, resulting in one member being expelled from the family or family fights. In most family incidents, when a parent is killed, the children are forced to go stay with their relatives for their safety.

Another learner shared the moments when her stepfather killed her mother on hearing that her mother was cheating on him. *He never gave her the chance to explain but hacked her to death, leaving me without any parents and having to fend for my siblings* **(Participant B)**.

People around me are not as kind and loving as my mother was. I receive hurtful words from family members verbal violence. I am reminded that I do not have a mother and it hurts **(Participant K)**

Challenges and their effects faced by learners living without their parents, educational environmental change results in poor school performance. Lack of maternal support leads to learners working overtime and taking on more responsibilities than their peers. Lack of parental guidance causes poor behaviour and disrespect among learners. Bullying at schools causes the dropout rate to escalate among learners. Lack of materials leads to poor school performance, and competition among learners leads to dropouts. Stress and depression increase as a result of these challenges, and generally, they result in poor performance among learners.

4.4.1 SUB-THEME 1: LACK OF PARENTAL SUPPORT

Growing up without the guidance of the mother is a challenge for most learners, mostly girls who are dependent on their mother as role models, as the ones who can guide them through. Maternal care is very important, as girls confide mostly in their mothers compared to their fathers. Thus, losing maternal care may result in the learner not performing properly, especially when they miss the part of their mother.

Most of the learners who have lost their parents do underperform after losing their parents; this could be because of the stress, fatigue, and depression that they experience after losing their parents. This happens, especially if the situation has not been taken care of through counseling. A learner indicated that

I had to stop going to school because I fell pregnant, and I did not have anyone to help me take care of my baby. This would have never happened if my mother was still around. (Participant I)

Another learner shared, I started my periods when my mother passed away; it was a very stressful time for me because I did not even know how long the periods were going to last or which sanitary pads to use. It was just difficult without my mother, and it made me feel her absence.” (Participant C)

4.4.2 SUB-THEME 2: BULLYING AT SCHOOLS

Most of the learners who have no parents are the ones who are the victims of bullying at school, because learners who bully others are aware that they have no defense as no one would

defend their case. This is one challenge which causing most learners to dropout after losing their parents, to try and find other ways to live than to keep on studying.

I remember after my parents passing a lot of things had to change even the way I used to wear and having money for lunchbox. I would always feel small and when they laugh and I would sometimes feel that they were just laughing at me” (Participant H)

I feel I am a target of bullying by other learners at school because I do not have a parent that can stand up for me and I don’t feel comfortable to discuss my feelings with everyone. Only if my mother was around I was not going to get this treatment from other learners (Participant N)

I get irritated easily, which ends up getting me to fight with other learner because I don’t want they to look down on me or disturb my peace (Participant O)

4.4.3 SUB-THEME 3: LACK OF RESOURCES

Most learners have got a challenge after losing their parents because of lack of provision as far as different materials are needed for schooling, for example provision of uniforms, school bags and pocket money are some of the major materials that are needed on a daily basis for learners to perform well at school. Some learners who have lost a parent had to downgrade front the life that they were used to living because the parent that passed away was the breadwinner and now, they have to rely on the grandparents social grant pension. They are unable to do the things they used to do before and it is a big adjustment for some learners.

Some learners lose parents while they are attending schools far away from where they stay, resulting in them being unable to pay for transportation to continue studying at those schools. This force them to come back to nearby schools as far as where they are staying is concerned. These changes impact negatively as adapting to the new environment is a challenge, the teaching styles and learning accessories may not be similar to the ones that they used to receive at the previous school. They may not adjust well in the new schools depending on how fellow learners would treat them, accept them or understand their situation. Thus, it causes them to be withdrawn, lonely and isolated from other learners. This may cause them to even drop out of schools.

I had to change schools after my father’s passing as my unemployed mother could no longer afford to give me money for transport to my old school (Participant F)

Other Learner indicated that because she doesn’t stay with her parent when the aunt buys clothes or shoes for her kids. She might not get the same things or not get what he wish to have (Participant K)

4.4.4 SUB-THEME 4: PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGE

The study reveals that not having a parent to take care of the child causes a lot of stress and anxiety in most learners, as they remain wondering how they are going to make it daily without food, clothing, learning materials, study materials, and other commodities. Learners are mostly stressed by the fact that they may not have the next meal on the table; they may not feel warm because they are unable to buy warm clothes, and this causes the stress to heighten or go up as far as risking their health. Most children tend to be withdrawn and isolated in such a way that they remain depressed and have a lot of questions and anxiety.

When a parent passes away suddenly, children naturally feel alone and alienated. They might not feel the same as their peers. They are feeling a range of emotions they have never experienced before. The loss of a very important person in their lives has upset their sense of stability and security. Learners expressed anger, guilt, denial, responsibility, and sadness.

A learner indicated that she now primarily spends her time at home beside her mother because she feels she cannot live alone at home. She cries a lot when she thinks about her father, who was her best friend (Participant K)

Learners who have younger siblings have to grow up very quickly and take on being accountable for looking after their siblings and household chores, which means they do lack the time to go engage in play with children of similar age, and it also takes up time from their school work.

Grief can have physical, mental, and even spiritual effects if the psychological aspect is not addressed. When you're grieving, you may experience both mental and physical pain. Physical symptoms are a normal response to grief, and learners have noticed a variety of them. Common physical signs include stomach aches, flu-like symptoms, brain fog, and fatigue.

A learner indicated that she has been missing school because of the flu that she has been having since the time her mother was admitted to the hospital. She had a bad runny nose and cough that would not get better even when using medication. She has been missing school because of stomach cramps and has always felt tired since her mother passed away. Because her mother was not there, she would wake up late to go to school, and the school transport would have left her by the time she woke up (Participant A).

A learner mentioned that after the loss, he could not remember what he studied for his exams. He would study but found it hard to recall what he had studied during the exam (Participant H).

4.4.5 SUB-THEME 5: LOSS OF PARENTS ON STUDENTS

Most girls within the schools regard their parents as role models and super stars who will do anything to make them succeed in whatever they are doing as learners at school, losing parents as girls makes them try and look for other alternatives to replace them which may result in them being abused by those they are trying to get closer to. They can be sexually abused, psychologically abused and emotionally abused. Girls may also be bullied and be pulled around, forced to be engaged in one thing that they did not plan, knowing that they do not have parents. Girls are vulnerable to human trafficking as they are easy prey for sex slaves, cheap labour and also easy material for marriage at that tender age, people may take advantage of them losing their parents. . In most cases, where boys have lost their parents they would want to abandon schooling in place of working to try and make a living. , Boys tend to mix up with the wrong crowd and do substances which distract them from their school work.

I got comfort from my friends and I would go out and drink. I even started smoking (Participant N).

I had to repeat a grade because my marks were not great after my loss (Participant C)

I feel pregnant and when my mother was around I don't think I would have had a child at my age (Participant K)

4.5 THEME THREE: STRATEGIES THAT CAN HELP LEARNERS TO COPE WELL AFTER LOSS OF THEIR PARENTS

Strategies that can assist learners to cope well after the loss of their parents: The contributing factors that lead learners into underperforming at schools need to be attended to and also the authorities must make sure that rules are being applied in order to safeguard the wellbeing of learners who lost their parents.

4.5.1 Sub-theme 1: Involving specialists–

For learners whose parents are experiencing challenges, professional specialist must be involved, for instance, physicians, psychologists, and social workers. Therapists should be made available in public health facilities for learners to access them with ease from their residential areas so that they can counsel and monitor the progress of such a learner from the day of reporting onwards.

4.5.2 Sub-theme 2: Engaging religious and cultural people

Incidents in families can also be reduced by engaging religious and cultural people in order to address some of the issues that lead to misunderstandings and violence.

4.5.3 Sub-theme 3: Awareness campaigns and workshops

Organizations that are dealing with gender-based violence must workshop communities and do awareness campaigns to help send information that may reduce abuse of children and women, as well as the killings of women by men, as well as family violence that can affect the learners in their studies.

4.5.4 Sub-theme 4: Initiating programs at school

There must be programs in schools which are created to encourage and monitor learners who are being affected by losing their parents so that they may be brought back to the normal learning environment. New programs at schools should be initiated that which may help learners who have lost parents to come back to the normal learning environment, for example a program such as “adopt a child” may be initiated in the schools wherein a school teacher may adopt a child depending on whether a child it’s a male or female. A female teacher may adopt a female child to look after that child at a school and at home. This could improve the learning of that child as the child would be feeling loved and cared for by a particular teacher and the teacher on the other hand would be able to monitor whether there is any improvement or other challenges that may need attention to help the learner to move away from the mourning zone and come back to the normal environment.

5 CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS, SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The main focus of this study was to establish the challenges and effects faced by learners living without their parents and strategies that can be put in place to curb challenges faced by learners

who lost their parents. This chapter presents a summary of the findings of the psychological experiences of learners who have undergone the loss of a parent, the limitations of the study, the conclusion, and the recommendations of the study.

5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to explore the psychological experiences of learners who have undergone the loss of a parent at Collins Chabane Municipality Schools. In the first chapter of this dissertation, the purpose and significance of the study were supported. And in chapter two, the researcher looked over the literature pertaining to the current investigation at hand and offered the conceptual structure through the Kubler-Ross theory. Written work that is relevant to the research was also covered in the second chapter of this dissertation. The methodology used to collect and analyse the data in this study was fully discussed in Chapter 3.

5.3 OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS

The study's goals were to investigate the difficulties faced by the students who have undergone the parents passing at Collins Chabane Municipality schools, to explore the effects of the loss of a parent on learners at Collins Chabane Municipality schools, and also to identify if schools have protocols that are written down to assist learners after the loss of a parent. In this research project, semi-structured interviews were used to gather data. After the analysis of the challenges and effects that are contributing negatively to learning for learners without parents, it is important to highlight that learners who have lost their parents have not yet lost their future, as there are solutions that can put them back on the normal learning track. The effects of losing parents may be so real that the recommendations and solutions may assist learners to refocus and continue to try to strive for better results and a better future.

5.4. DISCUSSION

5.4.1 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE LOSS OF PARENTS AT COLLINS CHABANE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

In this study, most of the learners in secondary schools have lost their parents through various types of diseases that cause death. Illnesses like HIV/AIDS, chronic illnesses like cancer, and other diseases such as malaria and short illnesses are some of the examples of diseases that have contributed to most of the deaths of the parents of the learners (Bago, 2022). The other

causes of death have been attributed to road accidents where parents lost their lives while travelling to or from work or trying to make ends meet. There are those parents who have lost their lives through incidents within their families, where family violence, misunderstandings, mistrust, and blemish caused fights, quarrelling, and killings that deprived learners of their parents. In some cases, one would find that children end up staying with relatives such as grandparents, aunties, uncles, cousins, and siblings. These side effects are very negative for learners at the secondary level as they start to understand what is happening in life. All these hurt the studies of learners at a secondary level, as they need attention from the school, the community, and the Department of Education at large.

Bago (2022) asserts that “most of the time, a parent's death has a significant impact on the family's living arrangements and financial circumstances. Moreover, a child's behaviour and academic performance may alter as a result of the psychological effects of losing a parent. In Africa, illnesses like cancer, accidents, civil wars, and HIV/AIDS-related illnesses are the main causes of parent deaths.”

5.4.2 CHALLENGES ON LEARNERS LIVING WITHOUT THEIR PARENTS

Challenges such as lack of maternal involvement are very serious for girls, to the extent that girls at the secondary level feel neglected and not cared for as they do not know who to share their challenges with. For example, when they see their periods, they may not know who to talk to, as most teachers at schools may be male. “They miss that part of maternal care where the mother would guide them through the period stage” (Faleke et al., 2023). In contrast, puberty and the absence of paternal participation affect most of the boys, who may want to know what changes are happening in their physicality at a secondary level. For example, when boys reach puberty, they change their voices to be hoarse; they develop beards and hands; and as such, they may be wondering about these changes in their bodies and never have someone to share with since they may be shy to ask women about that development. Learners need to have maternal and paternal support.

Another challenging factor is when learners must change the school environment because of these challenges, where they may end up moving from one school to another. They experience isolation as they may not know anyone in that school; they may take time to get used to the new environment, depending on how they can adjust. Changing the school environment may affect learners in that they may have to start from scratch in getting used to the new teachers, new school environments, and making friends. Disease as a challenge is an appalling factor that cannot be predicted, and as most learners lose their parents through different attacks, they are also forced to change their lifestyle. Most diseases are not expected as they just bounce and

deprive learners of their precious parents, and this experience is very traumatic for learners as they may be trying to understand why and how their parents have passed on. In some cases, learners suffer more than once. For example, if a parent is infected by HIV or AIDS, it may take many years for such a parent to suffer from the disease while the children are watching. The passing of one or both parents is such a traumatic moment and may not easily be removed from their minds, causing them to perform negatively in their learning. On the other hand, diseases force children to tend to their guardians till death, and then, after losing their parents, most young people remain with a guilty conscience as they feel they could have done better to save their parents. This kind of experience is very traumatic and may hamper learners' success in their educational efforts.

Alem (2020) indicated that “when parents pass away, learners mourn both their physical presence and the abundance of good things their parents gave them while they were still living, including love, protection, advice, and care. They frequently feel hopeless and powerless when they don't have adult or parental direction, especially if they haven't gotten any psychiatric treatment to help them deal with the loss of parents or other carers” (Ntuli *et al.*, 2020). They frequently address victimisation, intimidation, and stigmatisation. (Mutiso & Mutie, 2018). Stress, anxiety, and despair seem to be prevalent among children living without their parents.” (Ntjana, 2023).

5.4.3 THE EFFECTS OF LOSS OF PARENTS ON LEARNERS AT COLLINS CHABANE MUNICIPALITY

Learners who are living with single parents struggle a lot to adjust to a normal family situation. This is because they may be missing one parent at the expense of the other. In cases where learners are living with mothers, they may be missing a part of their father to the extent that they may end up disrespecting their mother and, as such, not taking instructions in a good way, leading them not to do their schoolwork and school work properly. Where the father is left to parent the children, the children may be in denial if the father opts to remarry or be involved in a new relationship (Bago, 2022). This can cause learners to be withdrawn and feel unimportant, and it could affect their learning in such a way that they may eventually quit school.

The most difficult challenge is when learners have lost both parents and the family is headed by another child, the elder one of the siblings. This situation has hurt the educational path of such a learner, as the learner must act as a parent and also as a student. While being at school, the learner may be trying to think about how he or she is going to fend for the siblings after school.

While at home, the learner may not have a chance to do homework and school work because the learner must see to it that everyone has food and shelter. These situations make learning very difficult and, as such, have negative impacts, as most of these child-headed families face school. Most learners end up not completing school. If they do not drop out, they underperform to the extent that they drop out and seek jobs in order to fend for their brothers and sisters.

5.4.4 SOLUTION TO HELP LEARNERS LIVING WITHOUT THEIR PARENTS

This study has resolved that there must be measures put in place to help learners with their education at a secondary level. To avoid repeating what happened, preventative measures must be put in place. Organizations that are dealing with gender-based violence must organise or arrange workshops, awareness campaigns, and training within communities, where communities would be taught about how to prevent violence and promote peace, so that families may not be involved in fights, killings, and abuse. This may reduce the risk of divorce, separation, and unwanted killings. Therapists should be deployed in public health facilities where learners who have lost parents could be able to consult and get counseling, which would help them deal with what they have gone through. This may help them to refocus and also to concentrate on their learning in a normal way.

However, Ntjana (2023) suggested “the following ways for learners living without their parents that might create the knowledge in school better: They've suggested, for instance the necessity for multiples counseling services, discussions, and the take in a Child through Adoption program, in addition to others”. Counseling services are critical to children living without their parents and can assist them in resolving their own and psychological issues. “Support groups provide an opportunity for orphans and vulnerable children to have talk sessions, providing an opportunity for the healing process to take place, especially in cases where they are dealing with the loss of their parents. As a result, they can be helpful to children going through psychological and emotional challenges” (Gerrity&Delucia-Waack, 2006). This viewpoint raises severe concerns, though, particularly in light of the complexity of academic programmes and their potential inability to provide specific services like support groups in schools.

5.5 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

This study set out to investigate the psychological experiences of students who had experienced the loss of a parent at Collins Chabane Municipality Schools. The study's goals were to describe the difficulties encountered by the students who have experienced parent loss at Collins Chabane Municipality schools and identify if schools have protocols that are written

down to assist learners after the loss of a parent. Themes that this research revealed were: elements contributing to the loss of parents on learners; challenges faced by learners living without their parents; the effects of the loss of a parent on learners at Collins Chabane Local Municipality secondary schools; and strategies that can help learners cope well following the death of one or both parents.

5.6 LIMITATION DURING THE STUDY

Each study has its limitations. In this study, the researcher was faced with challenges where people were not willing to participate because they were not going to be given anything for their participation. At other schools, some learners could not be interviewed because they were busy with exams. Some of the younger target group could not take part in the research because the guardians felt that the participants were young, and it may evoke some emotions as they already feel like people pity them because they do not have parents. In our communities, grandparents have a big role to play as most of the participants stay with the grandparents while the parents are in big towns working, and that affects the bond between parent and child.

5.7 CONCLUSION

This study has concluded that there remains a huge challenge in the causes, effects, and challenges experienced by learners who are at a secondary level after losing their parents. This is due to the high number of deaths of parents through diseases, gender-based violence, and road accidents, which are escalating every day. There are hopes that learners can be assisted to go back to their normal studies should the schools, the department, and the community come together to tackle these challenges as recommended. If there is a place where learners can go and seek assistance and get that assistance, and a place where parents and teachers can be trained on how to look after their families and how to resolve problems when they experience them, the problem can be easily resolved. Learning for students who have lost their parents may be simplified and may be accessible in such a way that challenges can be reduced slowly but surely.

5.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.8.1 SUGGESTION FOR POLICY FORMULATION

Existing policies should be revisited, revised, and also realigned to accommodate new trends that are happening around students who have experienced parental loss. New policies need to be implemented to enhance and upholster the current policies so that learners who lost their

parents can find a way to improve their learning without feeling the loss of their parents. Registered counsellors should be available at schools to assist with any psychological needs of the students and make referrals where necessary.

5.8.2 SUGGESTION FOR SCHOOLS

The schools should have a monitoring mechanism for students whose parents have passed away. They must register learners who lost their parents on a separate registration form for them to be able to monitor them and assist them where necessary. Schools should encourage learners who lost parents to partner with other learners so that they may not feel lonely and isolated. This will make them feel like they are part of the inclusive education that the government has recommended. Schools can assist learners who have lost their parents by asking for assistive devices, learning accessories, and other study materials exclusively for those learners who have lost their parents so that they may not hustle to get them.

5.8.3 SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Therefore, it is advised that additional research be done to see if anything has improved, that has occurred from the recommendations and solutions of the previous study.

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7. WORK PLAN TABLE

Activities 2020	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Concept Paper												
Research Proposal Writing												
2021												
Submit the proposal within the Department of Psychology												
Submission to School of Health Sciences												
Submission to UHDC												
Ethical Clearance												
2022												
Data Collection Phase 1												
2023												
Data Analysis and Presentation												
Phase 2 Model												



Development												
Finalising Research Report												

8. PROPOSED BUDGET

The study will be funded by the University of Venda.

NO	ITEM	MOTIVATION	DESCRIPTION	TOTAL
1	Transport during data collection	Trip from Univen to Mdavula village for an appointment with the headman to request permission to conduct a study.	Univen to Mdavula is 78 KM @ R3.61 x 2 trips	R563.16
		Trip from Univen to get a letter to conduct research at the Department of Education in Polokwane.	Univen to PLK 352 KM @ R3.61	R1270.72
		Travelling to different schools for permission and pre-testing.	Univen to different schools in Collins Chabane 78 KM @ R3.61 x 4 trips	R1126.32
		Trips to different schools for Consent forms and Assent forms from guardians.	Univen to different schools for consent 78 KM @ R3.61 x 4 trips	R1126.32
		Trip to different schools for data collection.	Univen to different schools in Collins Chabane municipality 78 KM @ R3.61 x 20 trips	R5631.60
		Trip to the different schools for dissemination of the results.	Trips to different schools to give report on findings. 78 km @ R 3.61 x 6	R1689.48

2	Printing	Printing of consent forms, Interview guides, Copies of final documents and other letters.	Printing in Black Ink per page @ R4.00 x 1000 copies	R4000.00
3	Audio recorder	Data collection process Batteries	Voice recorder 1 @ R1800 Batteries @ R60 of 2x6 packets	R1800.00 R360.00
4	Independent coder	Coding and re-coding of research content	Standard fee 1@ R5500	R5500.00
5	Binding	Binding of final document	Spiral binding @ R130 per copy x 5 Final report binding @ R500 per copy x 5	R650.00 R2500.00
6	PEP	Covid Protocol	Water, Sanitizer, face shields and box tissue	R700.00
7	Language Editor	Language editor (professional editor) Proof reading of Proposal Proof reading of final copy	65 pages @ R30 page 120 pages @ R30 page	R1950.00 R3600.00
8	Consumables	For the storage of information and for storing consent forms and other letters for safe keeping	Memory Sticks 8GB x 2 External hard drive 8GB x 2 30 Envelops @ R8 Writing Pens @ R10 x 10 Note Pads @ R36 x 2 Highlighters @ R20 x 4 Pencils @ R2.50 x 10	R450.00 R2800.00 R240 R100 R72.00 R80.00 R25.00

	TOTAL COST	 <small>University of Venda Creating Future Leaders</small>	R35 309.60
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9. APPENDIX A: MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENT: SEMI-STRUCTURED FACE TO FACE INTERVIEW GUIDE :

THE EFFECTS OF LOSS ON LEARNERS WHO HAVE UNDERGONE THE LOSS OF A PARENT AT COLLINS CHABANE MUNICIPALITY SHOOLS.

Information shared during this interview will be kept confidential and will not be published it will only be used for this research. The respondents' names will not be published.

Age: _____

Gender: _____



Grade : _____

Category: Students

The main question: To explore the experiences of learners who have undergone the loss of a parent at Collins Chabane Municipality Schools.

Opening question: How Old were you when you lost your parent?

Probing questions: How has it been that your parent is no longer around, what challenges have you experienced?

Who do you stay with?

Which Parent passed away?

Are you staying with you Mother/ Fathers side?

How is your relation with the remaining parent?

How was your relationship with the parent that passed away?

Did you attend counseling after your parents passing?

How are your needs meet?

What are the challenges that you face without a parent?

How is your school performance?

How has your loss affected your school performance?

How do you feel when your friends talk about their parents?


Do you receive support from school?

10. APPENDIX B: INFORMATION SHEET

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study : The psychological experiences of learners who have undergone the loss of a parent at Collins Chabane municipality schools.

Principal Investigator/s/ researcher

 : (Dr. M. Mashaba, MA in Psychology)

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s

: (Dr D.M Mushwana, PHD)

: (Dr K.E Mphephu, PHD)

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study: The aim of the study is to explore the experiences of learners who have undergone the loss of a parent at Collins Chabane Municipality Schools.

Outline of the Procedures: *(The participants are expected to be honour the appointment and be free to talk to the researcher, The school will provide the researcher with a quiet and confidential space where the interview will be conducted, the interview will be held at the school, Learners who have lost a parent at Collins Chabane municipality who are between 13 and 19 years old. The excluded will be learners who does not give consent or haven't experienced the loss of a parent, the researcher will explain the tools and measurement outcomes, there will not be any follow-ups, no treatment, will need 45 Minutes -1 hour of the participant's time, The participants are expected to be open and answer the researchers questions, participants will be identified by the school principal and educators and will be interviewed randomly)*

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant: No physical risk to the participants but the research can be emotional and if the participant needs further intervention they will be referred for emotional support.

Benefits: The study will explore the challenges experienced by the learners who have undergone the loss of a parent at Collins ChabaneMunicipality schools.

Reason/s why the Participant May Be Withdrawn from the Study: Withdrawal from the study at any time will be allowed due to any reason.

Remuneration: There will be no monetary benefit.

Costs of the Study: Participants will not be responsible for any cost towards the study.

Confidentiality: Participants and the data gathered from them must be kept anonymous unless they give their full consent. No names must be used. The researcher must protect the participants' right to privacy by means of confidentiality. The participants' real names will not be used on the questionnaires and during report writing to ensure confidentiality.

Research-related Injury: Because this is a sensitive topic when the participant needs emotional support after the research it will be arranged for them.

Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:

Please contact the researcher Ms R Mashaba (073 295 9448). My supervisor Dr D.M Mushwana (015 962 8356) or the University Research Ethics Committee Secretariat on 015 962 9058. Complaints can be reported to the Director: Research and Innovation, Prof GE Ekosse on 015 962 8313 or Georges Ivo.Ekosse@univen.ac.za

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

11. APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, (*Rirhandzo Mashaba*), about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: FHS/22/PSYCH/14/0710.
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (*Participant Letter of 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 researcher.
- 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 the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

Full Name of Participant Date Time Signature

I,

(*RirhandzoMashaba*) herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully

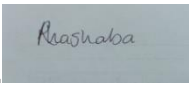
Informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Full Name of Researcher

RirhandzoMashaba

Date.....

Signature.....



Full Name of Witness (If applicable)

.....

Date

Signature.....

Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)

.....

Date.....

Signature.....

12. APPENDIX D: ASSENT FORM

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPERIENCES OF LEARNERS WHO HAVE UNDERGONE THE LOSS OF A PARENT AT COLLINS CHABANE MUNICIPALITY SCHOOLS.

Researcher : Rirhandzo Mashaba

Qualification : Masters of Psychology

Supervisor : Dr D.M Mushwana

Co-Supervisor : Dr K.E Mphephu

Purpose of the study: The aim of the study is to explore the psychological experiences of learners who have undergone the loss of a parent at Collins Chabane Municipality schools.

- ❖ To explore the challenges experienced by the learners who have undergone the loss of a parent at Collins Chabane local Municipality schools.
- ❖ Explore effects of loss of a parent on learners at Collins Chabane Municipality schools.
- ❖ To identify if schools have protocols written down to assist learners after a loss of a parent.

Informed assent and Declaration of Participation

I declare that I will voluntarily participate in the research sessions that have been explained to me and that I will cooperate by sharing my experiences and be honest at all times. I understand that the program is part of a research project and that my information will be treated with confidentiality and published anonymously for the research purposes. These publications will be made available to the University of Venda, the relevant Department of Education and the High school that I attend.

The number of sessions will depend on the disclosure process. I understand that MsMashaba will conduct the interviews at school during school hours. Interviews will take place over a period of four to six weeks, during school hours. If I am referred to an identified professional for therapeutic intervention, I hereby give MsMashaba permission to share relevant feedback regarding my case with that professional. There are no known medical risks or discomforts associated with this research, although I understand that I may experience fatigue and/or stress when talking about experiences that involve my loss. I understand that my remaining parent / guardian / school principal will not be present during the interviews but that I can call for him or her at any time that I want to. I understand that the interview will be audio-taped for the purpose of the research only. The data gathered for research will be stored in a safe place at the University of Venda for fifteen (15) years and then destroyed. I agree to attend the full research program, yet understand that my participation in the research is voluntary, and that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research / interview at any time.

Signed at _____ on this _____ day of _____ 2021.

Signature Participant _____

Signature Researcher _____

13. APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM

The purpose of the study aims to explore the experiences of learners who have undergone the loss of a parent at Collins Chabane Municipality schools.

I.....(Full names) hereby willingly in volunteer to participate in the University of Venda – led study entitled **“THE EXPERIENCES OF LEARNERS WHO HAVE UNDERGONE THE LOSS OF A PARENT AT COLLINS CHABANE MUNICIPALITY SCHOOLS”**.

I have read and understood the provided information sheet and understand that any information that I may give will not be linked to my personal identity.

I, therefore, consent to be interviewed, to enable the research team to collect information during the study.

.....

Signature (Participant)

.....

Date

.....

Interviewer’s Signature

.....

Date

If verbal consent is being given, the respondent will have had the information sheet read to him/her by the researcher and the interviewer will sign in the presence of a witness.

.....

.....

Signature (interviewer)



Date

.....

.....

Signature (Witness)

Date

14. APPENDIX F: LETTERS OF CORRESPONDENCES

**TO: Whom it may concern
Department of Education**

**FROM: DR F.J. Takalani
HOD: Department of Psychology**

DATE:

Re: Motivation Letter for RirhandzoMashaba (Masters Student) to conduct a study in Collins Chabane Municipality schools.

RirhandzoMashaba is a Masters Student at the University of Venda. She has presented her proposal titled“**THE EFFECTS OF LOSS ON LEARNERS WHO UNDERGONE THE LOSS OF A PARENT AT COLLINS CHABANE MUNICIPALITY SHOOLS**” and the proposal was approved and Ethical Clearance has been granted to her by The University of Venda Research Ethics Committee.

It is very vital for her to conduct this study. Participation in this study is voluntary and participants will be allowed to withdraw at any time if they feel like it. The purpose of the study is for academic qualification attainment (Masters). The study is a very unique one since it has not been conducted in the Collins Chabane Municipality before (See attached detailed proposal to attest to my testimony).

We will furnish you with further information at your request.

Thanking you in anticipation

.....

.....

Promoter Signature

Date

Dr MD Mushwana

Senior Lecturer: (Univen)

15. APPENDIX G: LETTER OF PERMISSION

University of Venda
Private Bag X5050
Thohoyandou
0950

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO ACCESS INFORMATION FROM THE LEARNERS WHO LOST A PARENT AT COLLIN'S CHABANE MUNICIPALITY SCHOOLS.

My name is **Ms. MASHABA RIRHANDZO**, a Masters student at the University of Venda currently conducting a research study titled "**THE EFFECTS OF LOSS ON LEARNERS WHO UNDERGONE THE LOSS OF A PARENT AT COLLINS CHABANE MUNICIPALITY SCHOOLS**". The purpose of the study is to explore the psychological effects on learners who experienced the loss of a parent and to identify if the education system has measures or guidelines that are put in place to assist the learners during that time when the incident happens and support offered by the school. The study will determine the effects and coping mechanisms for learners who have undergone the loss of the parent; how it affects them socially and their academic performance.

The study will involve the following:

- ❖ Seeking permission from the participants to conduct the study and giving all the information to the participants regarding the aim of the study before interviewing them individually.
- ❖ All the information gathered in this study will be kept strictly confidential, and no information will be used for purposes other than intended for this study.
- ❖ A participant's decision to be part of the study will be voluntary and withdrawal from the study at any time will be allowed.
- ❖ Anonymity will be assured by not taking the names of the participants.
- ❖ The ethical clearance letter from the University of Venda will be submitted.



I trust that my request will be granted. Your assistance in facilitating the research will be highly appreciated.

Thank you in advance

Sincerely

Rirhandzo Mashaba

(Student number: 11532951, Email: Rirhandzo@yahoo.com, Cell: 073 295 9448)

25 January 2024

TO WHO IT MAY CONCERN

Sir/Madam

This serves to confirm that I have proofread R Mashaba's dissertation titled **"THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPERIENCES OF LEARNERS WHO HAVE UNDERGONE THE LOSS OF A PARENT AT COLLINS CHABANI MUNICIPALITY SCHOOLS"**

The proof-reading entailed editing some parts of the document; for example, to avoid wordiness, redundancy, sub-dividing sentences, and so on, to enhance the readability of the document.

However, I have not tampered with the content of the document, except where this constituted repetition or made the document confusing.

Sincerely



.....
Mr. F. Mahori

Lecturer: Department of English, Media Studies and Linguistics



The psychological experiences is learners who have undergone the loss of a parent at Collins chabane municipality schools

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by Rirhandzo Mashaba

Submission date: 13-Feb-2024 12:02AM (UTC+0200)

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NAME OF RESEARCHER/INVESTIGATOR:

Ms R Mashaba

STUDENT NO:

11532951

PROJECT TITLE: Experiences of learners who have undergone the loss of a parent at Collins Chabane municipality schools.

ETHICAL CLEARANCE NO: FHS/22/PSYCH/14/0710

SUPERVISORS/ CO-RESEARCHERS/ CO-INVESTIGATORS

NAME	INSTITUTION & DEPARTMENT	ROLE
Dr MD Mushwana	UNIVEN, Psychology	Supervisor
Mrs KE Mphephu	UNIVEN, Psychology	Co - Supervisor
Ms R Mashaba	UNIVEN, Psychology	Investigator – Student

Type: Masters Research

Risk: Minimal risk to humans, animals, or environment (Category 2)

Approval Period: October 2022 – October 2024

The Research Ethics Social Sciences Committee (RESSC) hereby approves your project as indicated above.

General Conditions

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following.

- The project leader (principal investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the REC:
 - Annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project
 - Within 48hrs in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
 - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the REC. Would there be deviated from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date; a new application must be made to the REC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the REC retains the right to:
 - Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project,
 - To ask further questions; Seek additional information; Require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
 - withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - Any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected.
 - It becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the REC or that information has been false or misrepresented.
 - The required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,
 - New institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions A it necessary

ISSUED BY:

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA, RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Date Considered: August 2022

Name of the RESSC Chairperson of the Committee: Prof TS Mashau

Signature

