

**FATHER ABSENCE: PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPERIENCES
OF BLACK RURAL ADOLESCENTS**

BY

MELIDAH SEKGENA MAGANE

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS (PSYCHOLOGY)

In the

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

At the

University of Pretoria

July 2000



TABLE OF CONTENT

SUMMARY	IX
OPSOMMING	XI
CHAPTER 1	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT	1
1.2 THE AIM OF THE STUDY	2
1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY	3
1.4 PREVIEW OF THE STUDY	4
CHAPTER 2	6
LITERATURE REVIEW	6
2.1 INTRODUCTION	6
2.2 SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT	6
2.2.1 DIVISION OF LAND.....	6
2.2.2 MIGRANT LABOUR	7
2.2.3 EDUCATION	8
2.2.4 SELF-ESTEEM.....	9
2.3 THE RURAL CONTEXT	10
2.3.1 INTRODUCTION	10
2.3.2 PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF A RURAL VILLAGE	10
2.3.3 WAYS OF SURVIVAL	10
2.3.4 THE ROLE OF THE EXTENDED FAMILY	11
2.3.5 FARMING.....	12
2.3.6 GENDER CATEGORISATION	14
2.4 PERSPECTIVES ON ADOLESCENCE	15

2.4.1	INTRODUCTION	15
2.4.2	THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ADOLESCENCE.....	15
2.4.3	NEEDS RELATED TO SELF-ESTEEM DURING ADOLESCENCE	18
2.4.4	SOCIAL FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE ADOLESCENTS' BEHAVIOUR.....	19
2.5	THE ROLE OF THE FATHER IN THE FAMILY	20
2.6	REASONS FOR FATHER ABSENCE	22
2.6.1	INTRODUCTION	22
2.6.2	DESERTION AND SEPARATION	22
2.6.3	DIVORCE	23
2.6.3.1	<i>Facets of divorce</i>	23
2.6.3.2	<i>Reasons for divorce</i>	24
2.6.3.3	<i>The effects of divorce on adolescents</i>	26
2.6.4	UNWED MOTHERS	26
2.6.5	TEENAGE PREGNANCIES	27
2.6.5.1	<i>Psychological factors</i>	27
2.6.5.2	<i>Physiological factors</i>	27
2.6.5.3	<i>Socio-economic factors</i>	27
2.6.5.4	<i>Cognitive factors</i>	28
2.6.5.5	<i>Single mothers</i>	28
2.7	THE IMPACT OF FATHER ABSENCE ON THE LIFE EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN	28
2.7.1	LOSS OF RESOURCES.....	29
2.7.1.1	<i>Loss of economic resources</i>	29
2.7.1.2	<i>The loss of parental resources</i>	30
2.7.1.3	<i>Loss of community resources</i>	31
2.7.2	INTERPERSONAL ADJUSTMENT	33
2.7.2.1	<i>Pro-social goal setting</i>	33
2.7.2.2	<i>Adjustment in terms of gender</i>	33
2.7.2.3	<i>Social isolation</i>	34
2.7.3	MOTIVATION AND FUTURE EXPECTATIONS.....	34
2.7.4	MORALITY	35
2.7.5	SELF-CONCEPT.....	36
2.7.6	EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES	37
2.7.6.1	<i>Abandonment</i>	37
2.7.6.2	<i>Anger and resentment</i>	37

2.7.6.3	<i>Fear of marriage failure</i>	38
2.7.6.4	<i>Guilt feelings</i>	38
2.7.7	POSITIVE EXPERIENCES IN THE CONTEXT OF FATHER ABSENCE	38
2.8	CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF THE SELECTED POPULATION	40
2.8.1	MARRIAGE	40
2.8.1.1	<i>The process of marriage</i>	40
2.8.1.2	<i>Types of marriages</i>	41
2.8.1.3	<i>Life after marriage</i>	43
2.8.2	INDIGENOUS WAYS OF BIRTH CONTROL	44
2.8.3	UNMARRIED WOMEN AND SINGLE MOTHERS	45
2.8.4	VIEWS ABOUT MEN AND WOMEN	46
2.8.4.1	<i>Men</i>	46
2.8.4.2	<i>Women</i>	47
2.8.5	VIEWS ABOUT CHILDREN	49
2.8.5.1	<i>Girls</i>	49
2.8.5.2	<i>Boys</i>	50
2.8.6	DISCIPLINE	51
2.8.7	EDUCATION	51
2.8.8	COMMUNALISM.....	52
2.8.9	WITCHCRAFT.....	52
2.8.10	RELIGION	53
2.9	CONCLUSION	54
CHAPTER 3	55
METHOD	55
3.1	INTRODUCTION	55
3.2	RESEARCH DESIGN	55
3.2.1	THE NATURE OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	55
3.2.2	CRITICISM AGAINST THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD	58
3.3	THE PARTICIPANTS	58
3.3.1	IDENTIFICATION AND RECRUITMENT OF THE PARTICIPANTS	58
3.3.2	PROCEDURE.....	59

3.3.3	PROBLEMS IN STUDYING ADOLESCENTS	60
3.4	METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS	60
3.4.1	PERSONAL INTERVIEWS	60
3.4.1.1	<i>The nature of the interviews</i>	60
3.4.1.2	<i>Analysis of interview data</i>	62
3.4.2	PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUES	65
3.4.2.1	<i>Draw-a-Person Test (DAP)</i>	65
3.4.2.2	<i>Kinetic family drawing (KFD)</i>	67
3.5	PILOT STUDY	68
3.6	INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS.....	68
3.7	CREDIBILITY AND STABILITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	68
3.8	CONCLUSION	70
CHAPTER 4	71
RESULTS	71
4.1	INTRODUCTION	71
4.2	FAMILY BACKGROUND.....	71
4.2.1	LOW COHESIVENESS	71
4.2.2	PATERNAL CONTACT	72
4.2.3	UNPLEASANT CONDITIONS AT HOME.....	73
4.2.4	FEELINGS OF NOT BELONGING.....	73
4.2.5	THE ROLE OF THE EXTENDED FAMILY	74
4.3	FINANCIAL SITUATION	74
4.4	SOCIAL SUPPORT.....	75
4.4.1	SUPPORT FROM RELATIVES	75
4.4.2	FRIENDS	75
4.4.3	CHURCH.....	76
4.4.4	SCHOOL.....	76
4.5	PERCEPTIONS ABOUT SCHOOL AND FUTURE GOALS	76

4.6	PERCEPTIONS ABOUT MEN.....	78
4.7	PERCEPTIONS ABOUT MARRIAGE.....	78
4.8	BOYFRIENDS OF THE MOTHER.....	79
4.9	INTERPERSONAL ADJUSTMENT.....	79
4.10	PERCEPTIONS OF THE SELF.....	80
4.11	SEXUAL IDENTITY.....	80
4.12	EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES.....	81
4.12.1	FEELINGS OF HELPLESSNESS AND INSECURITY.....	81
4.12.2	SHAME.....	82
4.12.3	ANGER.....	82
4.12.4	BLAME.....	82
4.12.5	REJECTION/ABANDONMENT.....	83
4.13	CONCLUSION.....	83
	CHAPTER 5.....	84
	INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS.....	84
5.1	INTRODUCTION.....	84
5.2	FAMILY BACKGROUND.....	85
5.3	REASONS FOR FATHER ABSENCE.....	88
5.4	PATERNAL SUPPORT.....	90
5.5	NEED FOR A HOUSE/HOME.....	91
5.6	FINANCIAL SITUATION.....	92
5.7	SOCIAL SUPPORT.....	94
5.8	PERCEPTIONS ABOUT SCHOOL AND FUTURE GOALS.....	94
5.9	INTERPERSONAL ADJUSTMENT.....	96

5.10	PERCEPTION OF SELF.....	97
5.11	SEXUAL IDENTITY.....	99
5.12	PERCEPTIONS ABOUT MEN.....	99
5.13	PERCEPTIONS ABOUT MARRIAGE.....	100
5.14	BOYFRIENDS OF THE MOTHER.....	101
5.15	EMOTIONAL EXPEREINCES.....	102
5.16	CONCLUSION.....	103
CHAPTER 6.....		104
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....		104
6.1	INTRODUCTION.....	104
6.2	SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS.....	104
6.3	EVALUATION OF THE STUDY.....	107
6.3.1	RESEARCH DESIGN.....	107
6.3.2	THE PARTICIPANTS.....	107
6.3.3	METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION.....	108
6.3.4	DATA ANALYSIS.....	109
6.4	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	109
6.4.1	CHILD SUPPORT.....	109
6.4.2	SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORK AND COUNSELLING.....	110
6.4.3	TEENAGE PREGNANCIES.....	111
REFERENCES.....		113

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Prof. J.B Schoeman for his guidance and encouragement throughout this study. Working with him gave me a great experience.

I would also like to thank Mr P Phaahla the principal of the school where I have conducted my research, Mr Mokgišing, Mr T. Leopeng as well as the participants, without them this study would not have been possible.

Lastly I would like to thank my husband, J. Magane, my children Lillian and Godwill as well as their cousin Ivy for supporting me throughout this study. Not forgetting my mother Mankanyane Leutle who took care of my children throughout this study.

SUMMARY

The aim of this study was to describe the psychological experiences of black rural adolescents in the absence of their fathers due to divorce, separation, desertion, unwed childbirth and teenage pregnancy. As far as it could be determined, no study has yet been done in South Africa regarding this topic.

A qualitative research method was selected for this study. The participants consisted of ten adolescents, five boys and five girls from a rural area in the Northern Province. Data was collected by means of personal interviews, Kinetic Family Drawings (KFD) and the Draw A Person test (DAP).

The interviews were tape-recorded and subsequently transcribed. The information was firstly organised and arranged to form a coherent and understandable story. The data was then analysed by means of the analytical comparative method. Themes were identified and related themes were grouped into categories. The information from the DAP and KFD were analysed according to each technique's theoretical framework, and integrated with the themes and categories identified in the interviews.

The following categories were identified: family conditions in which the children lived, which included the role of the extended family; the nature and impact of financial problems; social support; perceptions about school and future goals; interpersonal adjustment, self-concept and sexual identity of the children; their perceptions about men and about marriage, and their views about their mothers getting involved with other men; and emotional reactions. These themes overlapped and influenced one another. The results were interpreted in terms of previous research, the cultural background of the participants and the context of life in rural villages.

Recommendations are made with regard to promoting financial independence from welfare among single mothers, child support, social support and counselling, and dealing with teenage pregnancies.

KEY WORDS

Adolescents

Rural

Father absence

Family conditions

Financial problems

Interpersonal adjustment

Self-concept

Future goals

Emotional reactions

Social support

OPSOMMING

Die doel van die studie was om 'n beskrywing te gee van swart, landelike adolessente se sielkundige belewenisse rakende die afwesigheid van hulle vaders (vanweë egskedding, vervreemding, verlating of ongehude tienerswangerskap). Sover vasgestel kon word, is hierdie onderwerp nog nie vantevore in Suid-Afrika nagevors nie.

'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsmetode is gevolg. Die deelnemers het uit vyf seuns en vyf dogters, afkomstig uit 'n landelike omgewing in die Noordelike Provinsie, bestaan. Persoonlike onderhoude, Kinetiese Gesinstekeninge (KGT) en die Teken-'n-Mens toets (TMT) is gebruik om data in te samel.

Bandopnames is van die onderhoude gemaak en dit is daarna transkribeer. Die informasie is eerstens herorganiseer om 'n samehangende verhaal uit te maak. Die data is daarna aan die hand van die analities-vergelykende metode ontleed. Temas is geïdentifiseer en verbandhoudende temas is in kategorieë groepeer. Die inligting wat deur middel van die KGT en TMT bekom is, is aan die hand van die teoretiese rasionaal van hierdie tegnieke ontleed en die resultate hiervan is met die kategorieë en temas wat uit die onderhoude identifiseer is, geïntegreer.

Die volgende kategorieë is geïdentifiseer: die gesinsomstandighede van die kinders, insluitende die rol van die uitgebreide gesin; die aard en impak van finansiële probleme; sosiale ondersteuning; opvattinge oor skool en doelwitte vir die toekoms; hulle opvattinge oor mans, die huwelik en verhoudings van hulle moeders met ander mans; interpersoonlike aanpassing, self-konsep en geslagsidentiteit van die kinders; en emosionele reaksies. Hierdie temas het met mekaar oorvleuel en mekaar beïnvloed. Die resultate is interpreteer in terme van vorige navorsing, die kulturele agtergrond van die deelnemers en die konteks van lewensomstandighede in 'n landelike stat.

Aanbevelings is gemaak oor hoe enkel-moeders aangemoedig kan word om finansiële onafhanklik te wees van bystand uit welsynsfondse, asook aanbevelings oor kinderonderhoud, sosiale ondersteuning en berading, en die hanterig van tiener-swangerskappe.

KERNWOORDE

Adolesente

Landelik

Vader-afwesigheid

Gesinsomstandighede

Finansiële probleme

Interpersoonlike aanpassing

Selfkonsep

Toekomsdoelwitte

Emosionele reaksies

Sosiale ondersteuning