

Exploring the Constructions of Masculinity of Unemployed Young Black Men from Mamelodi

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PSYC7015A: Research Report

Plagiarism Declaration

I, Dineo Naomi-Beth Sibanyoni, declare that this research is my own unaided work. It is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Community-based Counselling Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.



Dineo Naomi-Beth Sibanyoni

Signed on the 11th of March 2024 in Mooikloof, Pretoria East

Acknowledgments

Shema Yisrael Adonai Elohaynu, Adonai Echad.

Ekwa O Israel. Morena Modimo wa rena, Morena ke o tee

שמע ישראל. ה' הוא אלוהינו, ה' הוא אחד

First and foremost, giving honour to God Almighty for being an ever-present support throughout the years that have gotten me to this moment. All blessings are due to Him.

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Abstract

Although masculinity has been widely explored internationally and in local academic research, there are still gaps in understanding the constructions of masculinity with regards to young men's experiences of unemployment in impoverished areas. This research explores constructions of masculinity among young unemployed black men living in the township of Mamelodi, in Gauteng. The particular focus is on understanding their perceptions of employment and the provider role within their conceptualisations of hegemonic masculinity. With this understanding, their ideas around how these constructions obstruct or enhance their psychosocial life experiences can be better understood. The research used qualitative research design to yield more rich and detailed data. Purposive and snowball sampling methods were utilised to recruit eight participants to share their experiences. The participants were young unemployed black men between the ages of 18 and 35 years of age, making up the criteria needed to make up the sample. The theoretical framework that the study uses to support and understand the phenomena was the social constructionist view of masculinity. The data collecting method was semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis was then used to analyse the data. The main themes identified in the analysis were Proactivity, Dreams and Hopes, Unemployment, Masculinity and Culture, and Obstacles and Persistence. The findings indicated that the experience of being a young unemployed black male has an impact on how these men see themselves in relation to the social expectations of men fulfilling the provider role in their environment. This was seen to also influence their psychosocial lives. Through the findings, an exploration of the resistance to show full expressions of emotions that occur with this particular group of people can also be observed.

Keywords: black men, experiences, Mamelodi, masculinity, social constructions, unemployment

List of Abbreviations

Covid-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CBD	Central Business District
COGTA	Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
CWP	Community Work Programme
EMS	Economic and Management Sciences
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
PEP	Public Employment Programme
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
UIF	Unemployment Insurance Fund

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This research report explores how young black South African men understand their masculine role in relation to their employment status. This chapter introduces the study's focus on how men's constructions of race, age and employment status in the township of Mamelodi, South Africa, are related to and inform their ideas of masculinity, according to a social constructionist view.

1.2. Rationale

There is a growing body of research on masculinities in South Africa and it is currently a popular topic of interest across many disciplines. This is especially true in the field of critical masculinity studies or critical men's studies (Shefer et al., 2010). The study of masculinity has been extensively researched in relation to violence, 'toxic' masculinity and risk-taking in young South African boys (Elliot, 2003; Reardon & Govender, 2013; Hamlall, 2018; Kumalo & Gama, 2018; Cann et al., 2020; Mshweshwe, 2020). With regards to masculinity and unemployment, there has been some research in more well-known urban areas, such as Johannesburg (Ratele, 2008; Hadebe, 2010; Ratele, 2017). However, there is little research on masculinity and unemployment in impoverished townships, such as Mamelodi. Most of the research available also uses samples of high-school students or university students but does not explore masculinity in young men who have been unable to find work. The research contributes by expanding and generating further knowledge about the constructions young unemployed black men living in Mamelodi have.

A substantial amount of research has been done in the areas of unemployment and its impact on the psychosocial wellbeing of men, particularly with regards to stress and depression (Bartley, 1994; Eisenberg & Lazarsfeld, 1938; Novo, et al., 2001). However, scholars have researched this phenomenon with regards to families, communities, the state, religious affiliations and health facilities (Artazcoz et al., 2004), without taking into consideration men's social identities and the discourses around men and the provider role. The role of the masculine social identity has been neglected in psychological studies that look at the extent to which the psyche becomes compromised when a man faces unemployment and the implications of this on their social behaviour. Therefore, it becomes normalised that men need to work in order to

remain mentally healthy (Artazcoz et al., 2004). What is needed is more research that explores the link between the social meanings of work and how these impede the psychological and social life experiences of men.

1.3. Aims of the Study

The study explores how young black men construct their masculine identity, as well as how they position themselves in relation to other masculine identities through their experience of being unemployed in the township of Mamelodi in Pretoria. This research aims to qualitatively explore the effects of economic hardship on constructions of masculinity and foreground underlying and often unnoticed factors that contribute to the understanding of masculinity. The research is specifically interested in socio-economic transformation processes and their effects on the traditional male breadwinner role. Men are not only recipients of social changes but they also react, resist and respond to changes and their identities transform according to the changing socio-economic contexts. This research focuses on masculinities during economic hardship. It is concerned with how young unemployed black South African men construct their masculine identities when they are deprived of employment, given that work has been a historically defining aspect of their manhood. This focus was seen as valuable in being able to provide an expanded view on the experiences of these masculinities that look at a specific population of young black men.

Research Objectives

With this focus, the following objectives were of interest:

1. To understand the experiences of young black men in Mamelodi who are currently unemployed.
2. To explore men's constructions of employment and the provider role and how those constructions obstruct and/or enhance their psychosocial life experiences during employment.

1.4. Background to the Study

1.4.1 Masculinities in South Africa

It is widely recognised that there is no single way to being male or masculine (Meyer, 2020). In South African gender research, hegemonic masculinity as a concept is widely used. It started

in the early 1990s with Raewyn Connell's theoretical work on hegemonic masculinities (Morrell et al., 2012). The use of the word also appeared in academia and political areas, in activism and also among areas of class and race (Morrell et al., 2012). Gender scholars have seen the need to look at the fact that men were also subject to the homogenising plots of the influences of culture and politics. Therefore, there is a need to move the focus on radical feminist practice to the construction of masculine identity (Viljoen, 2008). Hegemonic masculinity not only oppresses women, but also silences other masculinities, positioning other masculinities in levels according to their relation to itself (Morrell et al., 2012).

It is seen that there exists a population of men that challenge and resist the dominant notions of hegemonic masculinity (Langa, 2017). As masculinities are responding to social change, hegemonic forms of masculinity are being contested (Buiten & Naidoo, 2013). In a South African study on fatherhood, one participant saw nothing wrong with men crying, seeing it rather as healthy, which goes against hegemonic perspectives that men should be without emotion (Langa, 2017). The men also expressed the need for paternal love, attention and care, as well as found comfort in being open with their moms and being able to self-disclose with them, which is also alternative to dominant masculinity (Langa, 2017). Some defy the dominant perceptions of South African men being absent fathers by being present in their children's lives and supporting their partners, which show a paradigm shift with how young men were redefining and constructing a different kind of masculinity (Langa, 2017).

Substantial work in South Africa has focused on hegemonic masculinity and male violence (Morrell et al., 2012). Male sexualities have been identified as problematic, violent and irresponsible, and as a result, an advocacy is made that targets constructing a more equitable and responsible vision of sexuality (Buiten & Naidoo, 2013). Some men identify with what does not fall under hegemonic masculinity such as being hybrid men that combine rural and urban African images with western culture, or gay men who have been subjected to judgements and homophobia (Elliott, 2003). Some young South African men are breaking away from traditional constructions of masculinity that do not serve them and living alternative ways of being a man that make them feel comfortable (Langa, 2017).

Masculinities respond to wider social processes including responses to how historical patriarchies are challenged through social change (Buiten & Naidoo, 2013). Formulations of masculinity are rooted in tradition, culture and custom, and are also attached to power dynamics and challenged meanings (Kumalo & Gama, 2018). They are historically and contextually specific therefore an understanding of local texts concerning masculinity is necessary (Shefer et. al, 2010). However, masculinity studies mostly reflect the experiences of Western societies,

which then almost erase the experiences of those men that do not live in Western societies (Mfecane, 2016). These theories cannot, therefore, be universally applicable or applied critically in different contexts.

1.4.2 Previous Research on Masculinity

Previous research on masculinity includes the work of James Messerschmidt (2000), an influential scholar in masculinity studies, who noted that subordinated boys are rarely discussed in the literature on violence. His article displays the interrelationship between in-school bullying, embodiment, reflexivity, and the social construction of hegemonic and dominant masculinities through aid of adolescent sexual violence (Messerschmidt, 2000). Utsa Mukherjee conducted a qualitative study using British Indian boys to unpack the ways notions of young masculinities are negotiated within children's leisure (Mukherjee, 2020). It is argued that leisure-based young masculinities are made within children's inter-, parent-child and intra-, child-child, and generational relationships in the context of leisure (Mukherjee, 2020).

Katarzyna Wojnicka's (2020) research focused on how age shapes attitudes to non-heterosexuality among migrant men and boys living in Germany and Sweden. The focus was on the differing perceptions and narratives identified regarding sexual diversity. Wojnicka (2020) placed an emphasis on analysing men's masculinities through an intersectional lens, with a specific focus on age. Age, along with other factors such as social class, ethnicity, and citizenship, situates people in certain positions in gender hierarchies and has a huge influence on their masculine practices and narratives (Wojnicka, 2020).

Cinthia Torres Toledo and Marilia Pinto de Carvalho (2018) looked at how the collective conceptions of peer groups influence the school engagement of Brazilian boys. They postulated that there is a hierarchisation process among boys that proves the existence of a collective idea of masculinity that opposes school engagement (Toledo & Carvalho, 2018). Steve Roberts and Karla Elliott (2020) bring up that "men in the margins" are easily and simplistically depicted as regressive and violent as a response to their marginalisation. They argue that privileged men and boys are held up by Critical Studies of Men and Masculinities scholars as archetypes of progressive change (Roberts & Elliott, 2020). These characterisations of working-class boys and men as regressive and patriarchal shadows the ability to address issues such as misogyny, violence and homophobia and overlooks the possibility for transformation in these marginalised communities (Roberts & Elliott, 2020). Finally, Amrita De (2020) unpacked the gendered nature and type of leadership of neoliberal right-wing populist governance in India and the United States has on young masculinities.

Viljoen (2008) mentions the research around new masculinity and metrosexuality as important, as this challenges the traditional western assumptions about physical and psychological self-interest being only important to women. Metrosexuality shows the existence of the modern, urban man who embraces self-beautification and self-care, which is an important signifier in redefining, as well as holding, multiple definitions of masculine identity (Viljoen, 2008). Morrell (1997) in Elliott (2003) and Morrell (1998) brought about the concept of the new man who moves away from sexual jokes, violence and sport, and is more caring, introspective, involved in domestic tasks, and outspoken on women's rights. Masculinities are constructed as a process, an ongoing continuous project of meaning-making as more constructions of it are reproduced and revised (Buiten & Naidoo, 2013).

1.4.3 Masculinities in Mamelodi

Mamelodi is a township northeast of Pretoria, Gauteng, that was established under the apartheid government. The population of Mamelodi is estimated at close to one million people (Blokland, 2014). Many of the residents of Mamelodi go out to the city to work during the day, and return to the township in the night (Blokland, 2014). In townships like these, access to service delivery, health services and basic needs in general, is poor (Blokland, 2014). There are very few resources that exist, even currently, with major resources only being available in the city centre of Pretoria. This requires that the people living in Mamelodi travel long and costly distances to be able to gain access to them (Blokland, 2014). The settlement patterns in Tshwane are characterised by the placement of low-income residential areas removed from economic opportunities and vital social amenities (Ramafamba & Meors, 2012). High unemployment affects men's behaviours and identities variously (Qambela, 2021). Men's responsibility as providers remains strong despite the growing economic insecurity that increasingly exposes men to unemployment (Gonalons-Pons & Gangl, 2021). There is an attachment and pressure to fulfil male breadwinner norms. Social status and social identity are core to the experience of men's unemployment (Gonalons-Pons & Gangl, 2021).

This research hopes to be of benefit to readers as it furthers our understanding of different masculinities in South Africa, and most importantly, how masculinity is constructed by unemployed young black men living in Mamelodi, Gauteng. It is also beneficial in giving some insight into the ways unemployed black men end up being unemployed, and how they feel about the impact of their unemployment on their masculine identity. The research helps us become aware of factors to take into consideration when working with this group, with these particular characteristics in this context. Lastly, this research helps us understand the patterns

of unemployment that remain an important issue in South Africa today, and these may help redefine these conceptualisations of masculinity and aid in putting more emphasis on, and acknowledgement of, the contextual factors involved with these participants.

1.1.4 Structure of the Research Report

Chapter 1 has introduced the focus and aims of the study. It outlines how the research intends to explore how unemployed black men from Mamelodi construct their masculine identities in relation to their employment status, and how they position themselves with regard to hegemonic masculinities in South Africa.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of literature, which includes the established understandings and studies of masculinity and more particularly, South African masculinities. This chapter provides a brief overview of literature on the definitions of masculinities, as well as some of the historical developments of understanding masculinities within the South African context. It also introduces some literature related to masculinity and unemployment, as well as the theoretical framework used to inform this study.

Following this, Chapter 3 discusses the method and process of the research, including the research aims and questions, as well as the procedures the research undertook and how the data were collected and analysed.

Chapter 4 introduces the main findings of the study together with the analysis and discussion of the findings.

Finally, Chapter 5 concludes the research report, offering an evaluation of the contribution and implications of the study and summarising the key findings.

1.1.5 Conclusion

There has been a growing body of research on the effects of unemployment on the psychosocial wellbeing of men, as well as on masculinity. However, this chapter establishes that limited research has a focus on the relationship between young unemployed black men in the township of Mamelodi and their experiences of masculinity, and outlines this as the topic of interest in this study. This is a meaningful endeavour, given the challenging socio-economic climate and limited prospects of employment in South Africa. This perspective potentially adds to the existing body of knowledge on the constructions of masculinity. The next chapter outlines existing literature in this area in order to situate the contributions of this research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review attempts to define masculinity, while acknowledging it as a complex construct that is in a state of constant change. A comparison between a single, dominant masculinity and the existence of plural masculinities is further discussed. The literature then extends on hegemonic masculinity, making sense of the concept and its position in the broader picture of masculinity. The construction of masculinities among boys and men in South Africa, in the past and present, is then reviewed. This literature review explores the relationship between masculinity and unemployment in South Africa, and the effects each concept has on the other. A review of the impact and effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the economy and unemployment rate of South Africa is covered. Finally, the chapter outlines the central tenets of social constructionism as a theoretical framework, which is used to better explain the findings, and respond to the aims of the research.

2.2 Masculinity - Attempting a Definition

In defining masculinity, Blackbeard and Lindegger (2007) state that “masculinities were constructed through multiple and contradictory self-narratives, consciously and unconsciously”. Berger et al. (1995, p.2) in Viljoen (2008) state that “masculinity is a vexed term, variously inflected, multiply defined, not limited to straightforward description of maleness”. It is subject to social changes that define and re-define society (Kumalo & Gama, 2018). This means that masculinity can mean many things and has multiple definitions attached to it. It is limitless in its meaning and cannot be fit into one structured definition. It is seen here that masculinity is difficult to define as it contains various meanings that are in a constant flux and that surpass the most basic understanding of the biological attributes of a man (Ratele, 2008). The essence of masculinity is performed through the identity that men claim by means of continuous everyday language and practice. This then needed to be verified, demonstrated, and played out to an audience which are then perpetuated and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means (Buiten & Naidoo, 2013; Ratele, 2008; Viljoen, 2008). It is through continuous feedback and reinforcement that masculinity is practiced and further perpetuated. Connell (2020, p.7) maps masculinity largely through relationships. This includes the relationship along childhood and adulthood; between adults and children; between boys and

girls; among groups of boys, in the everyday living in institutions, peer groups and other aspects of life (Cann et al., 2020; Ratele, 2008).

There are six norms used to encapsulate masculinity namely, the sexuality norm, the toughness norm, the independence norm, status norm, responsibility norm and the homophobia norm, whether successfully or unsuccessfully performed, or alternatively represented. For Luyt (2012) and Reardon and Govender (2013), the sexuality norm, captures the importance of men's sexuality, where "real" men are sexually assertive and objectify sex. Additionally, this includes the need to not involve emotions and the sexual objectification of women, like referring to women as "cherry" or "chick". Men are expected to be knowledgeable on how to initiate sexual activity and their sexual behaviour extends to before, during and after the sexual act (Luyt, 2012; Reardon & Govender, 2013). The toughness norm captures the importance of emotional containment, as not expressing pain or fear but remaining level-headed and rational (Luyt, 2012; Reardon & Govender, 2013). This norm dictates that men should be physically tough and be ready to engage in physical violence (Luyt, 2012; Reardon & Govender, 2013). Luyt (2012) and Reardon and Govender (2013) describe the independence norm as men who are determined, competitive, assertive, dominating, self-confident, self-motivated, and take initiatives and risks. Status norm symbolises material means and requires the respect of others and stating that "real" men have successful careers and lifestyles (Luyt, 2012; Reardon & Govender, 2013). Responsibility norm is defined by "real" men being dependable and dutiful towards their families, friends and society and are expected to be accountable for their actions (Luyt, 2012; Reardon & Govender, 2013). The homophobia norm describes the importance of overtly avoiding, ostracising and perpetrating violence against other men or behaviours that seem "gay" (Luyt, 2012; Reardon & Govender, 2013). There are claims that homophobia is the most policing agent of masculinity and is the source of "orthodox" masculinities that reject expressions of femininity in men and demand displays of heterosexuality (Anderson, 2010). The fear of being perceived as gay, and therefore not being a real man, keeps men exaggerating all the traditional rules of masculinity (Ratele, 2013). From the norms described, it appears that unemployment may affect men in various ways. To the "real man", unemployment may make them feel emasculated and would take away their sense of manhood. This relates to one of the aims of the current study, which would add onto the understanding of how men come to understand and construct masculinity.

In South Africa, masculinity relies on the reproductions of an "unchanging" culture which perpetuate and maintain dominant notions of masculinity involving violence, virility and sexual prowess (Hadebe, 2010; Hamlall, 2018; Kumalo & Gama, 2018; Mshweshwe, 2020).

They cling on to the ways of what it means to be a man in order to protect their masculinity, and in this way, issues of masculinity and culture are never questioned (Hadebe, 2010). Particularly in the Xhosa tradition, masculinity is conceptualised as a traditionally circumcised person (Mfecane, 2016). However, definitions of masculinity in the South African context are being contested, are contradictory and have varied over time (Kumalo & Gama, 2018). This is seen in Morrell's (2001) argument that in the South African context, men respond in different ways to current changing expectations placed on men, including being defensive, accommodating or responsive (Hadebe, 2010). Men's responses to change have been influenced by the shifts in gendered or power relations in South Africa, and in particular, the changing nature of the socio-historical political context (Hadebe, 2010; Hamlall, 2018; Levon et al., 2017). Since 1994, there have been political and social changes in gender relations with greater fluidity in gender identities where there are many men who adopt masculinities that oppose hegemonic practices (Hamlall, 2018; Levon et al., 2017). Ratele (2013) states that "the idea of masculinity is not merely biological outside of time. It is not simply given with men's bodies, male genes or hormones, or possession of a penis". It is then seen that masculinity is something that people achieve through establishing acts of manliness, which are then socially read within a particular historical context (Kumalo & Gama, 2018; Ratele, 2017). Mfecane (2016) states that masculinity is the set of practices that are associated with being a real man and that current theories of masculinity adopt a social constructionist paradigm. It speaks to the fact that masculinity is not just biological but is also achieved through acts of manhood which are seen through social actions that represent manliness in a specific time (Mfecane, 2016).

In South Africa, Ratele et al. (2010) conducted a qualitative study discussing how the gendered activities that boys engaged in coincide with, contest and re-create the constructions of hegemonic masculinity in South Africa. The study used three focus groups with 14–16-year-old boys across six schools in the Western Cape. These authors found that boys characterise masculinity by gender activity in what is regarded as girl-like or other notions that do not fit with hegemonic masculinity in a particular context (Ratele et al., 2010). However, they also found resistances and alternative views on what boys also can and cannot do, which highlights the contested nature of current constructions of masculinity among young people in South Africa (Ratele et al., 2010). Mfecane (2008) studied constructions of masculinity by men living with HIV and using antiretroviral drugs in a rural village. This study explores the impact of HIV on the men and the results of these impacts on their understandings of masculinity (Mfecane, 2008). Findings showed that the men's lives dramatically changed after contracting

HIV and that these changes were perceived to negatively affect various important markers of masculinity such as the men's provider roles and sexualities (Mfecane, 2008).

2.3 Masculinity vs Masculinities

The dominance of certain types of masculinity are sustained through the creation of a masculine ideal (Viljoen, 2008). The application of a single, dominant masculine ideal implies that certain masculinities are privileged over others, which leads to the marginalisation of individual character traits that do not fit into the mould of the prevailing masculine ideal (Viljoen, 2008). This more traditional understanding of a singular masculinity is widely known to be a biologically male gendered human being who shows the characteristics of being direct, aggressive, competitive, a sexual prowess, career and goal-driven, financially successful, physically tough and emotionally unavailable. However, recently, finding a concrete, single definition has been a struggle (Cann et al., 2020). All men do not have one fixed and static masculine identity (Elliott, 2003). Masculine identities are multi-layered and fluid.

Raewyn Connell's theory of masculinity in Mfecane (2016) states that contemporary gender studies are the most influential and it highlights the multiplicity of masculinities. It acknowledges that there are multiple forms of masculinity that exist at any particular time (Mfecane, 2016; Ratele, 2008). These multiple constructions of masculinity come from a constructivist view that masculinity is dynamic, multiple, fluid and flexible (Langa, 2017). The multiplicity of masculinities states that there are always likely to be dominant, subordinate, complicit, marginal and hybrid masculinities, which are in contestation and tension with one another (Hadebe, 2010; Hunter, 2005; Ratele, 2008). Hegemonic masculinity is the dominant form which is mostly considered as the ideal understanding of masculinity (Hadebe, 2010; Ratele, 2008). Subordinate masculinity does not live up to the hegemonic masculinity but is defined and constrained by dominant understandings of masculinity (Hadebe, 2010; Ratele, 2008). Complicit masculinity accepts the rewards of hegemonic masculinity without defending the patriarchal system that it benefits from (Hadebe, 2010; Ratele, 2008). Marginal masculinity appears in oppressed and exploited groups and has no power to act in society, even though it shares many of the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity (Hadebe, 2010; Ratele, 2008). Hybrid masculinity is men's selective incorporation of performances and identity elements related to subordinated and marginalised masculinities and femininities (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). They symbolically distance themselves from hegemonic masculinity and position the masculinities that are accessible to young white heterosexual men as less meaningful than the various marginalised masculinities (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). Inclusive masculinity celebrates

or accepts the tenets of feminism, gay rights, and welcomes more emotional and physical intimacies between men (Anderson, 2010). There is a diversity that exists as different men live out their masculinities differently (Mshweshwe, 2020). Men are increasingly adopting practices that are characterised by acceptance of diverse masculinities, which accommodate the more current meanings of masculinity in ways that promote a varied selection of performances to include as masculine (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). The idea that there are multiple masculinities that are constantly open to change means that positive masculinities exist amongst the “negative masculinities” that are most talked about (Elliott, 2003). There are existing masculinities that promote peace, harmony and sensitivity (Elliott, 2003). However, while these new masculinities and identities blur social and symbolic boundaries, they do not undermine the systems of dominance or hegemonic masculinity in any fundamental way (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). Furthermore, they have not significantly affected the meanings of masculinity at regional or global levels (Bridges & Pascoe, 2000).

There is a tendency in the masculinity studies field to presume “separate spheres,” and therefore to explore masculinities by looking only at men and the relations among men (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Connell (1998) states that hegemonic masculinity is rather whatever type of masculinity that is dominant at a given time (Lorber, 1998). Hegemonic masculinity is what people casually speak of when they refer to “the male role” (Connell, 2001). Hegemonic masculinity is hegemonic not just in relation to other masculinities, but in relation to the gender order in society as a whole. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) and Ratele (2008) recognise a multiplicity within masculinities. Connell (2001) states that academics have shown that there is no single pattern of masculinity that is found everywhere, and that different cultures, and different history periods, construct masculinity in various ways. For example, some cultures look up to soldiers and perceive violence as the epitome of masculinity while others look at soldiers with disdain and regard violence as nonsensical (Connell, 2001). The construction of masculinity in the context of disability, the labouring bodies of working-class men, men’s health and illness, and boys’ interpersonal violence are among the themes in research showing how bodies are affected by social processes of differing masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Another example in Alexandra is seen in groups such as “men for change” which counter the risk-taking, bravado and the celebration of multiple partners that is implicit in dominant masculinities (Hunter, 2005). There is also the understanding that men, women, the heterosexual and the homosexual, contest and produce a plurality of masculinities (Anderson, 2010; Hunter, 2005;). The different kinds of masculinities do not stand side-by-side

however, there is a hierarchy observed and there are definite relations between them (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014; Connell, 2001).

Some masculinities are more honoured and idealised than others, such as sportsmen, while others receive dishonour. For example, homosexual masculinities in modern Western culture, as well as the masculinities of disempowered ethnic minorities, are often socially marginalised (Connell, 2001). The hierarchy of masculinities is an expression of the unequal division of privilege held by different groups of men (Connell, 2001). Scholars in South Africa note the way dominant masculinities result in, and shape the violent control men sometimes have over women, their demand for unprotected sex and their praise for possessing multiple partners (Hunter, 2005). These relational patterns within African societies are embedded in their underlying social structure (Hunter, 2005). In the Zulu culture, being *isoka* (unmarried man or a young man liked by the girls) and having multiple girlfriends was in opposition to what is regarded as the humiliating *isishimane*, a man who is too scared to talk to girls and is without a girlfriend (Hunter, 2005). The *isoka* masculinity was dominant but not universal as Christianity challenged it with a single, monogamous strict moral code followed by male Christian believers, *amakholwa* (Hunter, 2005). A further challenge to heterosexual norms was the existence of same-sex relations, known as *isitabane* or *ingqingili* in Zulu (Hunter, 2005). The different masculinities in this culture show more complexities as the *isoka* masculinity comes across restrictions as other routes to manhood became more valued (Hunter, 2005). Although *isoka* could *ukusoma* (engage in thigh sex) with several partners, he had to have a wife and build *umuzi* (home) to become a respected *umnumzana* (household head) (Hunter, 2005). Additionally, *isoka lamanyala* (*amanyala* meaning dirt or disgraceful act) is a phrase used to reprimand men with too many girlfriends and signified a masculinity that has gone too far (Hunter, 2005).

2.4 Hegemonic masculinity

In defining masculinity, Connell (1987) states that:

Hegemonic masculinity, or the maintenance of practices that institutionalise men's dominance over women is constructed in relation to women and to subordinate masculinities. This suggests that gender domination is not simply about the domination of women, but it also includes men.

Hegemonic masculinity is the notion of masculinity and the most pronounced stereotype of masculinity in a particular historical context that has ascended into the dominant position in society, and is related to resource, power, resilience, strength, aggression and authority (Kupers, 2005; Langa, 2017; Luyt, 2012; Reardon & Govender, 2012). It is the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations (Campbell & Bell, 2000). Hegemonic masculinity is therefore seen as the version of masculinity that is considered “natural”, legitimate or unquestionable in a particular set of gender relations (Campbell & Bell, 2000). It has been originally defined as the arrangement and organisation of gender practice that encapsulates the currently agreed-upon response to the problematic legitimacy of patriarchy, which makes sure that men are out in a dominant position, and that women are subordinated (Luyt, 2012; Mshweshwe, 2020; Morrell et al, 2012; Reardon & Govender, 2013; Ratele, 2008). It has come to signify an overall commitment to understanding masculinity as a critical adjunct to feminist analyses of power (Campbell & Bell, 2000). It is imposed on boys during their upbringing as a socialisation process that looks at the importance of sexual conquest, physical strength and financial success, and these young men position themselves in relation to hegemonic standards whether consciously or unconsciously (Mshweshwe, 2020; Morrell et. al, 2012). All these build the “ideal” man who is constantly being enforced and reinforced. Manhood is hegemonic in nature, legitimised by tradition and manifests as strength, healthiness, heterosexuality, sexual zeal and avoiding homosexuality, which is opposite to femininity (Kumalo & Gama, 2018; Langa, 2017). This only serves the interests of men in powerful positions by making it seem to be right and by maintaining these patriarchal gender relations (Luyt, 2012; Reardon & Govender, 2013). The characterisations of relations are not only by men dominating women but also a hierarchy and power that is unequally accessed, existing between men themselves (Luyt, 2012; Mshweshwe, 2020). Hegemonic masculinity is the most honoured masculinity among them all and is a model for deciding what a real man is (Mfecane, 2016).

Hegemonic masculinity is also regarded as a theory mostly based on the Western gender order, that usually excludes the working class and black men (Hamlall, 2018; Mfecane, 2016). Western models of masculinities cannot be assumed to apply as equally to non-Western experiences because societies differ in their cultures and history (Mfecane, 2016). Heterosexuality and not being feminine or gay is the core to the construction of hegemonic masculinity (Mfecane, 2016). Men who fail to meet the criteria and standards of masculinity are excluded and put under as alternative, more submissive forms of masculinity (Mshweshwe, 2020). There is a possibility of the existence of more than one hegemonic masculinity in a

society, where there are sub-groups of hegemonic masculinity that arise among marginalised men, which put an emphasis on force and power (Mshweshwe, 2020). This is where the masculinities of these men from historically powerless race groups are simultaneously hegemonic and subordinate (Hamlall, 2018). For example, unemployed men that do not meet the criteria of financial success but meet the criteria of physical strength and sexual prowess could band together and produce a sub-group of hegemonic masculinity within society at large. Hegemonic masculinity was initially seen as fixed and rigid, but as more insights have been made, it has been characterised by a continuous process of translation and negotiation as it adapts to contemporary times and contexts (Langa, 2017). It is also argued that orthodox masculinity is increasingly becoming outdated (Anderson, 2010). For example, a study of a UK male football team displayed that the heterosexual men typically engage in prolonged public kissing with other men and other “orthodox” men indulge in sex with same-sex partners with the belief that it is an acceptable sexual recreation that does not threaten their identities as heterosexual bodies (Anderson, 2010).

Hegemonic masculinity as a concept has been used as a tool to understand the nature of gender relations, especially in post-apartheid South Africa (Morrell et al., 2012). The concept was used to look closely at the power of gender, with regards to the hierarchy that exists among men in relation to each other, as well as the dominant group (Morrell et al., 2012). Morrell uses hegemonic masculinity in the South African context to describe the nature and dynamics of male power and proposed at least three, not one, hegemonic masculinity. White masculinity is all about the economic and political dominance of the white ruling class (Morrell et al., 2012). The African masculinity is the masculinity which is perpetuated through indigenous institutions that are rurally based (Morrell et al., 2012). An example is seen in the isiZulu culture where the focus of masculinity is *umuzi* (the homestead) where masculinity is measured in how many cattle men could accumulate, how many wives one has taken, and thus how successful a homestead is (Hunter, 2005). These factors suggested how rich and how much of an esteemed household head, *umnumzana*, the man became. Finally, the black masculinity rose out of urbanisation and built itself separately from African townships (Morrell, et al., 2012). In this way, Morrell moved away from the idea of just one ideal hegemonic masculinity.

There are various critiques of hegemonic masculinity as pathological, defeated and collectively confused, which are informed by statistics around depression, suicide and crimes perpetrated by men. These indicate that an overwhelming number of men engaged in violent and self-destructive behaviour, such as substance abuse, gangsterism and crime (Langa, 2017; Viljoen, 2008). A correlation between masculine identity and harmful behavioural factors has

been made, stating that a huge amount of the factors relating to men's excess morality is linked to gendered patterns of socialisation and men's roles (Viljoen, 2008). Negative hegemonic masculine construction, along with dynamics of patriarchy and culture give rise to domestic violence in South Africa, as this is one of the countries with the highest rates of domestic violence (Mshweshwe, 2020). The fragility of masculinity is seen through the view of violent masculinities that appeals to policed sexualities, culture, and cultural identities (Kumalo & Gama, 2018). The cultural and traditional beliefs that look at males being dominant and assertive have an impact on how masculinity is constructed, which then reinforce domestic violence (Mshweshwe, 2020). The patriarchal system that allows men to fulfil their desire to exercise control and power over women is a way men construct and navigate their masculinity and how they make sense of their masculinity through these beliefs and practices that are then enacted (Mshweshwe, 2020).

Hegemonic masculinity undermines men's abilities to articulate their trauma and vulnerability (Shefer et al., 2010). Men feel pressured to prove their masculinity by engaging in traditional masculine behaviours that could be detrimental to their overall wellbeing which makes them conceal their failures and suppress their feelings (Elliott, 2003; Iwamoto et al., 2018). They are socialised to control and restrict their emotions, demonstrate toughness, and avoid weakness or the appearance of being 'feminine'. Strict adherence to masculine norms is often unrealistic and unattainable. Therefore, men experience stress in trying to fulfill these expectations which can then put them at risk for emotional difficulties, like anxiety and depression. In turn, these norms are theorised to shape how men respond to depression, masking or hiding their depression to prove their manhood. Some dominant forms of masculinity compromise the wellbeing and health of young men since the trait of masculinity, riskiness, is heightened (Shefer et al., 2010). One key statement is that men are "in trouble" as they are having trouble with social change, such as problems related to work, health, and psychological problems. As a result, they adopt a range of coping behaviours, such as suicide, enforcing violence and abusing substances (Buiten & Naidoo, 2013; Elliott, 2003).

"Masculinity in crisis" assumes that the failure to fulfil a particular masculine ideal on a personal level may result in a crisis of identity (Viljoen, 2008). It is when men become alienated as they cannot live up to the expectations of their "sex role" (Campbell & Bell, 2000). The fragility of hegemonic masculinity is seen through its factual and unchanging traditions that fix manhood in time, making it incapable of adopting its tradition (Kumalo & Gama, 2018). Some studies on masculinity tend to look only at the negative aspects of masculinity, making boys and men only seen in a bad light. This is problematic as there are certain constructions of

masculinity that are harmful to both men and women (Hamlall, 2018; Shefer et al., 2010). However, men are becoming involved in gender work because it was seen that males were also seen as victims of the order of gender in society, and not just the dominant view that masculinity is all about the problematic behaviours, attitudes, violence and abuse those men perpetuated (Anderson, 2010; Morrell et al., 2012; Ratele, 2008). This involvement would help men change these behaviours and attitudes. There is a need to create safe spaces for young black men to reflect on their identities and to talk about themselves and be expressive (Langa, 2017). These safe spaces can ultimately make a huge impact in how positive masculinities that are not aggressive, violent and that are future-oriented, can be developed (Langa, 2017).

There are implications involved because of globalisation and its different characteristics on gender formation. For example, globalisation is seen in the role of the media on culture in men and women's lives, sexuality, education, health, politics, violence, and peace (Cann et al., 2020; Levon et al., 2017). Mainstream media has always reinforced societal norms and cultural values that help maintain and perpetuate the status quo and make it legitimate (Khan et al., 2019). It appears that the frequent use of media is linked to sexist attitudes among male and female viewers, which then perpetuate gendered social hierarchies and hegemonic masculinity in society (Khan et al., 2019). Luyt (2012) states that many representations of the media construct femininity and masculinity in a way that maintains hierarchical gender relations over time. South African mainstream media play a key role in circulating specific representations of men and therefore contribute to solidifying specific masculine "types" in the national imagery (Levon, 2017). Buiten and Naidoo (2013) state that wider contextual developments in the South African media industry have implications for the politics around gender representation. Representations of femininities and masculinities produce dialogue with and in relation to one another (Buiten & Naidoo, 2013). It is also simplistic to assume that masculinities are defended by men and challenged by women as women can also serve to reproduce harsh dominant masculinities through their efforts of securing livelihoods in socio-economic circumstances (Hunter, 2005). This means some women may play into or stay silent in the societal expectations of men being providers in order to involve themselves in relationships where the man's role is to meet the women's material and financial wants. How gender and race are co-constructed is adopted by the sex role perspective where it is found that white men are portrayed as powerful and as the aspirational ideal, white women are seen as domesticated sex objects and romantically successful, black men as aggressive, violent, displaying moral decadence and are of ill-health, and black women as insignificant (Levon, 2017; Luyt, 2012). The representations of black men in *Drum* magazine during the 1950s and 1960s embraced positive

fatherhood despite the challenges of the migrant labour system and apartheid (Leopeng & Langa, 2018). In the South African magazine, *Destiny Man*, there is the conceptualisation of black masculinity as possessing specific characteristics that represent lifestyle, success, and the espousal of specific types of economic and political ideologies (Leopeng & Langa, 2018). This reflects the ways media reveal current trends in social preferences in specific periods of time, which then reveal the cultural norms and values of the target audience (Leopeng & Langa, 2018).

2.5 Masculinities within the Context of South Africa (past and present)

The construction of masculinities among boys and men in South Africa has been subject to an increasing amount of attention in gender studies (Buiten & Naidoo, 2013; Ratele, 2017). Robert Morrell, a leading masculinity scholar in South Africa, reflected on the importance of Connell's work in South Africa since the era of apartheid because studies of masculinity in South Africa rarely existed before the 1990s (Cann et al., 2020). There was only a small interest in gender focusing on women and inequality. Morrell says that this is because South Africa was in transition from white minority rule to a democracy that was committed to end poverty, inequality, racism, and the oppression of women (Cann et al., 2020). The interest in masculinity in South Africa was propelled by the idea that one cannot fully understand femininities without their overlapping relationship with masculinities (Buiten et al., 2013). On Connell's visit to South Africa, he stressed two points: the recognition of the existence and power of patriarchal relations and the need for historical research looking at how masculinities were produced, and which a particular form of masculinity became hegemonic in society (Morrell, 1997). In South Africa, power is held by men both in private, public, and political areas and in all South African families, men made the decisions, held all the power, and earned more (Elliott, 2003). Looking at masculinity in the South African context is more complex, considering the history of racial inequality in the country (Viljoen, 2008). This inequality is a product of the legalised discrimination based on race during apartheid which led to years of colonial rule, dispossession, and race-based structural discrimination (Luyt, 2012). Therefore, South Africa is a significant country for social analysis and deemed important due to its diversity and cultural inflection of legalised oppression and colonialism, which have produced the various masculine ideals that form part of a whole of the past and current South Africa (Mfecane, 2016; Ratele, 2017; Viljoen, 2008).

Over the last two decades, the status quo of South Africa had been challenged by the socio-political change that was the transition from the oppressive apartheid system to a majority

political rule that resulted in the 1994 democratic elections (Luyt, 2012). In South Africa, the masculine identity is affected by the political shift from oppression to a democratic system which aims to disenfranchise the patriarchal regime (Viljoen, 2008). The global crisis in the self-articulation of masculinity was compounded by the socio-political changes brought about the country's first democratically elected government (Viljoen, 2008). White men have therefore become the representations of a past of hostility and domination (Viljoen, 2008).

African masculinities reflect the political subordination that resulted from colonialism and was connected to the remembered past and the institutions of African patriarchy (Morrell, 1997). The black identity, which is both public and private, is intrinsically linked to historical conceptions of African culture and proper manhood, which were undone by colonialism and the infantilisation of blackness during apartheid (Kumalo & Gama, 2018). A link has been found between violent masculinities and the historical racial and economic forces that do not allow the expression of traditional norms of masculinity, especially among poor black men (Buiten & Naidoo, 2013). Many contemporary interpretations of black masculinity being pathological exist, which then leads to its implicit association with domestic violence and crime (Viljoen, 2008). Through trying to preserve the authenticity of the cultural practices of manhood, there are symbolic forms of violence occurring, such as the exclusion of women in cultural practices and the policed sexualities of feminised bodies (Kumalo & Gama, 2018). These associations can be partly traced to the apartheid era when young black men in urban areas were seen as inherently violent (Viljoen, 2008). However, today, there are arguably two forces that threaten South African men's path to masculinity status including the struggle in marrying and establishing an independent household, as well as women becoming more independent by showing greater participation in the labour market (Hunter, 2005).

South Africa, as a socio-political space for transition, gives out the opportunity for re-negotiating and contesting social identities like manhood (Kumalo & Gama, 2018). Young men are seen to negotiate their identities over time (Langa et al., 2018). Many psychologists writing on masculinity are mostly interested in how young men construct their own masculine identity in relation to those around them (Morrell et al., 2012). This is seen in a study in Gauteng which was conducted on young black men in the historically black township of Alexandra. The participants in this study challenged and rejected the depictions of black men being violent and aggressive (Langa et al., 2018). The young men refused and subverted the automatic assumptions and associations between black masculinity and violent crimes, especially as the stereotype mainly speaks to young black men living in predominantly black townships (Langa et al., 2018). It is seen that not all young black men embrace the masculine attitudes of

aggression and violence, but some also embrace the voices that are school-oriented, peaceful, and non-risk-taking (Langa et al., 2018). This shows that masculinities in South Africa are not static, but diverse, socially situated and constantly changing depending on the context and time (Buiten & Naidoo; Langa et al., 2017). We have different languages, with different idioms and ways of practice and meaning making, which have an impact on masculinity, and aid the various ways of being a man (Mfecane, 2016). However, these are not popular in the public discourse of how many people are likely to see and speak about young black men (Langa et al., 2018). In South Africa and globally, black masculinity is predominantly socially represented as violent and dangerous (Langa et al., 2018). The pronounced racial hierarchies that exist in South Africa reflects multiple hegemonic masculinities that represent the unique racialised history of South Africa (Morrell et al., 2012). Among all these dominant masculinity studies, positive voices need to be heard, promoted, and celebrated (Langa et al., 2018).

Robert Morrell (2001, p.33) argues that there is no one typical way to be a South African man. There are various conceptualisations of masculinity within complex hierarchies of identity in South Africa (Mfecane, 2016; Morrell, 1997; Shefer et al., 2010). All these different masculinities do not have equal social respect as some are made to be idealised like sportsmen, and others to be marginalised like homosexuality (Mfecane, 2016). An example of this can be seen in the particular forms of masculinity which were reproduced in the Oscar Pistorius trial through public involvement (Langa et al., 2018). These include assertions made particularly by white male gun owners and gun lobbyists about the right to own guns to defend their families and possessions against threat from black South Africans (Langa et al., 2018). This is rooted in the perception that black masculinities are dangerous and violent. Another example observed in this trial is guns and weaponry as a symbol of manhood for white men (Langa et al., 2018). Masculinity is a complicated, multi-layered, and diverse term. It has many definitions attached to it and is subject to change and span over time and culture (Cann et al., 2020; Shefer et al., 2010). It is also the shifting, multiple, fluid practices and performances of gendered bodies and identities, and the ever-changing subjective understanding of the self (Kumalo & Gama, 2018). Masculinity is not universal. It changes boundaries and characteristics and is flexible to change (Cann et al., 2020). It is not fixed or fractured, but always changing and is constantly being negotiated and reimagined along social conditions that are just and ethically aligned with aesthetics (Kumalo & Gama, 2018). There can be an all-inclusive manhood.

2.6 Masculinity and Unemployment

High unemployment among black men is not a new phenomenon. It has continued for decades and even though scholars, economists, advocates, sociologists, and policymakers have brought attention to various aspects and solutions to this phenomenon, it still seems to be a difficult situation. South Africa has one of the highest rates of unemployment, the unemployment rate among black people is on the increase, and many black people continue to live in abject poverty (Langa, 2017; Langa et al., 2018; Surrender et al., 2010). In addition to this, access to tertiary education is limited to a few individuals because of financial constraints (Langa, 2017).

In 2017, the South African unemployment rate among the youth was 38.2 percent, meaning one in every three young people did not have a job (Statistics South Africa, 2018). In 2020, the youth unemployment rate was estimated at 55.75 percent (Statista, 2020). This shows an increase in the rate of youth unemployment from 2017 to 2020, making it an urgent issue that needs to be addressed. Currently, the official unemployment rate was 32.1% in the fourth quarter of 2023. The youth still remain vulnerable as the 2023 fourth quarter results show that the total number of unemployed youth increased by 87 000 to 4.7 million while there was a decrease of 97 000 in the number of employed youth to 5.9 million. This resulted in an increase in the youth unemployment rate by 0,9% from 43,4% in the third quarter 2023 to 44,3% in the fourth quarter of 2023 (Statistics South Africa, 2024) It could be that the youth are discouraged and are also not building on their skills. The rate among those not in employment, education or training declined among the black African and coloured males, while the rate increased among Indian/Asian and white males (Statistics South Africa, 2018). This shows that there is an actual increase in employment, education and training among young black men, which goes against belief that there is a decrease in employment among this population. However, even though an increase is seen in employment, education and training among young black men, it does not negate the fact that the unemployment rate still remains high as the increasing rates are still not consistently representative of the South African population.

According to the latest Quarterly Labour Force Survey released by Statistics South Africa (2024), total employment decreased by 22 000 to 16.7 million in quarter 4 of 2023. The number of employed people remains at 16.7 million in quarter 4 of 2023 compared to quarter 3 of 2023, having surpassed pre-Covid level of 16,4 million in quarter 1 of 2020 (Statistics South Africa, 2024). The number of not economically active people increased by 111 000 in quarter 4 of 2023 compared to quarter 3 of 2023. The unemployment rate increased in six provinces between quarter 3 of 2023 and quarter 4 of 2023, with Gauteng province increasing from 33,7% to 33,8% (Statistics South Africa, 2024). The formal sector in South Africa accounts for 68,7%

of total employment and it had decreased by 128 thousand jobs between quarter 3 of 2023 and quarter 4 of 2023. The decreases in employment were mainly in the Services, Construction and Agriculture industries, however, the largest employment increases were recorded in Finance, Transport and Mining (Statistics South Africa, 2024). Youth aged 15-24 years and 25-34 continue to have the highest unemployment rates at 59.4% and 39% respectively. The youth aged 15-34 years are more vulnerable to unemployment when compared to older age groups (Statistics South Africa, 2024). It was noted that approximately 3,4 million (33%) out of 10,2 million young people aged 15-24 years were not in employment, education or training. The unemployment rate among Black African (36.1%) population group remains higher than the national average and other population groups (Statistics South Africa, 2024).

According to Statistics South Africa (2015) in Mkhize (2015), youth unemployment is marked as a shock and crisis to the economy and that employment rates among youth, as compared to adults, are deteriorating, leaving many youths frustrated from looking for employment and ultimately discouraged altogether. Fifty-five percent of those who are actively looking for employment have qualifications lower than matric level, which means many of these youths are unable to acquire the skills needed to drive the economy, as this rate increases (Mkhize, 2015).

One of the most popular constructs of masculinity across race and culture is the emphasis on being employed and earning money (Elliott, 2003). Here, employment is not about money but about affording the choices of how to participate in the world, what one desires to eat and what living conditions a person chooses (Ratele, 2008). Working and producing an income has been a key requirement for being a man in most cultures (Ratele, 2008). Many men feel safe in the male identity through having breadwinner status; that they can provide for their families by working and earning an income (Mshweshwe, 2020). Because of the high rates of unemployment among black men, these men experience a huge amount of threat to their manhood and self-esteem (Elliott, 2003; Ratele, 2008). Men who do not achieve breadwinner status then felt disempowered and felt like they are not man enough as they are unemployed (Mshweshwe, 2020). The inability to provide financially means failure and not living up to the masculine ideal. A high unemployment rate and low incomes establish a context where men's self-esteem could be reinforced by acquiring multiple partner relations and violence against women (Hunter, 2005). Celebrating numerous sexual conquests is understood as an expression of manliness that is used to counter the inability of many men achieving status through work and through fulfilling a provider role (Hunter, 2005).

The debates around expanding social assistance have been a feature since 1994 where the first decade was concerned mostly with poverty alleviation and redistribution whereas the second decade was concerned about handouts, the rising expenditure, and of welfare dependence (Surrender et al., 2010). The state has responded to the aim of reducing poverty and unemployment by establishing Public Employment Programmes (PEPs) (Bruce, 2015). Interventions should go beyond poverty alleviation and try to develop exit programmes that capacitate households and communities to empower themselves (Surrender et al., 2012). PEPs were first established by the post-apartheid government in the late 1990s (Bruce, 2015).

In South Africa, the five major social security grants are: 1) the Disability Grant, 2) the Foster Child Grant, 3) the State Old Age Pension, 4) the Child Support Grant and 5) the Care Dependency Grant (Samson et al., 2006). Eligibility for each grant depends on an income-based test and the grants are financed through taxes that are collected nationally (Samson et al., 2006). The South African Social Security Agency, a separate national governmental agency, implements and administers these grants and in 2003, seven million South Africans have received one of these grants (Samson et al., 2006).

One of the PEPs, The Community Work Programme (CWP) is a government programme within the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) that focuses on providing an employment net to working-age unemployed individuals (Masuku, 2015). It was established based on the fact that unemployment in South Africa is structural, meaning that, even if there are any improvements made in the South African economy, unemployment is likely to still remain a constant problem in the medium to long term (Bruce, 2015). The programme provides two days of work, leaving three days for the participants to look for other opportunities for work (Masuku, 2015). The CWP involves people from poor communities working within their own communities. It is also highlighted that grants must not allow there to be dependency and must try establish a link to economic activity because a lot of the communities remain trapped in poverty and are dependent on the state (Surrender et al., 2012). However, in terms of participation, there appears to be an absence of men, especially young men, within the programme (Bruce, 2015). This raises concerns that the rate of unemployment among young black men is high. This raises questions about the whereabouts of young men and what are they doing in their unemployed state, in the midst of grants being administered.

2.7 The Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Unemployment in South Africa

The Covid-19 virus, which first appeared in Wuhan, China in December 2019, has affected most parts of the world (Hamadziripi & Chitimira, 2021; Ikwegbue et al., 2021; Nguse & Wassenaar, 2021). This virus is caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (Hamadziripi & Chitimira, 2021; Nguse & Wassenaar, 2021). It is reported that the virus spreads from person to person through close contact with respiratory droplets of an infected individual by coughing or sneezing around another individual within a metre (Ikwegbue et al., 2021). It can also be spread through fomites or objects, such as thermometers, stethoscopes and surfaces if the environment is not sterilised after use (Ikwegbue et al., 2021). Within two weeks, the virus spread to 114 countries with 118 000 cases and 4 291 deaths, and as a result, the World Health Organisation declared the virus a global health crisis and pandemic (Hamadziripi & Chitimira, 2021; Nguse & Wassenaar, 2021; Simon & Khambule, 2021). Almost all countries had to resort to versions of national lockdowns along with the precautionary measures of social distancing and enhanced hygiene methods with the intention to curb the spread of the virus (Hamadziripi & Chitimira, 2021; Simon & Khambule, 2021). The poor have been most affected because of poverty, structural inequality, unemployment and lack of access to quality health care and other services (Ikwegbue et al., 2021; Nguse & Wassenaar, 2021). The public mental health has been negatively affected by the pandemic above an already ailing mental health care system (Nguse & Wassenaar, 2021).

South Africa recorded its first Covid-19 case on the 5th of March 2020, with the first fatality occurring 22 days later (Hamadziripi & Chitimira, 2021). The minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs of South Africa, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, declared the Covid-19 outbreak a national state of disaster in South Africa on the 15th of March 2020 in terms of section 27(1) of the Disaster Management Act 57 of 2002 (Hamadziripi & Chitimira, 2021). Since early 2020, the Covid-19 virus has become a crucial and most central part of everyday life for South Africans (Nguse & Wassenaar, 2021). We are reminded of this through news updates of the mortality rate and the continuous threat and complications it has on our lives (Nguse & Wassenaar, 2021). These updates included those who have either tested positive for Covid, have died due to related complications, and those who have recovered from it (Nguse & Wassenaar, 2021). It is reported that almost fifty million people had been affected globally, including more than a million deaths so far (Hamadziripi & Chitimira, 2021; Simon & Khambule, 2021).

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused a huge amount of devastation and negative socio-economic effects to South Africa (Ikwegbue et al., 2021; Hamadziripi & Chitimira, 2021;

Simon & Khambule, 2021). The economic growth in South Africa has been slowed down by 2.1% and this is expected to continue for the next three years (Hamadziripi & Chitimira, 2021). South Africa has experienced its biggest decline in economic output in the second quarter of 2020 due to the lockdown (Hamadziripi & Chitimira, 2021). It is estimated that it would take 5 years for South Africa to return to pre-Covid conditions (Hamadziripi & Chitimira, 2021).

During the national lockdown, most economic activity was suspended with the hope that some activity would resume once the restrictions were eased (Posel et al., 2021). It is argued that South Africa's lockdown has negatively affected employment, labour markets and production sectors of the economy in South Africa, resulting in substantial revenue losses (Hamadziripi & Chitimira, 2021; Simon & Khambule, 2021). This was seen because most businesses were either completely shut down or were operating at limited and fewer hours than usual due to the lockdown (Hamadziripi & Chitimira, 2021). Some employed individuals retained their jobs to return to, however, they were neither working nor earning an income for the duration of the lockdown (Posel et. al., 2021). Millions of people in the informal sector have been impoverished due to the lockdown induced by the Covid-19 pandemic (Ikwegbue et al., 2021; Hamadziripi & Chitimira, 2021; Simon & Khambule, 2021). It has mostly affected the unskilled and semi-skilled employees and those in the informal sector (Hamadziripi & Chitimira, 2021). These workers were left vulnerable as they usually did not have access to Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) and in addition, mostly worked on a no work, no pay basis (Hamadziripi & Chitimira, 2021). This means that many of those that relied on informal trading, who are likely to lose their jobs, will increase the level of unemployment and hunger, thereby placing more pressure on the government and the economy (Ikwegbue et al., 2021).

Approximately 3 million South Africans lost their employment during the first four months of the Covid-19 lockdown period (Nguse & Wassenaar, 2021; Simon & Khambule, 2021). This increase in the unemployment rate is already above an alarming national unemployment statistic in South Africa (Nguse & Wassenaar, 2021). In 2020, Statistics South Africa reported that the South African unemployment rate rose to 30.0% (Nguse & Wassenaar, 2021). It was estimated that 700 000 jobs in South Africa were lost. However, as more businesses closed down, the number of unemployed people had increased to 2.2 million, meaning that South Africa was left with only 14.1 million employees (Hamadziripi & Chitimira, 2021). As a result, as of June 2020, in a population of 59.6 million people, with a labour force of 18.4 million, 14.1 million were employed (Hamadziripi & Chitimira, 2021). Since the 2008 Quarterly Labour Force Survey, the lockdown has resulted in the highest level of unemployment in South Africa (Hamadziripi & Chitimira, 2021).

The Covid-19 pandemic has heightened the already existing gap in mental health and has restricted access to mental health services (Nguse & Wassenaar, 2021). The economic fallout of Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a huge amount of job loss, which has had a consequential impact on mental health (Hamadziripi & Chitimira, 2021; Nguse & Wassenaar, 2021; Posel et. al., 2021). In a study on the impact of Covid-19 on the mental health of South Africans living in Soweto, it was found that adults who had experienced childhood trauma and other related traumas were found to be at a higher risk of developing depressive symptoms that were precipitated by the perceived risk of contracting Covid-19 (Nguse & Wassenaar, 2021). A study by the Human Sciences Research Council reported that 33% of South Africans were depressed, 45% were fearful and 29% experienced loneliness during the first lockdown period (Nguse & Wassenaar, 2021; Posel et al., 2021). The broad health spectrum has experienced a decline in service uptake (Nguse & Wassenaar, 2021).

A South African study by Posel et al. (2021) found that adults who kept their employment during the Covid-19 lockdown had significantly lower depression scores than those who had lost their employment. There appears to be an increase in realisation that the health costs of the Covid-19 pandemic are not restricted to physical health but include the effects it has had on individuals' psychological wellbeing (Posel et al., 2021). The mental health and socioeconomic effects may be more lasting than the physiological impact of the infection for the average human being (Nguse & Wassenaar, 2021).

The next section of this chapter presents the theoretical framework of social constructionism that was used to locate the study and guide the data analysis. Given the myriad of contextual and social factors that influence masculinity and unemployment in South Africa, this framework provides a way of thinking about these processes in relation to the experiences of the young unemployed black men in Mamelodi who participated in the study.

2.8 Theoretical Framework

This research is situated within a social constructionist theoretical framework. A social constructionist theoretical perspective maintains that gender is a social construction of masculinity and femininity that is developed in social contexts and refers to the role and responsibilities of men and women that are influenced by societies, families, and cultures (Hadebe, 2010). Traditional gender roles have mostly been characterised by polarising dominant cultural ideals around the role of being a man and being a woman (Kulis, 2018). Within these gender roles, being a man comes with the expectations of working outside the home, being courageous, being economic providers, protecting and being loyal to your family,

as well as taking a dominant role in decision-making in the family as the head of the household (Kulis, 2018; Ratele, 2008). The traditional gender roles for females place an emphasis on dedication to family, spiritual strength to endure self-sacrifice, nurturance, responsibility, being homemakers and submitting to men (Kulis, 2018). This is also seen in present-day society where women are over-represented in occupations of education and nurturance, and men are over-represented in occupations associated with physical strength, power and status (Endendijk, 2017). Most human societies make social distinctions based on gender, and all of them allocate more power and higher status to men (Strebel, 2006).

Two major approaches to understanding gender that share different views of gender roles are the essentialist and the social constructionist perspectives. The essentialist view understands gender differences as stemming from the biological differences between men and women, as gender differences are biologically determined (Besley, 2002; Hadebe, 2010; Kogan & Gale, 1997; Ratele, 2017; Saguy, 2021; Sayer, 1997). Considering their differences in their biological make-up, both men and women have distinct essences which make them predisposed to have mental and behavioural differences (Saguy, 2021). It claims that men behave the way they do because of testosterone, big muscles or because of a male brain (Hadebe, 2010). The main explanation of this view are that the determining factors of masculinity and femininity are the genetic and hormonal differences between females and males (Saguy, 2021). Gender representation exists at a biological, cultural, or ideological level, taking shape through language or other symbolic forms and offers shared ways of understanding (Luyt, 2012). The most common critiques of essentialism is a concern to counter characterisations of people, practices, institutions, and other social phenomena as having fixed identities which deterministically produce fixed, uniform outcomes (Sayer, 1997). This can be seen in gender, whose relational, positional, diverse and shifting character defies any identification of a fixed essence (Sayer, 1997). The essentialist's assumption of separation of roles between sexes lacks a concrete examination of how gender patterns are constructed and practiced (Anderson, 2010; Hadebe, 2010).

There appears to be a relatively agreed-upon understanding among scholars that gender is based on biology and psychology, however this may be a reductionist approach to conceptualising gender, which denies the social aspect of its construction (Campbell & Bell, 2000; Shefer et al., 2010; Hadebe, 2010; Sayer, 1997). Social constructionism emphasises the socially constructed nature of knowledge and institutions and the way in which knowledge appears with the marks of its social and historical origins (Campbell & Bell, 2000; DeLamarter & Hyde, 1998; Etchison & Kleist, 2000; Sayer, 1997). In the social constructionist worldview,

it is understood that truth and reality represent perspectives that are influenced by history and context, as opposed to being objective and immutable facts (Besley, 2002; Corey, 2017; Kogan & Gale, 1997; Sayer, 1997). It is often loosely referred to any social influence on individual experience and has its roots in the philosophy of human experience (DeLamater & Hyde, 1998). The fundamental assumption of social constructionism is that reality is socially constructed (DeLamater & Hyde, 1998). It claims that objects or referents of knowledge are nothing more than social construction (Corey, 2017; Sayer, 1997; Weingarten, 1998). The notion of gender identity being stable and internal has been displaced by it being social and performative (Shefer et al., 2010). Sayer (1997) argues that whether we are describing gender, cultural identity, sexuality or economic behaviour, people are not creatures of determinism, but are socially constructed and constructing. The social constructionist theory conceptualises gender as a system of social classification that has an influence on status, access to power and material resources (Strebel, 2006). From this view, gender is more of a feature of social situations rather than a property of individuals (Saguy, 2021). From the social constructionist view, gender identity is a social construction that gives men and women an idea of their sense of self, according to various factors around them (Iwamoto et al., 2018). It favours the use of conventional scientific methods to establish factual knowledge about an observable, objective, and measurable external world (Luyt, 2012). Therefore, it attempts to explain how men and women are portrayed and to determine its effects. Social constructionists argue that gender constructions and roles are based on historically cultural, psychological, and social factors (Elliott, 2003; Ratele, 2017). There is an acknowledgment of biological differences between men and women, but it makes a point that masculinity and femininity are not determined by these biological differences but are socially constructed through experience and can transcend gender roles (Ratele, 2017). To expand on this point, the acknowledgment is that gender is grounded in biological drives which provide a generalised motivation. However, biology does not dictate when, where and with what a person is (DeLamater & Hyde, 1998). Gender practice is produced through these representations and occurs at an individual, interpersonal, and institutional level, which speaks to a social performance (Luyt, 2012). With regards to gender roles, specifically in South Africa, there has been a shift toward a social constructionist view of gender, where gender and gender roles are seen and experienced as social constructions. However, there are still deep roots present in society that link to essentialist views of gender.

2.9 Conclusion

In an effort to define masculinity, this literature review has reviewed existing theory and research on the topic, acknowledging that it is a complicated concept that is always evolving. Further discussion was made to compare the existence of multiple masculinities with a single, hegemonic masculinity. The discussion of hegemonic masculinity was furthered in the literature, which has explained the idea and where it fits into the larger scheme of masculinity. An examination of how men and boys in South Africa have constructed their masculinities over time has been discussed. The relationship between masculinity and unemployment in South Africa was examined in this literature review, as well as the impact each idea has on the other. The literature review chapter has made an evaluation of the Covid-19 pandemic's consequences on the South African economy and unemployment rate. Lastly, the chapter explains how the study has employed social constructionism as a theoretical framework because it is thought to better explain and address the research objectives. The next chapter details the method used in this study to achieve the research aims.

Chapter 3

Method

3.1. Introduction

This chapter begins by highlighting questions of the research, to clarify what the research is focused on, and the information needed to reach this focus. This is followed by presenting the research design that was best suited for this study, along with a motivation for this choice of design. The criteria for selecting the participants and a description of the research site is then provided. An explanation of the type of data collection that was chosen for the research, as well as its appropriateness for the research, is given. This is followed by an outline of the procedures and the form of data analysis that was used. Finally, the ethical considerations of the research are discussed, as well as the reflexivity considerations of the researcher throughout the process of the research.

3.1.3 Research Questions

The following questions were the focus of the study:

1. What are the experiences of unemployed black men in Mamelodi?
2. How do unemployed black men in Mamelodi construct (hegemonic) masculinity?
3. How do unemployed black men in Mamelodi identify with the provider role?
4. How are unemployed black men's identifications with the provider role related to psychosocial challenges in situations of unemployment?
5. How do the unemployed black men's identification with hegemonic ideas of masculinities influence their identification with the provider role?

3.1.4 Research Design

Qualitative research turns to understanding a person's textured experiences, as well as their reflections on those experiences, rather than relying on numeric data and limiting questions that are categorised, and leave no room for open-ended replies (Jackson II et al., 2007). In addition to this, it relies on the participant to offer in-depth responses about how they have constructed or understood something to be (Jackson II et al., 2007). The aim of qualitative research is to aid in uncovering the perceptions and behaviours of an audience with regards to a specific topic as the focus is on describing individual experiences and beliefs (Creswell, 2014). More thick descriptive data and inferences can be taken from this kind of method, as a result of the richness

and detail within the discussions (Creswell, 2014). A disadvantage of this approach is that the results cannot be generalised to the rest of the population, because only a few participants are involved to acquire the depth needed (Jackson II et al., 2007). Qualitative research functions to understand the meaning of human action by being able to describe the essential characteristics of social objects or human experience (Jackson II et al., 2007).

Considering the nature of this research, a qualitative design was used because it was seen as the most appropriate research design that aided in answering the research questions of this study and was able to provide a more complex understanding of the research topic. It was seen as the most appropriate research design because it views human experience as too complex to be reduced to variables and numbers, as is typical of quantitative research (Howitt & Cramer, 2017). The study focused on the understanding of the phenomena from the subject's perspective (Howitt & Cramer, 2017). The researcher used this design as it strived to identify the essential core structures of a given experience and it was able to identify and suspend the researcher's assumptions in order to receive a universal essence of the phenomenon of the understanding of masculinity among the population of unemployed black men living in Mamelodi (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). This research design was believed to be the most suitable because the study was searching for the subjective perceptions of the participants with regards to the meanings and feelings they have attached to unemployment, masculinities, and their psychosocial wellbeing. The study was able to identify these essential components by bracketing off any other assumptions that do not belong to the male participants (Whiting, 2008). In this way, the study can distil the essence of the phenomenon - the constructions of masculinity among unemployed young men living in Mamelodi. The research design fits well into the aim of exploring the experiences and the subjective constructions of masculinity of these unemployed young black men.

3.1.5 Participants

Purposive and snowball sampling methods were implemented to recruit participants for the research. The researcher interviewed 8 participants for the study. Participants of the study were required to be African black men, between the ages 18 and 35, residents of Mamelodi and out of work for at least a period of two years. This was a non-random sampling technique where research participants were selected because they are easily recruited (Howitt & Cramer, 2017). This allowed for better control of the selection process. However, because this was not based on chance, everyone in the population did not have an equal opportunity to participate. The nonprobability sampling approach was suitable as the study sought to explore particular

subjective experiences from participants who were readily available and would allow for in-depth rich data to be produced. The researcher was cognisant of not using the snowball technique within friendship groups and had aimed to spread the collection of data from participants across the area of Mamelodi.

Purposive sampling is a non-random technique about deliberately choosing a participant due to the characteristics that the participants have that will fulfil the research of the study (Etikan et al., 2016). The researcher decides what needs to be known and tries to find the people who can and are willing to provide the information according to their experience and knowledge of the phenomenon (Etikan et al., 2016). The reason this technique was used was because the study required specific participant characteristics that were able to be of assistance in the research. These characteristics were young black men who were unemployed and who also lived in Mamelodi. These characteristics were essential and were purposefully sought out to fulfil the aims of the research. Snowball sampling starts with a purposive sample where the initial participant serves as the start of a ripple effect, recruiting subjects, who then also recruit, expanding the sample wave by wave like a snowball (Etikan et al., 2015).

The sample criteria included that they should be male participants who lived in the community of Mamelodi. The ages ranged from 18 to 35 years old as this was within the legal ages of the age bracket under the category of “youth” in South Africa (Southern African Regional Poverty Network, 2020). The last criteria was that they had to be unemployed or seeking employment. These criteria were set to help get a definite sample that would have aided in reaching the aims of the research. A snowball approach was used through referrals where participants recommended others (Howitt & Cramer, 2017). This appeared to be the best approach because unemployed young black men who were interviewed referred the researcher to others, with the expectation that friendship and family groups were excluded. After evaluation, the participants were telephonically informed of the research and upon consent, an interview and location was set to their convenience. The setting of the interview included a room which included two chairs for myself and the participant, as well as a table where the forms, stationery and recording device were set. After an interview had been concluded, it would be noted and the next participant would be called to enter and begin their interview. Below is a table with the participants’ biographical information:

Table 1: Participants’ biographical information

Participants	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Length of Unemployment
1	Thabo	26	Male	Never have been employed

2	Mpho	26	Male	Never have been employed
3	Thato	27	Male	2 years
4	Tshepo	25	Male	Never have been employed
5	Thabiso	29	Male	2 years
6	Katlego	23	Male	Never have been employed
7	Karabo	32	Male	4 years
8	Neo	28	Male	Never have been employed

3.1.6 Research site

Mamelodi is a large historically black South African township in the Gauteng province (Ramafamba & Meors, 2012; Renkin, 2017). It is a marginalised area of the Tshwane greater metropolitan area and the marginalisation of the township life continues even after twenty-seven years of democracy (Blokland, 2014). Mamelodi is approximately twenty kilometres east of the Pretoria CBD and located in ward 38 in region six of the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality (Khanyile, 2014; Mgushelo, 2018). In the 1870s, Mamelodi was known as the Vlakfontein farm, however the actual township was founded under the Black Areas Consolidation Act in 1945 (Khanyile, 2014; Mkhize, 2015). The residents of Mamelodi were individuals who were removed from other areas, as a result of the Group Areas Act of 1950, to come live there (Mkhize, 2015). The reason for the township's development was that the government wanted to establish segregated townships in line with Pretoria's manufacturing industry's needs to serve as a labour reserve, and it also served as an alternative urban housing scheme as there were demolitions of locations in and around Pretoria (Khanyile, 2014).

Mamelodi is a 45.2 km² urban township settlement in the east of the City of Tshwane (Frith, 2011; Ilunga et al., 2020). Currently, the township of Mamelodi has a population of 334 577 people and approximately 110 703 households (Frith, 2011; Ilunga et. al, 2020; Renkin, 2017). Some sources state that this is a conservative estimation, and that the population is closer to one million (Renkin, 2017). With regards to gender, there are 52% males and 48% females. 98% of the residents are African and 42.5% of them speak Sepedi as their first language (Frith, 2011; Ilunga et. al, 2020). A third of the households are female headed and 40% of the population live on less than R20 000 a year (Ilunga et. al, 2020). 61% of the homes are classified as formal, leaving 39% of the homes classified under informal housing (Ilunga et al., 2020; Renkin, 2017). Those from the ages of 15 to 19 years old constitute 7.2% of the population, those from 20 to 24 years constitute 11.88% of the population, 13.49% of the population are

between the ages of 25 to 29 and 11.13% are from the ages of 30 (Frith, 2011). Only about 38.4% of the population above the age of 20 years have completed their secondary school education (Ilunga et al., 2020).

3.1.7 Data Collection

The use of interviews for data collection is popular in the social sciences and is considered as a favourite data collection tool by qualitative researchers (Denzin et al., 2006). Doody and Noonan (2014) identify three types of interviews namely, structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. The main difference between these interviews is the level of control the interviewer has over the interactions during the interview. A semi-structured individual interview was the main instrument design used for this study. During a semi-structured interview, the researcher is guided by an interview schedule which contains the predetermined topics and questions to be asked and discussed (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Although the researcher enters the interview space ‘prepared’ they also enter knowing that the interviewee’s responses cannot be determined, and that the direction of the interview is unique to each interviewee (Whiting, 2008). This type of interview includes a skeleton of the interview structure that covers questions. A broad interview guide or schedule is used when there is enough objective knowledge about the phenomenon but little subjective knowledge about the phenomenon (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). It may be added onto during the interview when important issues arise that could not have been anticipated by the researcher prior to the interview (Howitt & Cramer, 2017, p. 382). They should be personal, involving direct, open and verbal questions to elicit detailed stories and narratives while the interviewer contributes very little, respecting the role of the participants (Whiting, 2008).

The semi-structured interview is designed to bring out subjective responses from participants regarding a particular situation or phenomenon they have experienced. The participants in the study may respond to the questions as they wish to and the researcher may, in turn, also probe these responses (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). What makes the semi-structured unique among other interview methods is that the topic still holds a degree of relevance while also remaining responsive to the participant (McIntosh & Morse, 2015).

Semi-structured interviews were selected as the open-ended nature of the questioning allowed for the participants to narrate their experiences and understanding of their daily lives. Additionally, they allowed for the researcher to gain further clarification or a deeper understanding through the use of follow-up or probe questions. The interview schedule used in the study is detailed in Appendix A. The advantages of semi-structured interviews include

gaining insight and context, helping the researcher build rapport and the ability for more complex questions to be asked (Doody & Noonan, 2014). Other advantages include the ability to seek clarification of questions, for the participants to give detailed responses and the personal benefit for the participants to telling their story (Doody & Noonan, 2014). This was seen as the most suitable choice because the researcher was looking for rich and detailed answers, led by the participant, to receive a good account of their experiences. It was also appropriate because there could have been very important issues that were relevant to the study that would not have been identified if structured interviews were used. It provided the researcher with insight into the everyday happenings and life of the unemployed young black men without having filtered any information out. It gave the researcher the in-depth responses that were needed to address the research questions. In terms of the language used in the interviews, the participants would be asked to express themselves in whichever language they are comfortable in expressing themselves in. Most of the interviews were mixed between English and Sepedi or S'pitori, an urban dialect which combines Sepedi-Tswana, Afrikaans and other Bantu languages. An English and Sepedi interview guide were each compiled (see Appendix E and F), which were easily translated to fit the participants' preferences. Once the interviews were completed, I transcribed the interviews and translated them into English, where necessary.

3.1.7 Procedure

Ethical clearance was applied for within the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of the Witwatersrand. The ethics protocol number, MACC/21/06 was provided (please see Appendix B for the ethics clearance certificate). Once the research proposal was submitted, approved and I had been issued a research protocol number, I began to recruit participants. I started by recruiting participants, through word-of-mouth, in the D-sections of Mamelodi West and obtained recommendations of other possible participants to recruit from those that were initially found. I attempted to diversify where data was collected across Mamelodi by not having restricted the data collection to a specific area or having participants within the same social and family groups. The participants that fit the sample criteria were invited to participate in the research. I provided all potential participants with a research participant information sheet (Appendix C), which provided the participant with a more detailed explanation of the study and my contact details. I then arranged to meet participants at a venue that was most convenient for the participant. Before the arranged date of the interview, I ensured that the selected venue was suitable to conduct a confidential interview. In consideration of the Covid-19 pandemic, I made sure that all protocols were observed. This meant that the

participants and I would always wear masks, and we sat at a distance from each other in a well-ventilated area with hand sanitisers available. In addition, contact was limited, and I was cognisant of making sure the duration of the interviews would not be prolonged. Before and after interview sessions, I ensured that the venue was cleaned.

At the beginning of every interview, I provided the participant with three documents: the participant information form (Appendix B), the interview consent form (Appendix C) and, the recording consent form (Appendix D). I had taken time to go over all three forms individually to ensure that the participant understood what each form was asking of them. Participants were reminded of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage of the research. I then explained how they were able to do this. Once I answered any questions and/or addressed issues of clarification, I then obtained the participants' signature on the two consent forms. The data received from the participants was stored in a password-protected file and was only accessed by me and my supervisor. As approved by the participants, the data may be used for future research.

3.1.8 Data Analysis

I used a digital recorder during each interview to record the session. After each session, the recordings were stored in a password-protected file to protect the confidentiality of the data.

Due to the qualitative nature of the research, thematic analysis was used to analyse the data from the semi-structured interviews. This type of data analysis was chosen because it provided stability and flexibility in examining and summarising findings, in the sampling size, constitution, research question, data collection method and approaches to meaning generation (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2015; Alhojailan, 2012). It can be used to identify patterns across and within data in terms of participants' perspectives, lived experiences, behaviour and practices, views and understandings of what the participants feel, think and do (Braun & Clarke, 2015). Thematic analysis illustrates data in great detail and works with diverse subjects through interpretations. It is most appropriate for any study that aims to use interpretations (Alhojailan, 2015). It goes beyond counting words or phrases and moves to identifying and describing explicit and implicit ideas as codes that are developed for themes are linked to raw data as summary markers (Alhojailan, 2015). In order to perform a comprehensive analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006) identified six phases: familiarising yourself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

Before thematic analysis was implemented, I listened to each of the recordings and typed out the responses. During this, I would pause, re-wind and re-listen to the recordings in order to accurately type out what was mentioned. When the typing out of a transcript was done, a final listening to the recordings was done to ensure the accuracy of the transcripts. Thematic analysis for the research has followed the steps outlined below:

1. Familiarising yourself with the data

Braun and Clarke (2006) state that it is important for the researcher to immerse themselves in the data to the extent that they are familiar with all aspects of the content. I read each entire transcript separately to familiarise myself with the participants' responses. I then informally looked for patterns across each transcript and noted them down on each transcript and on a separate page which was designated to the thematic analysis. This was done repetitively to make sure all the patterns were included.

2. Generating initial codes

Once the researcher has read and familiarised themselves with the data, an initial list should be generating, which includes what is in the data and what is interesting about them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I identified the initial codes from the data that appeared to be of importance to answering the research questions. I then organised the data into meaningful groups according to the patterns that were found. I also added quotes from individual participants that captured and fit with each of the main codes.

3. Searching for themes

Once the initial codes were generated, I wrote down these codes and sorted the different codes into potential themes. The codes were then reviewed, and some were combined to form overarching themes. I was then able to visually see how the different codes made up the themes that were identified. As I progressed, some codes were used for main themes whereas others were discarded.

4. Reviewing themes

The data in the themes should make meaningful sense together and there should be clear distinctions between the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once I was able to produce a set of candidate themes, I reviewed them again against the transcripts and the codes and refined them.

Some themes that were identified were found to overlap while others needed to be broken down further into separate themes.

5. Defining and naming themes

At this stage, the researcher defines and further refines the themes that they will be presenting for their analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I implemented this by identifying the essence of what the theme was about and what aspect of the data each theme captures. I made sure that the themes could cover the overarching pattern of responses by the participants and the themes. The themes that were identified were seen to respond to the research questions and fit the overall narrative of the experiences of the participants.

6. Producing the report

The last stage starts when the researcher has fully worked-out themes and includes the final analysis and write-up of the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher notes down all the themes and gives a description of each theme. The validity of the themes were ensured by using extracts and examples that were found in the transcripts of the participants that captured the essence of the data in response to the research aims. Each theme was also followed by literature discussed that fits with the themes found in the analysis of the research.

I had ensured the rigour of the research by showing that what I had found was present and that the findings had been consistent throughout and had ensured the quality of the research was at its best. I had also ensured transferability by producing thick descriptions, and I had achieved external validity where conclusions that have been drawn were transferable to other times, settings, situations and people. Confirmability was ensured by leaving an audit trail of the research steps taken from the beginning of the study till the reporting of results. Additionally, I also kept a reflexive journal to manage my beliefs and biases.

3.1.9 Ethical Considerations

There were ethical concerns involved that needed to be addressed throughout the study, especially as the research was concerned with human emotions. Ethical considerations and limitations included informed consent, beneficence and non-maleficence, fidelity and responsibility, respect for anonymity and confidentiality, and respect for privacy (Fouka & Mantzorou, 2018). Institutional approval and ethical clearance were obtained. Information regarding the purpose, procedures and the approximate duration of the study was provided to the participants. Consent means that the participants freely and clearly gave their consent and

that they should be adequately informed about the research (Arifin, 2018; Fouka & Mantzourou, 2018). Consent was asked for when filling in the consent forms and participants were made aware that they were free to refuse to take part or withdraw from the research, with their data, at any stage (Arifin, 2018).

Anonymity is protected when the participant's identity cannot be linked with their actual personal responses (Fouka & Mantzourou, 2018). If the researcher cannot promise anonymity, then they have to address confidentiality, which is the management of private information by the researcher in order to protect the subject's identity (Fouka & Mantzourou 2018). Although anonymity could not be assured because of the face-to-face interaction with the participants, confidentiality was assured by eliminating any of the identifying information in the transcripts and research reports. For this, pseudonyms were used in the place of participants' names. Participants were given contact details of someone whom they may approach for further details. Voice recordings were also subjected to the principle of informed consent. After the data collection was completed, the data was kept in a password-protected file that could only be accessed by the researcher. Upon the consent provided from the participants, the data may be used for future research. Feedback will be provided on request to inform participants about the results and conclusions of the research.

Beneficence includes the professional duty to do effective and significant research to promote and serve the wellbeing of the people (Fouka & Mantzourou 2018). Beneficence refers to the benefits of the research whereas non-maleficence relates to the potential risks of participation (Fouka & Mantzourou 2018). The participants were informed of the aspects of the research that may have influenced their decision to participate, such as risks or discomforts. They were further informed that there were no direct benefits to participating, but that the research would contribute to academic knowledge. Fidelity and responsibility are when the researcher should be in a relationship of trust with people and are thus required to take responsibility for their actions, to adhere to professional conduct and to make their role and obligations clear to their participants (Howitt & Cramer, 2017, p.166). The next principle is respect for privacy, where privacy can be defined as the freedom an individual has to determine the extent, time and circumstances under which private information will be shared with or withheld from others (Fouka & Mantzourou 2018). An invasion of privacy happens when private information like opinions, beliefs, records and attitudes are shared with others without the participant's consent or knowledge (Fouka & Mantzourou 2018). The researcher made sure that there was no invasion of the participants' privacy during the research and respected the participants' right to privacy.

3.1.10 Reflexivity

Reflexivity has been established as one of the ways researchers can ensure the rigor and quality of their work in determining trustworthiness (Dodgson, 2019). Reflexivity allows for self-examination where the researcher's assumptions, values and prejudices must be acknowledged (Whiting, 2008). It increases the credibility of the findings and deepens the reader's understanding of the work (Dodgson, 2019). As a researcher, I was cognisant of my role in the creation of knowledge and was constantly monitoring the impact of any possible biases, beliefs and personal experiences on the research. This was ensured by keeping an auditing trail, as well as a self-reflexive journal, that I used throughout the study.

I am a black, Jewish, twenty-six-year-old woman who comes from a semi-urban background. Because of this, I was given the opportunity to further my education through pursuing higher education to postgraduate level. All of these factors might have affected the way the male unemployed participants gave their responses, be it conscious or unconscious. Since I am not male, this might have exhibited a gendered power dynamic, which might have affected the way I perceived the participants' responses and vice versa. There may also have been less comfort in those participants that were older, and possibly, more traditional, who might have expected me to be more submissive. The younger participants may have been easier to converse with because of the commonality of age. However, they may have also skewed their responses because of being my same-age peers. To me, it appeared that the older participants were more expressive about their accomplishments, drive, hopes and willingness to better themselves. This may be due to feeling a desire to be viewed as more accomplished. In turn, I felt the need to build rapport and ease these participants' anxieties.

A major barrier between all the participants and the researcher would have been the socialised norm that men cannot be open about feelings and emotions. Therefore, it would possibly have been difficult to get open responses from the participants. This was where the environment of the interview location was important in facilitating open conversation. There could also have been a barrier with the level of education, having come into an area with most people not having access to higher education. This could have created a power dynamic that impacted the responses given. It appeared to me, that this factor could have made the participants feel the need to be more formal in their mannerisms and responses. My black racial identity probably gave the participants a sense of familiarity. Additionally, the fact that the location of the research was an area where I grew up in, resided in and speak the language, gave

me an insider's perspective. I attempted to maintain reflexivity using a reflexive journal for self-awareness.

The data collection for this research was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. This meant that additional factors were to be considered in the collection of data. I needed to be cognisant of the role the pandemic played in the participants' responses and the narrative they brought up. Due to the dire socio-economic situation that followed the pandemic, I may have found the participants at a time where the financial hardship was heightened, affecting their feelings about their unemployment and the pressures to provide. The responses may be different in a non-pandemic period.

3.1.11 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an explanation of the questions that the research is attempting to address in order to gain an understanding of the constructions of masculinity of the unemployed black men from Mamelodi. The use of a qualitative research design has been explained, as well as the reasons for choosing this design for the research. A description of the participants and the research site of Mamelodi was provided to provide a frame of reference for the research, and to better understand the perspectives of the participants. The use of semi-structured interviews as a data collection method and the reasons why this method best suited the research was provided. The procedures that had taken place regarding the data collection were outlined. Thematic analysis as the most fitting type of analysis for the research was considered. The ethical considerations surrounding the research were also addressed. Finally, the chapter concluded with the reflexivity section, detailing my self-examination of assumptions and biases.

Chapter 4

Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the themes that were identified across all the interviews that were conducted for the study. This includes sub-themes that were also considered to be of importance. This chapter presents a descriptive analysis and interpretation of the themes identified. This is integrated with the literature that has been conducted by other researchers, and the theoretical framework of the study.

There were five themes identified. These are listed in the table below.

Table 2. List and Order of Themes and Subthemes

Order of Themes	Themes
Theme 1 Sub-Themes:	Proactivity - Working and Survival - Victories and Achievements - Pride and Self-Esteem
Theme 2 Sub-Themes:	Dreams and Hopes - Teenage Dreams - Current Dreams and Hopes
Theme 3	Unemployment
Theme 4 Sub-Themes:	Masculinity and Culture - Masculine ways of reacting - Coping mechanisms and strategies - A modern take- women can also provide
Theme 5	Obstacles and Persistence

In the chapter, there is the exploration of the major themes obtained from the interviews undertaken with eight young unemployed male participants in Mamelodi. The research aimed at uncovering the constructions of what being a man in Mamelodi means, from the perspective of these participants. The following are the major themes obtained from the study.

4.1.1. Theme 1: Proactivity

The first major theme that emerged from the study is pro-activity. Proactivity is described as the action of trying to shape, expand, affect, and tamper what happens in our lives (Grant & Ashford, 2008). They are behaviours that involve self-starting actions oriented toward change in the future (Bohlmann & Zacher, 2012). These behaviours include anticipatory actions that individuals take to impact themselves or their environment (Grant & Ashford, 2008). Ways in which individuals can do this is by taking initiative in pursuing personal goals, actively adapting to new environments, expressing voice, taking charge, acting in advance to influence individuals and groups, implementing ideas, and solving problems and building social networks (Bohlmann & Zacher, 2012; Grant & Ashford, 2008). The theme of proactivity comprised of three sub-themes, namely working, victories, and pride. This can be seen by the following participants who occupy a proactive nature and intent in their daily lives:

“I look for a way that will keep me busy, like maybe I could go to the library, read something or maybe I can watch a fashion channel and after that I eat and stuff, but me normally, I don’t sitting around, I make sure that I go to library, I read something new, I find something interesting to do. Every day for me is like finding something new to do because I don’t want to like sit around doing nothing, because it will, I’ll limit myself and I’ll become depressed and I’ll become stressed because right now I’m at home” - Tshepo

“I spend most of my day reading books. I don’t like watching TV because it wastes a lot of time.” - Thabiso

“Currently, I’m doing morning runs around Rethabile sport ground trying to keep fit since I once applied for army right, I have to get used to running and lifting, I have to get used to extreme environment because as I’ve heard, training for an army is very intense. So, I must make my body to be strong and keep up with. That’s my morning, then my day, I read some books, my father has a lot of books. He used to hold many books. In mostly, since I’m not currently in any institution, I help people a lot. People who struggle with schoolwork since I recently finished my matric, people who struggle with particular subject like commerce, when they come forward then I help them out. It also helped me realized that I can also do teaching. Currently, if army rejects my application, that’s when I can apply at UNISA and do education.” - Katlego

It is seen from the above quotations that the participants intentionally involve themselves in various activities throughout the day. This is understood that it may be beneficial to keep their minds and bodies in an active state, whilst they are unemployed. This may come from a worry about staying idle and the need to give off the appearance of seeming busy. Another reason may be from keeping away from the negative feelings, such as depression, that may arise when being inactive and keeping to one's self.

This seems to be true with Tshepo, who shares that he makes sure he does not sit around and actively finds something to do with himself, be it going to the library and reading books or watching a channel with a perceived purpose to him, such as a fashion channel, which is relevant to his desired occupation. In this way, he feels that it would help him steer away from limiting himself and causing feelings of depression and distress. Thabiso also shared similar ways of being proactive, such as reading books, as TV made him feel like he was wasting time. Therefore, these two participants viewed reading as a more proactive means of using their time. Katlego, along with taking up reading like the other participants, kept himself physically active in the hopes of being able to qualify for a job that required a certain level of physical fitness. He also used his time to help others with their schoolwork, which had helped him realise that he had an interest in teaching. With Katlego, it was observed that his proactive endeavours were linked to ultimately gaining something that would be useful for a career from the experience, such as getting into the army or teaching.

It is also worth noting that there also appeared to be a lack of proactivity that was observed among some of the participants. This could be seen with Thabo:

“But during the day, I’m actually doing nothing. Like, I don’t know, most of the time. Especially now because of lockdown, you know, can’t really do much. So I’m always home and trying to find something else to do... I don’t really have a schedule. Even if I sleep at 3 o’clock in the morning, it doesn’t matter because there’s, I can sleep but in the past years, I couldn’t do that. I had to sleep before 11 o’clock, knowing that I’m going to be awake by half past five. So, I guess it depends on what I actually do every day cos that’s what messing up with my sleep pattern”

In this, we see an admittance of not having anything to do during the day. This lack of proactivity needs to be noted as a very real part of the reality and experience of these participants, to give a whole account of their proactive and non-proactive ways. It was shared

that there was very little to do, as there is no schedule in place for them, or a responsibility that bound them to work for the day. In addition to this, the impact of the Covid-19 lockdown appeared to influence a sense of inactivity.

The theme of proactivity is evident in the way individuals in the community engage in various activities to survive and make the most of their circumstances. From engaging in informal side jobs to pursuing personal goals and adapting to new environments, participants demonstrate a strong sense of agency and a desire to make a positive impact on their lives (Grant & Ashford, 2008). For Young (2016), a man's boredom, restlessness, inner emptiness and their woundedness from their unemployment, may influence them into taking up action. However, it is also observed that because of their unemployment and general lack of work duty and responsibility, some participants had resorted to having nothing to keep them active on some days, as their days were not structured.

4.1.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Working and Survival

Working as a sub-theme can be demonstrated where the participants shared their daily routines, stating the works they have taken on and handle for survival. This meant that the participants kept themselves busy with tasks they could do, and with informal side jobs they could offer in their community. It is assumed that "working" in this sense was not seen as employment or what they aspired to be in their individual lives but was a way of making means and keeping themselves occupied while looking for employment. Thabo mentioned barbering as a 'side hustle':

"Maybe I can add, sometimes, during the week, I cut people's hair, and then they call me. Like I'm a barber. I cut people's hair. To be honest, I do it for fun even though the money is little but I love doing it. Like, I feel better like when doing things for other people and seeing when they're happy with something that I do. It makes me feel happy. And then, yea, everyday life is like that and if I don't have anyone who comes maybe for a haircut then I'm by myself by the tv, music, you know and just, yea, that's it"- Thabo

The third participant, Thato, participated in art and modeling and others were stylists, whereas others, seen below, tutored younger children:

"Yes. Then, when I help around people with schoolwork's that's a wrap. Because I help many people in the same day. Maybe I go to them, or they come to my place. It takes a

lot of time, and it depends on the work they need help with. Some comes with the assignments, some come with classwork's, some needs basic tips on how to study a certain chapter, like what should they do whenever they encounter that chapter. I help them with those kinds of things.”- Katlego

Neo defined his hustle as printing and designing:

“Hustling. Mostly we do, uh ba reng (what do you call)? we print t-shirts for people. We also do flyers, banners, business cards. Ka mo gare ga (part of) the graphic designer part nyana (abit) so wangthlaloganya? Ya ke yona eo (you get me? yes, that's it)... ya because I'm not registered to the law system wangthlaloganya (you get me)? to South African system wangthlaloganya (you get me)? So most of the time, ke ya te hustlela, wa bona? Le chelete e ke kreyang, ke tswara bo R200 bo R300. Ko re le ka mogare ga uh, mo di banking details tsa ka, a di reflect'e coz ke, mostly ke hand money fela, ba go ofa yona mo letsogong (I hustle for myself, you see? Even the money that I receive, it's around R200 around R300. So even in my banking details, it doesn't reflect because its mostly just hand money, they give it to you by hand). So ya, I'm unemployed. Nna vele (yes of course) I'm unemployed.”- Neo

As part of their proactivity, Thabo was seen to use his side hustle of barbering as a way of working and surviving. This was apart from keeping himself busy through watching television and listening to music. His barbering was said to also be a way for him to positively impact others by making them happy. Other participants also shared proactive activities, such as being involved in arts and fashion. These were said to help advance them in the actual career they intended pursuing. This was also true for Katlego who worked and survived on helping others with schoolwork, which helped him realise his interest in teaching. It is also noted that it appeared that Neo defined his hustling as being able to print objects, such as shirts and stationery. These proactive behaviours help individuals reach their goals (Bohlmann & Zacher, 2021).

It is seen here that participants may have a need to do something with themselves while hoping to find the work that they are truly interested in. Most of the participants appeared to struggle to keep idle and feared wasting time, opting to turn their interests, skills, and hobbies into something they could make money out of. Others appeared to have an initial interest that

they were struggling to pursue, and ultimately used their time to find other things that worked for them while pursuing this initial dream.

Within the broader theme of proactivity, the sub-theme of working and survival showcases how the participants were engaged in various activities to keep themselves occupied and financially supported. Many participants took on different tasks, such as barbering, art, modelling, teaching, and assisting with schoolwork. In the masculine identity, with regards to proactivity, the qualities of determination and ambition are emphasised, and value is placed on action, decisiveness and performance (Carson et al, 2014). While proactive individuals are clearly ambitious with making a difference, they are also focused on helping others (Carson et al., 2014). This was true with these participants. These activities not only provided a source of income for survival but also demonstrated the participants' resourcefulness and determination to utilise their skills and talents.

4.1.1.2. Sub-theme 2: Victories and Achievements

The sub-theme “victories” represents the successes that the unemployed young men had made in their past and were proud of. In this sense, victories referred to moments and actions that had felt special and rewarding to the participants. These included obstacles they had seemed to overcome, or times where they had felt they had succeeded or triumphed over a situation. The participants’ responses ranged from perceived small achievements and moments to big achievements, and those that they had waited a long time for.

Mpho shared that a victory for him was succeeding in doing important things for those around him. He mentioned:

“I’m the oldest one ke santse ke le mo gae (who is still at home), but then ba proud ka nna (they are proud of me) when I can do something for them on special things like birthdays you know, so I would say for me I’m successful, and that’s how I’ll define success. For me I’m successful it makes me happy to see them happy because of somethings that I do for them. That makes me successful and that has been my goal the time gore if nna ke nale plans bo bohle re swanetse gore re be sharp (that I still have plans, everyone at home should be fine). Yah, ke nthwe ke e dirang (that’s the thing I do).”

Here, the victory for him was defined as an act of giving, and the ability to give to and celebrate others on special occasions. He felt like an achievement was making sure that his loved ones

were happy and satisfied. Thato mentioned that a victory in his life would be being successful in the things he loved doing in the art industry. He said:

“I’m a model and I also do couple of art”. (Thato)

Here, he was proud of being able to be recognised for his creative abilities in modelling and art. For Tshepo, making continuous progress towards achieving his goals was a victory for him. Tshepo mentioned:

“Can say that like I’m a step closer to be where I want to be”. (Tshepo)

This showed his emphasis on breaking down his goals incrementally and being able to value the process of getting closer to achieving them. Thabiso stated that his victory was to having saved money and invested:

“I saved up money, I just saved up money”. (Thabiso)

Katlego shared that an achievement that he was able to claim was being able to attain the minimum academic entry requirements for furthering his studies in higher education. He mentioned:

“One of them is finishing matric. Like in my high school career, there was a time where I repeated a grade. I’ve never repeated a grade, I’ve never failed any subject of whatsoever because I was used to people calling me a genius and that. once I failed it was the first time, I failed Term 4. When I failed Grade 11 it really hit me. You know, it took toll in my confidence, in my abilities to do anything. As the second year of Grade 11 went on, I started to regain my confidence... once I got my statement, I saw that I got a Bachelor’s degree then I know that yah this it, it gives me a sense of fulfilment, made me happier than I’ve ever been. That was my biggest achievement.” - Katlego

To Katlego, this achievement followed a difficult time in his scholastic career where he experienced failing a grade. This victory possibly meant that there was a regained hope that he would be able to achieve this goal of further studies one day. But there was also a sense of this being an achievement in and of itself, and a form of validation of his abilities and potential.

In this sub-theme, it was seen that the participants had various personal meanings and diverse experiences that they could call victories for themselves. These victories ranged from achieving something for themselves and others. It also included victories that were a journey and would take time to achieve, rather than instant victories. In most of the responses, there appeared to be a sense of pride in being able to, or being in the process of, attaining these victories and successes, however big or small they might be.

The sub-theme of victories and achievements highlights moments of success and triumph that hold personal significance for the participants (Blokland, 2014). These achievements ranged from academic successes, overcoming obstacles, making progress in personal endeavours, and contributing positively to the lives of others. Participants took pride in their accomplishments, regardless of their scale, indicating a strong sense of self-worth and determination.

4.1.1.3 Sub-theme 3: Pride and Self-Esteem

Pride pointed to the feeling of happiness and fulfilment that these young men from Mamelodi had after attaining some of the goals they had set in their lives. Pride, in this sense, meant having a deep sense of satisfaction and pleasure that came from one's own achievements and successes or from owning certain qualities, skills or possessions that were admirable to others (Vocabulary.com, 2024). It also meant having confidence and self-respect. These were seen as a source of honour and respect. In this research, this excluded the meaning of pride that refers to feeling that one was better or more important than other people or having an exaggerated sense of self-esteem (Vocabulary.com, 2024).

Thato recalled a moment of pride in his development as an artist:

“Mmm. One thing ke like go pusher (is like, to keep going), growth. Ke na le five (5) years so far ke pusher (I have 5 years trying to move forward), since 2016. So, for me ge ke lebelela (when I look at) 2016 it's something else. So far, so good for my side, a ke tsebe (I don't know) from how other people see my work... Yah, because one thing about that, ke bona if ge o le artist (I see that when you are an artist) in most case, ge o ka ya ka batho gore ba go botsa eng (if you could focus on what other people are saying to you) like in most case, o ka se tefe nako (you won't give yourself time) like let me try this, let me try this, wa ntlhaologanya (do you understand me)”.

Tshepo stated that making his mother proud also brought him pride:

“The thing that I most proud of is like my mom, she’s proud of me and that is the thing that makes me happy, wa ntshwara. And ke achievile (I’ve achieved) that thing ya gore le nou (which currently), I can understand myself, not dilo tsela tsa go bragela batho like ke sale ka winner (not that of people bragging like I’ve won that), maybe like ko (at) GP magazine like best stylist, mara (but) not like GP magazine ke winne (I won) like I have few awards tsa (of) the best, wa ntshwara, tsa fashion mo gae (for fashion here at home), ke tsona dilo tseo e lego gore (those are the things that) I can be proud of and I’m proud of making my mom to be proud of me, you know, because where I come from it’s like our neighbourhood it’s kind crazy, you’ll find people like doing drugs, people like stealing, especially youths, they do drugs, they do alcohol and they don’t want like, those township it’s like dead, their minds is like not focusing on getting the paper and doing something right, wa ntshwara (you get me).” - Tshepo

Thabiso shared that a proud moment for him was being able to produce business plans for himself and others:

“Being able to construct any business plan without any formal education. And being able to consult for people, to create business plans and logos” - (Thabiso)

In this subtheme of pride, participants received a sense of internal gratification and pleasure from the recollection of these moments. To them, it was experienced as a personal feeling of accomplishment in the process or result of one’s efforts and works. For Thato, he was proud of that fact that he had grown as an artist and had shown persistence, focus and determination in his journey. He did this by avoiding what other people say, and remaining focused on himself. Tshepo mentioned that his pride was rooted in making his mother happy and proud. He did this by winning local awards and staying away from unhealthy negative actions, such as stealing and engaging in substance abuse. With Thabiso, a proud moment included using some of his own capabilities and inner resources to capitalise on an opportunity.

The sub-theme of pride and self-esteem underscored the emotional fulfilment and satisfaction that participants experienced as a result of their achievements and positive contributions. These moments of pride went beyond material gains and extended to personal growth, learning experiences, and the ability to make a difference in the lives of others.

Participants expressed a sense of self-respect and honour as they reflected on their accomplishments.

In conclusion, these themes collectively portrayed a narrative of individuals who were proactive in their pursuit of better lives despite challenging circumstances. The interviews shed light on the resourcefulness, resilience, and determination of the young men in Mamelodi, emphasising their efforts to create positive change for themselves and their communities. This was evident in the efforts these participants made in trying to survive in the circumstances they were in and to make more of a life that they had envisioned for themselves.

4.1.2 Theme 2: Dreams and Hopes

The second major theme was Dreams and Hopes. A dream in this study meant a cherished ambition, ideal or inspiration that one wished to achieve. It was a desire one might have, to hope that something happens (Webster, 2023). Hope was defined as having a feeling of desire and expectation for something specific to happen. It was believing that something good may happen. The theme of Dreams and Hopes included those that the participants had while growing up and what they wished to become when growing up, as well as the current dreams and hopes they had in their young adult lives. Some of these had stayed the same, while others were influenced by various factors, such as experiences, resources, and circumstances.

This theme comprised of two sub-themes, namely, ‘teenage dreams’ and ‘current dreams and hopes’. The sub-theme, teenage dreams, revealed the aspirations of these young men from Mamelodi when they were young. This included what they hoped to become with no reservations, and with endless possibilities and opportunities. This was reflected from the point of having responded to this question without thinking of factors that may have hindered the achievement of these hopes and dreams. It was from the perspective of the younger versions of these participants. These could be seen in the subthemes that are discussed below.

4.1.2.1. Sub-theme 1: Teenage dreams

The participants shared many of their diverse aspirations while growing up. Thabo mentioned wanting to go to school, study aviation and have a steady secure career:

“You know like when you’re like from a childhood and there’s like dreams... Yeah, unfortunately some dreams, you can’t get everything. Unless maybe, in future. So, its sort of like, since I couldn’t get into the field in the real world... So, it kind of like fills the space, the void that, yea, to be like uh like when I’m on the game, like I actually, it

fills the space like I wanted to do something like this. Just because, not everything goes according to plan, yeah. (speaking about a simulation game on piloting)... By now, I had hoped that I'd be like, secure employment, you know and like living. I had hoped that by this time, I'm fully independent, and like I had achieved my dream career. Coz, like yeah and then yea. I really had a dream. Like, I wanted to get into aviation. Since the pandemic, I had to look for a plan B. So, yea. Like I said, not everything goes according to plan"- Thabo

Mpho shared that he always wanted to be an artist:

"Because I remember when I was a kid, the drawing has been with me like always my whole life. I remember when I was in primary, when people planning on being doctors, I was always dreaming of being an artist. Then, sa le ke gola, as well ke experencer dilo tse di diragalang ka mo jarateng (I've been doing these since my childhood and experienced things that were happening inside the yard) between my parents and what not and getting a job"- Mpho

For Thato, his dream was to be a soccer player or artist:

"For me, aah, ke be nyaka go dlala ball (I wanted to play soccer), truly speaking. Pila pila (actually), let me explain my story, how I grow up from primary school be ke dira di gum boots, di drum-maduretse (I was doing Gum-boots dance, and dancing that involved drums music), wa ntlhaologanya (do you understand me), yah, stuff like that. Ke mo ge ke ntse ke gola nthwe ya bo artist ne e ntse e le mo go nna (being artistic have been there ever since my childhood), ke be ke dira le di drama (I was acting dramas), and ge ke ntse ke gola ke discoverile gore noh that's why ke dira so (when I grew up I've discovered that, yah now I see why I was doing this), like le ge gole boima ke a pusher (I kept on pushing even though it was difficult), like football a sankha ka stopper (I didn't stop playing football)"- Thato

Tshepo described having wanted to be a soldier based on a role-model of his:

"Well, while I was a teenager neh, because my uncle was a soldier, so I wanted to become a soldier when I finish school, I wanted to go to the army and me like him.

Because he was one of the persons I was inspired by, like my uncle is my inspiration, because when I was growing up, I had no father figure, my dad came like late when I was in matric. So, I didn't have that relationship with him, so my uncle was there for me.”- Tshepo

Thabiso recalled that he wanted to be a teacher growing up before he lost interest:

“I remember, I wanted to be a teacher. And then along the way I lost interest because I saw how teachers were treated at school, so I didn't want to put myself in that position. And then on, I started developing this passion for business. Then, I started catering company, of which I hired a partner, then he went through a drug problem and stole the money, then, yah”- Thabiso

Katlego mentioned wanting to have been in commercial law or in accounting while growing up:

“I chose another career field which was commercial law since everyone at home did sciences at school, I was never a person who was interested in science or anything. I was interested in the business world. Also, the comic things, I saw myself in media houses, media businesses and all that. Or saw myself as an accountant, someone who has a higher status in the business world... I only so myself as a lawyer, commercial law field. That was the only career part that I saw for myself. I always, at home they always told me to aim high that my father used to tell me that you should aim high for yourself, despite how your home environment is like, aim high, those kinds of things”- Katlego

The above participants spoke of the people they aspired to be and the career paths they hoped to follow when they grew up. This was more focused on the career aspect of their lives. This included factors such as their desired professions such as being an aviation pilot, an artist, stylists, a soldier, a teacher, an entrepreneur and lawyer. It was mentioned that some dreams could not be fulfilled due to circumstances. This is true for Thabo who shared that he could not fulfil his dream of aviation due to the pandemic and had to opt for an alternative career. This was seen because South Africa experienced its biggest decline in economic output due to the lockdown in the second quarter of 2020, and it would likely take 5 years for South Africa to

return to pre-Covid conditions (Hamadziripi & Chitimira, 2021). Some participants, such as Mpho, always viewed themselves living up to their dreams despite peer pressure and what other children wanted. This occurred until he experienced the reality of not finding work and other factors. This is also true for Thato who persisted despite the obstacles he faced. Some had dreams that were born out of admiration of a loved one or role model, such as Tshepo. Others had dreams based on being seen in a higher status, such as Katlego. This may have been seen as the most important thing to be when they were younger; and a career they occupied that would ultimately define them. This would have been instilled in these men as boys from a young age.

This reflects the initial aspirations of these young men during their formative years. It portrays a time when their aspirations were uninhibited by constraints, and their dreams were marked by endless possibilities. The participants expressed ambitions that ranged from envisioning themselves as professionals within specific career fields to pursuing careers in art and sports. These dreams often seemed to be tied to broader societal ideals and expectations, suggesting an influence of cultural norms and values (Mfecane, 2016; Viljoen, 2008;).

4.1.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Current dreams and hopes.

The sub-theme on current dreams and hopes, expands on the aspirations that the young men of Mamelodi currently have for the future. It further explains what they wanted to achieve going forward in their young adult lives. The dreams and hopes the participants expressed currently may have changed or stayed the same, according to each participant:

“I have a dream that I would like to achieve, like getting my licenses. Like aviation, and I hope in about three years from now that I’ll be, I would have obtained my first degree, yah”.- Thabo

So, my passion is style, I’m a stylist. I like to style people and my one of my dreams is to have some boutiques across all over the world. I’m talking about Paris, New York, Cape Town, wa ntswara (do you get me)?... And my dreams is that as I’ve explained to you gore ke be stylist, ke be le di boutiques, ke be Radio personality, like ke be ko radiong ko Tv’ng, wa ntshwara, because ke bona nkare I’m destined to that and at the same time ke thuse le batho. Because I know mo ke tswang teng and give back to people. Yah.- Tshepo

I want a stable job, so that I can create my business. So, from my own savings not to rely on business loans or funding. So right now, I'm looking for a stable job. Of which I can sustain myself and my family. Actually, it sorts of steppingstone... I want to open a real estate. Yah, it's a real estate. That actually selling houses. I'm into property right now." - Thabiso

Because high school has its difficult things, so, because my mathematics was not up to their standards, I was told to do Maths Literacy, then once I apply that commercial law, they told me that they don't meet those requirements, I should pure Maths in my statement, and I only did Maths Literacy. So, that's why I couldn't do commercial law... One of my goals is if I become a teacher and when I get the job, I want all my learners to get distinctions in the certain subjects that I will be teaching, you know. I can help them in others whenever they tell me that they need help, like saying please help me with Social Sciences even though I'm teaching EMS or I'm teaching Economics, like saying Sir please help me with the Accounting. I want to be a teacher that..., you know school kids mostly don't respect their teachers if you go soft and they fear the authoritarian kinds of teachers you know. I want to be a teacher that no one fears, no one disrespects, anyone can come to me. And whenever they feel safe around me, whenever they trust me, that is the one of the things that I want as a teacher" - Katlego

However, some participants had ultimately lost hope in their past childhood and current dreams, such as Mpho:

"Until to get to a point where I don't care about my career anymore until now ke ntse ke godile (as being a grown-up). They are consequences or places tse e lego gore (those that are) ... (not clear), le a nkwisisa (you understand). I made choices mo bophelong (in life) ge ke gola (when I grew-up). Here I am, and I feel like Gontse ke nna and ke moloositse kgale (Gontse it's me and I lost him long time ago). Because of the things tse di bego di diragala (things that happened) around that time" - Mpho

The dreams and hopes that had changed from the teenage ones may be due to factors such as limitations, a lack of resources, not meeting requirements, attitudes towards the profession and motivation, as well as less access to opportunities. The dreams they currently had were seen to be more suited to their current circumstances, as well as the time they perceived they had. In

addition, these dreams and hopes may have been expressed with other life pressures in mind and taking a more “realistic” approach. The dreams and hopes that had not changed meant participants were still hopeful and believed that what they hoped for was still attainable. A deep passion for the career field, be it a passion to make a change or to make money, may have caused some participants to stay rooted in the career that they had aspired to growing up. There are also those that had “given up” on their dreams completely due to circumstances and decisions that were made in the past. It is seen in some studies that the youth are discouraged, and therefore are not building up their skills (Mkhize, 2015; Statistics South Africa, 2018).

The sub-theme of current dreams and hopes captured the present aspirations of these young men as they navigated the challenges and opportunities of young adulthood (Blokland, 2014). Participants expressed a range of ambitions, from becoming radio personalities to pursuing careers in teaching, real estate, aviation, entrepreneurship and the arts. These dreams often reflected a blend of personal passions, financial considerations, and a desire to make a positive impact on their lives and communities (Kumalo & Gama, 2018). These aspirations may have evolved due to various factors such as limited resources, changing circumstances, and a growing understanding of the real-world constraints they faced. Limited access to resources and opportunities in Mamelodi might have influenced some participants to pursue careers that they perceived as more achievable within their current circumstances (Blokland, 2014; Surender et al., 2010). This is said to be true as accessing tertiary education is limited to only a few individuals in South Africa due to financial constraints (Langa, 2017). Despite these challenges, some dreams remain unchanged, indicating an enduring passion for specific interests or career paths.

It is worth noting that the interplay between dreams, aspirations, and the broader socio-cultural context is also evident throughout these discussions (Mfecane, 2016; Viljoen, 2008). The participants' dreams and hopes were influenced by cultural norms, societal expectations, and the intersections of masculinity and identity within their specific environment (Mfecane, 2016; Viljoen, 2008). This meant that when growing up, ideas and ambitions that the participants might have had were influenced by friends, family members and community members, and the wider social circles that they were part of. This may be seen to be the result of the constructions that the society around them may have had about which dreams and hopes young black men should align themselves with. Furthermore, these aspirations reflect their desire for personal growth and a brighter future, emphasising the role of hope as a driving force (Alhojailan, 2012).

In conclusion, the theme of dreams and hopes encapsulates the evolution of aspirations from the uninhibited dreams of youth to the nuanced and adaptive ambitions of young adulthood. These dreams, shaped by a complex interplay of personal desires and socio-cultural influences, offer insights into the participants' resilience, determination, and their pursuit of meaningful futures in the face of challenges.

4.1.3 Theme 3: Unemployment

The third major theme that emerged from the interviews was Unemployment. Unemployment here referred to an individual being in a situation where they are actively searching for employment, but unable to find work (Hayes, 2023). This did not include those that have left the workforce, due to factors such as retirement, higher education, and disability. Being unemployed and looking for work was one of the criteria specified for participation in the research. The participants who had 'side hustles' still identified as unemployed. Perhaps they did not feel stable enough in their side jobs or did not feel they were employed until they reached formal employment, their chosen career or a job that was able to sustain them in living the life that they envisioned for themselves.

The participants expressed the different effects that unemployment had on their lives, on how they viewed themselves and their status, as well as how they thought they were perceived and treated by those around them. The following three participants expressed their awareness of time while being unemployed:

"Eish, I feel like time is ticking, you know. There are lot of things I would like to do, you know. And then this thing of not been employed, it's kind of slows down my plans you know. At least, that's how I feel. Yah. And then, I feel like if things were different, I would have done like some of the things I have hopes that by this time I would have been done with." - Thabo

"Yah, and I've wasted so much time and to fear out gore pila pila Mpho ke mang (that who it's exactly Mpho), sometimes I feel like nna (me) self I'm not sure gore (about) plan ya ka e kae (where is my plan), but sometimes I would wake up, ke tsee mapage a ka (take my pages) and ke thome go draw (start drawing)... As I feel old now, e nthlabisa kgala (I feel bad) with my age" - Mpho

“I worry a lot about time and age, and not doing anything worries me a lot. Because if I’m not doing anything today then there’s nothing tomorrow. So, that’s most of my stresses”- Thabiso.

These participants reflected a worry about wasted time and not being able to use the time of young adulthood productively. There was the feeling that the plans they have had for themselves had been slowed down by their unemployment, as well as a looking back at things that they could have done differently. Being idle with no plan or job felt concerning for them as they grew older. In addition to this, they felt like they should be taking on more responsibilities. This appeared to add pressure. This may reflect concern over lost opportunities, and possibly a fear of career disadvantage or lack of progression due to time lost. There is also the feeling of being lost in who they were, and struggling to establish a sense of identity that is without employment, such as Mpho. Some participants felt they occupied a lower status in social contexts due to their unemployment. Thabo expressed how society, as well as social media, did not give respect to men who are unemployed:

“To me neh, it’s like they don’t really matter because you know why, some men may not be respected like even if they deserve to be respected. Like in places like Mamelodi, like townships it’s not like bekazakho (look after your own things), saying this one noh, and if you earned your respect, I feel like you don’t really matter until... (cut by network), like for an example if someone doesn’t respect you and then the next day you can give them something, and they will respect you. I think that’s how it is. And when I’m in social media I think some of the things that people say on Facebook they are true like men in township like this, if you are unemployed, I don’t think you will receive the respect that you deserve because you don’t earn anything, as I have said respect is earned.”- Thabo

Tshepo and Neo shared the hardships of forming a romantic relationship when one was unemployed and unable to provide financially. Tshepo further expressed how family members, especially younger members would treat an individual based on their unemployment:

“Yoh, ke matsapa (it’s a problem), It’s very hard. Because once o sa bereke, ngwanyana o ka se mo kreye, ke no go botsa ka a (the moment you are not a working person, you won’t even find a girlfriend, I’m giving you a) typical example (laughing). Wa ntshwara,

ke gore once o sa bereke le ngwanyana o ka se mo hwetse (the moment you are unemployed, you won't even find a girlfriend), once o se na mozoolu (don't have a job), o sa zoolinyana (not working there and there), o sa sware two pop nyana ka mo potleng (not even have a 20 cent in your pocket), bathoma go go fiela (they start to look down on you), ba go lebelela ka leihlo le lengwe (they look at you with an evil eye), ba thoma gore "aa chomi wola o tlo go pora o tlo go petja ka eng (they'll start to say, my friend with that one you'll get bored and he'll not even give you girlfriend allowance).... So, even some households tse dingwe ge o sa bereke ba go tseela ko tlase (even some households they look down on you), o telela le ke ngwana wa ko geno yo monnyane (even your little sister does not even respect you) ... So, being a man from kazi ya gago (your township) and o bereka o kreya le (if you are employed, you get) respect, o a ntshwara, yah. O ba sharp (you become fine), because ge o sa bereke o le mo gae (if you are not employed, staying at home), o ba Mahlalela (staying at home, doing nothing) like ba go telela (they disrespect you) ... Because neighbourhood ye re phelang mo go yona is very fucked up (our neighbourhood that we are living in, it's a mess), I'm sorry go bolela (to say this) so, but e fucked up, wa ntshwara (you get me). So, go bjale (it's just like that), ge o sa bereke o sa zoola zoole ke flop (if you are not working, not hustling, it's a big problem)."- Tshepo

"Waitsi (you know) there are these new generation model girls, ba rata chelete, wangthlaloganya (they love money, you get me). So wena ge o se na chelete, banyana, a go na ngwanyana a tlo tseyang serious (laughs) a teng, wa bo'? go boima (when you don't have money, girls, there is no girl that will take you seriously, there's not one, you see? It's hard). O tlo palla go rekela, o ntsa di out, o mo rekela something nyana (you will not be able to buy her things, take her out, buy her something small), gift, gift net ya (just a) valentine or ya (a) birthday, because a o na (you don't have) income. That's why in most cases, o kreya o bona di relationships ge di thoma di collapse'a, ko re a go sa na income, wa bona? A o sa na chelete ka mo ga ra di relationship (you'll find that you'll see relationships when they start to collapse, that means there is no more income you see? There's no money in relationships). Maybe mma teng o lose'itse mmereko, papa teng mmereko e fedile. So ntw e ba kopansang, e fedile (the mother lost her job and the father's contract has finished. So the thing that brought them together, is finished). A go sa na (there is no more) growth".- Neo

Thabiso also expressed how society viewed unemployment, as well as the expectations placed upon unemployed young men at family gatherings:

“That means no lives. Full stop. It means that the society does not deem them as anything, they are just unemployed...I can tell, family. Let’s say there’s a gathering, you are the one that is sent around, doing all those sorts of things. The fact that you didn’t contribute anything for that thing and they kind of look down on you. They forget the person that you want to be and the way you are right now. And in turn it affects, then, next time when there’s a gathering you don’t feel comfortable in going, because you know that there are relative and will start doing things in shaming you.”- Thabiso

Katlego also offered a term that was often used for unemployed men:

“There’s this term that they normally use which is “Mahlalela”. They always call an unemployed man that. They don’t know the reason why you are not employed, why you are not at school, all those things, they just only view the negatives.”- Katlego

Karabo shared the challenges of being unemployed as a man and the expectations to provide and play the male role in the household:

“Ya. O face’a di (you face) challenge tse (that are) difficult each and every time, wa bona? (you see?) le ge o nyakega (like when something is needed) something, wena a o na yona and wa lebelala, ke wena o mo golo mmona ka mo jarateng, wa bona bo bottle ba dependa mo wena? So o palla ko meet’a dilo tse ba di nyakang, (you don’t have it and when you look at things, you’re the eldest man in the house, you see that everyone depends on you? So when you fail to meet the things that are needed so, ke (it’s a) problem... ba expecta go re ke mmona, atleast gore twantse a yire plan gore borotho bo be teng (they expect that the man, atleast he must make a plan that bread must be bought). In most cases, o pila, o nna le ka mogare ga basadi, wa bona (you live only with women, you see)? Each and every thing e lebelala wena (is up to you). Toilet e thoma e senyaga, ba lebelala wena. Le he o sena experience, mara twantse o ire plan because kwena mmona ka mo jarateng, wa bona (the toilet starts to break, they look to you. Even when you don’t have experience, but you have to make a plan because you’re the man in the house, you see)? Ya”- Karabo

In addition, Karabo also added how he believed that the community tended to blame and were suspicious of unemployed groups of men being involved in illegal activities, more than any other groups of people:

“Sometimes akere, batho, (you see, people) in most cases, during the day vroeg’o ba ya mmerekong neh? (they go to work in the morning) And then lena ba le shia mo hae (and then they leave you behind at home). Maybe le pila le ntsi mo corning (you are always sitting in the street corner), for example, wa bona (you see)? The minute mo corneng e le pilang mo yona, ge ba ka timelwa, go wa ba le crime le goreng ba utswa ka mo, le ba di (by the street corner you sit at, there is something that is stolen or a crime takes place, you easily become) first suspects because ke lena ba le pilang daar (you guys are the ones that are always there) each and every day, wa bona (you see)?”- Karabo

It was expressed that when one was unemployed, there was a shift in the power dynamic between his peers who were employed. This was also seen amongst friends, family members and community members. This made the participants feel underestimated and devalued as they had the perception that others treated them differently and negatively because of their unemployment. This was thought to be true because they have not contributed or provided materially in group settings or did not carry the esteem that came with being employed. This was seen to create a separation or hierarchy between those who were able to provide financially and those who had not. As a result, some participants found it difficult to hold a sense of self and feel a sense of lifelessness in their unemployed identity. This also may prevent these individuals from wanting to be a part of these social circles if they expected negative treatment. As expressed by two of the participants, these young unemployed men were also called names, like the term “mahlalela”, meaning an individual who sits around. This term is used in a derogatory sense. The participants shared that they were called this without the speaker knowing what the young man is doing or going through. There was also a feeling of pressure shared by the participants, which is rooted in being a male in the household, and therefore being expected to fulfil certain duties because of their gender. In addition to this, young unemployed men felt that they were mostly the target of blame when things go wrong in the community because of their idleness.

The participants also expressed what it meant for themselves being unemployed and how this impacted the decisions they made and their own self-esteem. Thato expressed how he must fend for himself and faced complaints from parents:

“Because rena mauthi, ge go etla mo dijong o a iponela, like go and buy sephatlo (us as guys, when it comes to food, you’ll see for yourself like you go and buy Kota). So, sometimes e tla noba boima (it will be hard, sometime). Le motswadi o a balabala, hehe eng eng ke a provider what what what what (even a parent might complain when you keep on asking things, she’ll be saying that I’m providing this and that, now you are asking this).”- Thato

Thabo and Karabo shares how their unemployment is linked to them having to depend on others:

“I think being unemployed, you don’t really have independency, you know. And it’s a problem I feel like tings should get better soon, I’m just hanging in there because I’ve seen people, you remember you said hopes that I have, like I’ve seen people who lacked employment at the, somewhere in the late 30s you know, and they were able, there were able to get their lives on track you know.”- Thabo

“Eish... so obviously unemployment e tough wa bona (it’s tough, you see)? because at the end of the day ao kgone go ira dilo tse wena o nyoko dirang, wa bona? ‘coz of zaka. O se ira ka nako ya motho yo le horeng o kgono go o fa zaka ka nako yena a o’fang yona, wa bona? So o ka se kgone go ira dilo wena ka nako wena o nyaka go dira (you can’t do the things that you want to do, you see? Because of money. You will do the things at someone else’s time at the time that they will give you money, you see? So I will not be able to do the things you want to do). In most cases, tswantse o emele somebody go re a kgono go tusa go re o kgone go ira dilo tse o nyoko go dira (you have to wait for somebody to help you so you can do the things you want to do)”.- Karabo

Thato shared how the experience of being unemployed has affected him and how isolating the experience has been:

“E affectile too much (it has affected me too much), too much too much. I’ve been where ke nyaka le go dropa (I nearly gave up). But yoh, I’ve been asking for help, ke bolela gore ke nyaka thuso dilo tsa go swana le tseo... Yah, I’ve been alone. A ke itsi (I don’t know), maybe le (even) jealousy, I see lot of jealousy. Ke bone jealousy ye ntsi, yoh (I saw lot of jealousy). That’s ke dira dilo tsaka ke le one (that is the reason I do my things alone). Because batho ba na le jealousy, wa e bona akere (people have jealousy, do you see it). Tse dingwe ga di sharp, because ge o struggler, they see gore like aah you need help, wa bona (somethings are not right, because when people see that you are struggling and that you need help, they just keep distance, you see).” - Thato

Tshepo gave an account of what could happen and the kinds of activities he could involve himself in because of being unemployed:

“Yes. And kamo o tla end up o utswa (and on the other hand, you’ll end up stealing) just because o nyaka tshetele (you want money) and you’ll end up killed or o le ko dronkong (you’ll be jailed). And ba bangwe (some other people) the end up being suicidal, e tlisa le di (it brings about) suicidal thought, wa ntshwara (you get me), because you are stressing a lot about it.” - Tshepo

Therefore, the theme of Unemployment emerged prominently in the interviews as a crucial aspect of the participants' lives, shedding light on the challenges and complexities they faced in seeking employment in the context of a disadvantaged environment. Unemployment refers to the condition of actively seeking work but not finding employment, reflecting a state of economic insecurity and social vulnerability (Surender et al., 2010). The participants' experiences of unemployment were varied and multifaceted, encompassing economic, psychological, and social dimensions (MacDonald & Shildrick, 2007).

The participants' descriptions of the effects of unemployment revealed a profound impact on their well-being, identity, and social interactions. Feelings of worry about time passing and age suggested a sense of urgency and the perception that unemployment impeded their progress in life. The participants also expressed concerns about not contributing to social gatherings or family responsibilities, highlighting the societal pressure to provide and participate actively. These participants also brought in a term that is often used in the community for individuals who are unemployed, called “mahlalela”. This word was used has been used to make these individuals feel bad about themselves and their unemployed status.

The term implied that these individuals had decided to “sit” around having no intention of doing anything with their lives.

The participants also expressed that while they were unemployed, they felt that they were not able to provide for themselves in the way that they wished to. This probably left them distressed as they seemed to be in a place of discomfort not having the resources, they wanted to fulfill their needs and wants. This included both necessities and comforts, suggesting a pervasive sense of deprivation. Ratele (2018) states that it is not only about money, but being able to afford what one desires to eat and the living conditions they choose. Another effect of unemployment appeared to be how their self-esteem and sense of self was mostly dependent on their unemployment. It seemed to be a main defining character. Men who do not achieve breadwinner status feel disempowered and feel unsafe in their male identity (Ratele, 2008; Mshweshwe, 2020). Being unemployed felt deprecating and debilitating to them as if there was a malfunction to their being because of their inability to find work. This aspect appeared to influence all other aspects of their lives, causing distress. This was found by Mkhize (2015), who noted that youth unemployment is a crisis to the economy and the employment rate among the youth is deteriorating, which leaves many frustrated and discouraged. Another factor that was highlighted was the possible consequences that the hardship of being unemployed may bring up, such as stealing.

The theme of unemployment also exposed the financial hardships and debt accumulation that accompany being unemployed. Many participants discussed the necessity of borrowing money to cover expenses, resulting in a cycle of indebtedness that exacerbated their economic challenges. This financial strain contributed to their distress and exacerbated the emotional and psychological burdens they already faced.

Participants have also expressed that because of their lack of sufficient income from being unemployed, they had to loan some money which they hadn't been able to pay back, which led them to have multiple debts. This added to their daily stressors. Another important point raised by participants was how their unemployment had led them to be more dependent on those around them. They felt that having an income would enable them to become more independent in being able to do the things they wished and make the choices they wanted to for themselves. Without being employed and earning an income, they could not experience independence. The Covid-19 pandemic has seen a decline in active employment, which caused a huge amount of negative socio-economic effect to South Africa (Jain et al, 2020; Ikwegbue et al., 2021; Hamadziripi & Chitimira, 2021; Simon & Khambule, 2021). It must also be noted

that this research was conducted at a time of heightened unemployment and poverty due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which may have exacerbated these issues.

Moreover, the experience of unemployment took a toll on their mental, emotional, and physical health, reinforcing the interconnectedness of well-being in these domains (Blokland, 2014). This aligned with research that emphasises the detrimental effects of unemployment on mental health and overall quality of life (MacDonald & Shildrick, 2007). The participants' sense of self-worth and esteem appeared closely tied to their employment status, suggesting that societal perceptions of their worthiness are linked to their ability to find work (MacDonald & Shildrick, 2007).

Furthermore, the participants' narratives highlighted the impact of unemployment on their autonomy and independence. The lack of a steady income limited their ability to make choices, engage in activities they enjoy, and lead an independent life (Surender et al., 2010). This dependency perpetuates feelings of inadequacy and disempowerment, creating a cycle of disadvantage that is difficult to break free from.

The pressures these young men felt from being unemployed might have made them feel like they could not fit into the traditional or hegemonic masculine ideal because they did not fulfil the societal expectations of being a man who would provide for those around them and to meet the needs that they may have, had as well as those around them expected. This threat to their masculine identity may leave them vulnerable to feelings of helplessness and distress.

It is important to recognise that the context of heightened unemployment due to the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbates the challenges faced by these individuals, underscoring the urgency of addressing the systemic factors contributing to unemployment in the community.

In conclusion, the theme of unemployment encapsulates the far-reaching consequences of joblessness on various dimensions of these young men's lives. From psychological well-being to economic stability, the impact of unemployment permeates their experiences, shaping their self-perceptions, social interactions, and overall quality of life (MacDonald & Shildrick, 2007). The narratives provided by the participants emphasise the need for comprehensive and contextually sensitive interventions to address the multifaceted challenges of unemployment in disadvantaged environments (Surender et al., 2010).

4.1.4 Theme 4: Masculinity and Culture

The fourth major theme of the study was Masculinity and Culture. It appeared that the behaviour, stature, and expectations of the participants were primarily influenced by perceptions of culture and tradition within the context of Mamelodi. Masculinity has had

multiple definitions throughout the years and in many contexts. A broad term of masculinity includes the qualities, attributes, behaviours, and roles regarded as characteristic of men and boys. This may also include the social expectations of a man. This research adopted the social constructionist theory that maintains that masculinity is socially constructed. Culture may be referred to as a set of shared general ideas, customs and social behaviour of a particular people or society at a particular time (Merriam-Wester, 2023). Culture also distinguishes one group of people from another. The focus here is on the culture of black unemployed men in Mamelodi.

The participants shared their experiences of being young unemployed men in the township of Mamelodi and their views of who a man from Mamelodi was and what it entailed. Thabo spoke about the pressures of being a man in Mamelodi and how one needed to be an example:

“I had hopes for moving out of townships. You know why? Coz I realised that, there’s a, in townships, there is fear that installed in many individuals neh. Like, you be pressurised to succeed and then most of the times, you might, like trying to fit in the society you know. Like moving out of the townships, but not just move completely out. I still want to be around some people... I’d always like to think that being a man, like, from a developing township, you know. You also need to like, set an example, you know, even though there are flops, you know. I’d like to think that you should set examples, at least to the young ones and then at least contribute to the community, like take part, you know... But yeah, being a man, you need to help make a difference, you know... Coz like, we still, from townships, we still got a long way to go, you know... for me like a man from Mamelodi, you need to do things, to be a man it’s not like to have money, make a difference where you can... it’s important to me neh, because like, you mustn’t really forget who we are. Yah, that is why it is important, like, it will teach us like, for me I see it connects us with the elders, you know, like how they used things, you know. Yah. And it’s important to learn other cultures like how people live and to me it’s important not to forget your culture.”- Thabo

Mpho spoke of the potential that young men from Mamelodi hold and how their presentation was a reflection of Mamelodi:

“Like young men from Mamelodi I just see potential, it’s just in every one of them... (unclear). Batho ba lebele (people should view) everyman from Mamelodi in different

way or in a way ... (unclear), like we have different intentions, we have different things... When Participant 2 a le busy ka presentation ya gagwe is not only about yena, it's about yena and mo a hlahang ko teng (he's busy presenting himself, it's not about himself only, but it's also about where he's from)... Go na bjale (now) a man from Mamelodi, there are things that o a didira mo bophelong bja gage (one does during his life), wa lapa (getting tired), or he's lazy ... (not clear), they start go bona gore batho ba ba dealer le situation e bjang (to see what kind of situation these people are dealing with)... Being a man from Mamelodi it's tough. There are so many things that o swanetse gore o di lebelele especially batho ba age ye ya rena (one should focus on like people of our age), ... (not clear). The only difficult thing about being in Mamelodi, it's not just about nice time, but Mamelodi itself"- Mpho

Thato expressed that a man in a township like Mamelodi should inspire others:

"How can I put it, nna gore ke dire nthwe bjalo, ke bona gore ge o le mo Kazi (for me to do something like this, I see that when you are here in township), you have to do something that will change or inspire. Even now, if I could get funding, I want to make change, like role-model, I'll give other people an opportunity, that's my goal." - Thato

Tshepo also added that being a man from Mamelodi meant that one must be a good representation of the township and hold a sense of pride from being from the township, despite the hardships:

"So, being a man from Mamelodi it means gore le nna ge ke fihla ko ke nyakago go fihla ko teng (that, when I reach where I wanted to reach) I'll raise the flag, ba kgone go bona gore ke mfana wa Mamelodi, that Mamelodi e na le talent, Mamelodi e na le batho ba e lego gore ba sharp (so, that people could see that he's a boy from Mamelodi and that Mamelodi have people with talent and good people too), o a ntshwara. I even do like, there are some other part of our neighbourhood ga di sharp (they are not good), but then like you can raise a man ko Mamelodi, go na le banna ba e le go gore (there are men that) they can be whatever they want to be, wa ntshwara. So, nka se e fetse ka re Mamelodi eng eng (I can't conclude that Mamelodi is this and that), because I'm proud of Mamelodi, I was born and raised here, so I'm proud of being ngwana wa (a child of) Mamelodi." - Tshepo

For Thabiso, being a man from Mamelodi was about where one saw themselves in the future, as well as seeing moving out of the township as an achievement:

“For instance, you can’t say you are from Mamelodi of which Mamelodi does not have many opportunities, nothing to offer and say that you are a man from Mamelodi, you are just being stereotype. Because what matters in life is where you are going, it’s not where you are coming from or where you are right now. Where you are actually going, where you want to see yourself. So, being a man in Mamelodi for me it’s actually getting out of Mamelodi. Because Mamelodi it’s not really a good place... And creating opportunities back to Mamelodi... So, that people could be proud”.- Thabiso

With Katlego, being a man from Mamelodi was about prioritising and providing for the family:

“Looking at that I saw the definition of a man is a person who’s able to support his family, he’ll do whatever it takes for them. Even the smallest piece jobs as long as you know that you are able to take care of your family, fill that financial gap, but not only the financial gap, do things that your father could have done but couldn’t. you know, be there for your child, your sister, your little sister or brother, anything. As long as you can fill that void. That’s what I think a man is. A person who takes responsibility for their actions and that’s his responsibilities, and make sure that everything is ok too. And family is his first priority. He’ll be second but his family will be the first priority”.- Katlego

Karabo spoke to the pressures of how being a man in Mamelodi entailed having money and being able to provide to live with others:

“Specifically in Mamelodi? Go boima (it’s tough). Go (it’s) very tough. Plus e bele le ge o ka ba le motho maybe o rata bo fashion, lifestyle, e ba (it becomes) very very very difficult because each and every day no ke chelete, wa bona? (its about money, you see?) Ya so, ge o sana zaka, ke (yes, so when there’s no money, it’s a) problem. Tswantse ge o sa no supporta okgono go ira something, o kgona go provid’a, wabona? Go re atleast le wena o kgono pila jana ka batho ba bangwe (you have to support and do something, and be able to provide, you see))”.- Participant 7

Neo expressed the hardships of being a man in Mamelodi and how it affected those that depended on him:

“Being a man in Mamelodi, it’s very hard, *wa bo’* (you see)? It’s very hard. Firstly, you have to provide, *wa bo’* (you see)? That’s why, *akere* (right) I have a daughter, *neh* (right)? and that daughter (unclear). If I’m the father, but not the father with, whose providing money. *Ngwana ka o tlo dgcina a ire dilo tse snaaks* (my child will end up doing bad things). *Bo prostituting so tswantse* (things like prostitution so I have to), I have to make sure *go re ke mo* (that I) cover before *a gola wa bona* (she grows up you see). So that’s why *o kgono bona go re* (you can see that) white people, white people, *ngwana a sa gola, se tse ba mmeile chelete, wangthlaloganya? Ke system ya bona* (when a child is still growing up, they have already put aside money for them, you get me? it’s their system). *Ge ngwana a sa gola, ba mmeetse chelete* (when the child is still growing, they’ve saved up money for them) up until varsity life, *wa bona* (you see). *Ga thoma a re varsity, ko re* (when they begin varsity, that means) (unclear). So for us black people, it’s hard to stick to the system that’s why *o bona dilo di thlakathlakane* (you see things are messed up). Rape is there, pregnancy is there (unclear). *Ke mathata, wa bona* (it’s problematic, you see)”.- Neo

For Thabo, there appeared to be a need to move out of the township while still having access to Mamelodi. He believed that this would ensure success as there are many fears and pressures in living in Mamelodi. He also believed in being involved in the community and being a positive role model to the youth about the decisions they made. In addition, he also spoke about how important culture in Mamelodi is in terms of being a man, and how the culture of Mamelodi makes a man. For Mpho, being a man from Mamelodi isn’t about the individual man, but how he represents himself and other men from Mamelodi, to the rest of the world. A man from Mamelodi has a responsibility to Mamelodi in the way he carries himself. He further shared that the experience of being a man from Mamelodi was challenging. Thabo and Tshepo also believed that a man from Mamelodi should be able to inspire other youth. Tshepo further shared that being a successful man from Mamelodi should be something that one was proud of as it meant that the individual had surpassed great difficulty to be where they were. Thabiso appeared to be in an agreement with Thabo with measuring success as being able to move away from Mamelodi, as it is not seen as a good place. For Katlego, a man from Mamelodi was

someone who prioritised and provided for the family. Karabo mentioned the struggle of having to provide as a man from Mamelodi. Neo shared how his manhood and fatherhood affected his dependents and how his inability to provide might lead them into a dangerous life. He further examined the difference between white and black people's views on money, ending with an observation of how people move away from the township when they start making money.

The theme of Masculinity and Culture emerged as a significant aspect within the context of this study of unemployed young black men in Mamelodi. This shed light on the complex interplay between cultural expectations and the construction of masculinity (Luyt, 2012; Viljoen, 2008). It must be noted that their responses had a particular focus on the township of Mamelodi and how the township life influences their constructions of being a man. It was believed that the culture of living in Mamelodi possessed certain characteristics that were important and were exclusive to other parts of South Africa. The main points that were provided was being an inspiration to others in the township, being a proud representative of Mamelodi, being able to provide, as well as moving away from the township.

The focus on masculinity and cultural identity within this context added an additional layer of complexity to the themes, as they intersect with the broader social and cultural dynamics of South Africa (Mfecane, 2016; Viljoen, 2008;). The masculinity and cultural factors played a role in and had influenced the circumstances of these participants that had led them to take these actions and efforts. In their responses, it was assumed that their geographical and social environment, the township of Mamelodi, played a huge impact on their constructions of masculinity. As O'Brien (2005) mentions that masculinity is a constantly changing collection of meanings that we construct through our relationships with ourselves, with each other and with our world. Manhood is not the manifestation of an inner essence; it is socially constructed and it does not bubble up to consciousness from our biological makeup; it is created in culture (O'Brien, 2005). Therefore, the context of the township of Mamelodi had informed their constructions.

4.1.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Masculine ways of reacting

The participants expressed their ways of dealing with disappointments in their lives. This was seen as a masculine way of reacting in their culture as it appeared that several participants had a similar way of being affected, and a similar reaction to these disappointments. This has then become an insight into cultural aspects in the way these young unemployed black men handled and responded to situations. It was seen as a behaviour and emotions that were characteristic of

these men in situations like these. These are the characteristics, behaviours, and emotions that were mentioned by the participants. Thabo expressed being quiet:

“Like if I’m really upset. I’d be quiet. That’s how you notice that, “ah, this person is not okay”. Or sometimes I just go MIA, you know. Deal with things by myself. Yeah, that when you know that if I’m quiet and I’m not around, then just know, something is not right... I’d be quiet for some time until I need to talk, you know”. - Thabo

Mpho shared that isolating himself to avoid acting in ways that he would regret:

“I just resolve it and go to my room and sleep because if I continue to communicate with other people ke ntse ke tseba gore (while I’m aware that) inside ga ke sharp (I’m not well) I don’t want to end up ke dira dilo tse e le go gore a ke di rate (doing things that I don’t like), basically, I’ll just walk away and go and sleep... Nako ye nngwe ke nale go feeler nkare a ke itsi, ke a te loser (sometimes I feel like I don’t know myself, I’m losing myself) somehow and sometimes ke nale... (not clear)... a sankha ka nyaka go complainer (I didn’t want to complain)”. - Mpho

Tshepo also reacted by isolating himself, which did not coincide with his usual bubbly personality:

“Not talking. Nna ke a te keyelela ko room (I lock myself inside my room). Ba bona gore Bra ga a sa le bubbly ga a bolele thata (they will see that our brother is no longer bubbly, he does not talk much), they would say what’s wrong but maybe yo mongwe o tla mpotsisa gore o sharp naa, then ke mo nka mmotsang (like, if someone could ask me what is wrong, that is when I’ll open up to that person about what is happening), wa ntshwara. Yah, they simply don’t see me like ke bolela, ke le bubbly, ke bolela thata, ke mo ba no bona gore yo o kwatile that’s why a te keyeletse ko rooming (they would not see me talking and bubbly, I don’t talk, and they’ll just see that I’m angry when they see that I’ve logged myself inside the room)”. - Tshepo

Katlego also resorted to silence and keeping to himself:

“I’m a talkative person so whenever I’m upset, I turn to be silent. There is moment when I’m silent but when I’m silent for a very long time deep in my thoughts. That’s when they’ll see that there’s a problem you know that this guy is going through something, is either he’s very angry. I’m not a person who always lashes out on people you know. I keep my problems to myself, you know. I try to solve my own problems. Even if they say no man is an island you know, I don’t go by that saying, I just try to do things on my own. But I can keep things to myself and stay calm. That’s why they see when I’m silent, I don’t talk or anything. That’s how they see”.- Katlego

Karabo shared about the feeling of being pressured which might lead to depression:

“Ha obviously, re tlo feel’a (we’ll feel) under pressure. Sometime o kgona wa ba depressed, wa bona? Because dilo tse o di nyakang ke tse dintshi, and at the end of the day, wa nyoko dira mara wa palwa. Wabona go re di ding, e kgona go lead’a to depression”.- Karabo

The most dominant reactions to setbacks and disappointment among the participants seemed to be a deep sadness, an intentional quietness, and the use of isolation to deal with the issue or situation by themselves. Others expressed a feeling of sorrow, while others disengaged or retreated from activity. This reaction seemed to be rooted by the reality that they were unemployed and were unable to be independent, to provide and fulfil the roles that they felt they needed to. In terms of their masculinity, this could also come from feeling as though no one could help them with the challenges they were facing and from the expectation that these young men should be fine and should not overtly show these kinds of natural reactions that were elicited by their struggles. It appeared that the young men would rather withdraw from others and limit their emotional expression to others as a response to the societal expectations of men around not showing emotions. There appeared to be many stereotypes that disadvantage men, such as those that expected men to be strong, tough and unemotional, and thus never encouraged to be open, soft, and vulnerable (Young, 2016).

This also seemed to be true for Young (2016), who found that staggeringly, only 11% of 20–50-year-old men say there is someone they feel they can speak to in a crisis. Symptoms such as stress, depression and anxiety all formed as desperate attempts to keep their suffering hidden, to ‘get on with it’, and for many to ‘man up’ (Young, 2016). Luyt 2012) and Reardon and Govender (2013) report about the toughness norm in masculinity, which emphasises the

importance of containing one's emotions and not expressing pain and fear. Men feel pressured to prove their masculinity by engaging in traditional behaviours that makes them conceal their failures and suppress their feelings (Iwamoto et al, 2018; Elliott, 2003). As found in other studies, the participants' narratives revealed that cultural norms, traditions, and societal expectations heavily influenced their behaviours, emotions, and reactions to disappointments and setbacks (Mfecane, 2016; Viljoen, 2008).

The sub-theme of ways of reacting in the theme of masculinity and culture pointed to the ways in which societal expectations of manhood contributed to the construction of identity among unemployed black men in Mamelodi. The participants' feelings of disempowerment, sorrow, isolation and questioning of their identity as men in the face of unemployment highlighted the complex interplay between societal constructions of masculinity and personal experiences (Mfecane, 2016; Viljoen, 2008). Cultural expectations of providing, independence, and success influence young men's self-perceptions and self-worth (Mfecane, 2016; Viljoen, 2008).

4.1.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Coping mechanisms and strategies

In light of cultural norms and values, the participants' responses to disappointment can be understood as adaptive coping mechanisms within their cultural context (Mfecane, 2016; Viljoen, 2008). Listening to music, seeking solace in prayer, emphasising positive thinking, being involved in illegal activities and alcohol use are strategies rooted in cultural beliefs and practices that helped participants navigate challenges and setbacks. These coping mechanisms showcase how cultural resources are harnessed to address emotional distress and maintain a sense of identity and purpose (Mfecane, 2016; Viljoen, 2008). Thabo mentioned how music helped him take his mind off his worries:

"I don't really like have hobbies but I'm a music fan, I collect music, even on my spare time, I collect music, you know, I listen to music. At least that's what makes me go through the day, you know. Yeah, that's, yeah, listening to music, that's my hobby... Uh, you know when you just, like you don't have anything to do and just thinking a lot. Yeah, actually it's just those thing through the day. It takes my mind off things. Coz like I'm collecting and I don't have to think of much stuff. My mind is on music." - Thabo

Tshepo coped through prayer and speaking to God:

“Well as I’ve said I’m very polite, ga ke motho le gore oke le disappointed ke tshabele bjaleng (I’m not a person who would run to alcohol if I got disappointed) or something. Nna (I), like whenever I get disappointment neh, I just go down on knees and I pray, and I talk to God about it. Waitsi gore go botsa motho (you know to tell a person), well talking provide a sense of relieve, go bolela motho o ka bolelela motho mara yena obang yo mongwe o go swiela, o goseba (to tell someone your problem, but that person would go to other people and tell them all your problems and gossip about you), wa ntshwara. Yah, when I become disappointed, I just go down on my knees and I pray about it, ke bolelele Modimo ka yona and ke ba sharp (I’ll speak to God about it and in turn I became ok).”- Tshepo

Other participants, such as Mpho and Katlego use self-coaching to help them cope through difficulties:

“For me I take it as it’s just part of life, I don’t worry about it, I know it can happen to anyone, ke (I) something that ke no tswa mo go yona (ignore it) like gona bjalong ka nore ok sharp ke stukile ga gago diragale selo (I would just say it’s ok, I got stuck and nothing it’s happening) and every time oke facer (when I come across) disappointment, I always tell myself that if nthwe ke e planning and ga ya diragala (something that I have planned and did not happen) for wherever kua ke tswang teng, ke tlo swanelwa obaba le solution ya nthweo (where I’m from, I have to find for solutions of that thing) until it happens... Like imagine gona bjale (currently), when you feel sad, you don’t just sit there and say I’m feeling sad you just have to do something, try, and do something, you know, whatever way. So, le nna (even me) myself that’s how I deal with disappointment, and how to get away from there”- Mpho

“There’s a quote that I got from a cartoon. That man said along the way whenever a man has a dream, there have to do whatever it takes to fulfil it. No matter what it takes, no matter what mistakes you make or any obstacle that you have to overcome despites the disappointment just look at the picture, put it in your head make sure you see yourself as a prominent person in whatever career you want to be in. as long as it’s your dream you have to fight for it no matter what, fight. It sounded stupid when I told my friends, but it really helped me to get through everything, it really helped, it made me see that failure is not something bad that will weigh you down, it’s just a

steppingstone on your path to success. You just have to learn from your mistakes, then improve yourself to be better.”- Katlego

Mpho and Karabo used alcohol, along with their friends, to cope with their daily stressors:

“For now, I think its hard especially people in townships, if you check mentality wo re o tshwerego bo bohle (the mentality that we all hold) it’s still there. Imagine that chomi ya gago (your friend) is drinking obviously le wena (you) you’ll do the same... So, I’m struggling with lot of things”.- Mpho

‘Ya, sometimes di zolo (weed), sometimes renwa (we drink) a lot because o kgona go ya ko chomming and o kreya go re yena o te enwela dilo tsa hae le gore lwena atleast o kgono go lebala dilo tse o tlang mo tsona, wa bona?(you can go visit your friend and you will find that they are drinking their own things so you will join just so you can forget some of the things in your life that you have left behind, you see?) Sometimes, o kgona go end’a up gore, tsona dilo tse o di berekisang (you end up, from the things you are using), alcohol substance and drug substance, o kreya gore (you will find that) at the end of the day, o palla go tswa ka mo, wa bona? E kgono go leadela (you will struggle to leave those things, you see? They will lead you) to drug abuse or alcohol abuse le dilo tse Tswana le tseo (things like that)”- Karabo

Neo initially shared how he focuses on himself in order to cope. He further admitted that he had involved himself in illegal activities in order to make a living and provide for himself and his family:

“People always talk, so to avoid everything, o no labella di karata tsa gao (you just look at your own cards), you play your cards, wa bo’ (you see). You came here alone, you die alone. Go re motho a reng eng, nna a e lo ng’ affecta, wa bo’ (even if someone has something to say, it won’t affect me, you see). So tswantse ke no labella di karata tsa ka, go re nna ke channel’a ka bophelo ba ka, wangthlaloganya? Ke ira dilo tsa ka byang, wangthlaloganya (so I just have to look at my own cards, so that I can channel my life, you get me? to see how I do my things, you get me)? So, yona e boima (its hard) to cope, wa bo’ (you see), yona (it’s) its very very bad to cope but mo gongwe (in some way), you just have to close your eyes or close your- ya close your ears, o bole matlo

(open your eyes) to run your own race, wa bo' (you see) ... That's why keo (I'm), that's why ke re chelete e ke nyakang (I say the money that I want), you end up doing silly things. You end up o tsamaya le batho ba goreng, ba tsamaya di heist, ba bolaya batho, ba ba robber'a (going around with people that involve themselves in heists, who kill people, people who rob others), ba because of money because of situations re le mo sona, wa bo' (that we're in, you see)?"- Neo

As noted above, participants had a variety of ways to cope with the challenges they face. These ways of coping may be seen as positive and negative ways of dealing with their stressful situations. Coping represents behavioural and cognitive efforts to deal with stressful encounters. Coping models have been further classified by function as problem focused or emotion focused (Ben-Zur, 2009). Problem focused deals mainly with the problem whereas emotion focused deals with its emotional and physiological outcomes (Ben-Zur, 2009). Another difference between these coping modes is the approach-avoidance classification which is aimed at reducing, eliminating, or managing the problem whereas disengaged coping is about ignoring or avoiding the problem and its emotional consequences (Ben-Zur, 2009). One participant expressed using music to calm his thoughts and get him through the day. Another used prayer and speaking to God. He further shared that he avoided sharing with other people, as he felt like people gossiped. Other participants mentioned that they needed to change their mindset into more positive and proactive thinking ways, due to negative thinking patterns that would set in. They would do this through using self-coaching methods. This would allow them to acknowledge the mistake or obstacle and push past it by looking at the positives. Some others resorted to substance use as a way of coping. This way of coping was also observed by Young (2016), who discovered that boys are three times more likely to misuse drugs and alcohol. One of the pathologies of young men not integrating into the expectations of employment can also be seen in them involving themselves in extreme situations such as alcohol and substance use (Young, 2016). Lastly, another participant mentioned how the pressures and expectations of filling the provider role might lead them to be involved in illegal acts. Another study observed the correlation between masculine identity and harmful behavioural factors, finding that a huge amount of the factors relating to men's excess morality is linked to gendered patterns of socialisation and men's roles (Viljoen, 2008).

The participants' descriptions of their responses to disappointments reflect deeply ingrained cultural norms and expectations of resilience and determination (Mfecane, 2016; Viljoen, 2008). For instance, the statement "no matter what it takes" and the emphasis on

perseverance, despite obstacles, exemplify a cultural belief in the value of determination and endurance (Viljoen, 2008). This illustrated how cultural ideals shape the participants' understanding of what it meant to be a man, emphasising qualities such as perseverance and resilience (Mfecane, 2016).

In addition, participants' accounts of their emotional responses to disappointments reveal a range of emotions that may be seen as both culturally influenced and manifestations of masculinity (Mfecane, 2016; Shefer et al., 2010). Expressions of keeping quiet and listening to music, positive self-talk, turning to prayer for solace as well as substance use, all in the hopes of not expressing their true feelings, highlighted how cultural norms around emotional expression and coping intersect with their experiences of masculinity (Mfecane, 2016; Shefer et al., 2010). These responses reflect a culturally mediated emotional repertoire through which these men navigate challenges, aligning with the concept of cultural scripts for emotion (Shefer et al., 2010).

4.1.4.3 Sub-theme 3: A modern take - women can also provide

The participants of the study thus far had given accounts for their experience that had seemed to be in line with 'masculine' ways of being, which existing literature has supported. However, there seemed to be a more modern way of looking at how contributions are made in relationships, which also emerged. The majority of the participants adopted this way of looking at things. This included women taking a step into providing financially in relationships and in households. This was seen in the quotes below:

"No, I don't think it should be a man's responsibility only. But, then something that re gotseng ka yona (the way we were groomed) that's how it should be. It's somethings, it's like it's in our DNA gore (that) everything about the house it should be a man's responsibility, so, I don't think like there will be any man who could disagree with this thing unless a tshaba di responsibilities (he doesn't want to take or afraid of some responsibilities)... a man without culture is a man yo a tshabang di responsibility (it is a man who is afraid of taking responsibilities)."- Mpho

"Le ngwanyana (even a girl), also a woman does provide. Even now, when a woman provides, she understands, wa utlwisisa gore ke struggle (she understands that it's a struggle), we all struggle, we try to make something work. Because one thing ge a (when she), woman provide, o a counter mo storing gore (she counts even on stories that) she

did play a role e ntshi (a huge). In most of the case, ge ngwanyana a sa dlale role o tlo bonagala like they gonna talk, like ga asana taba like bona nou o mo (when a girl did not play a role in providing, it will be clear because she'll talk much, saying like he didn't care, look at his current situation)". - Thato

"No. like, yeo ne applier kgale o maybe ko diplekeng tse dingwe(that was applicable in the olden days or in other places), because nou (now) we are living in a modern age, in a modern world, mo elego gore le basadi (where women) they want to be independent, wa ntshwara (you get me). Ga basa nyaka go utlwa ka monna, yes monna ke (they don't want to listen only to a man, yes a man is the)head of the family but not tsela tsa gore o provider (that he has to provide) everything."- Tshepo

"I believe, I see it as a sexist thing, you know. Even a woman can provide for their family, right. I see that women are not supposed to be a stay home wife, their only responsibility is cleaning, does cooking and all that, no I don't see it like that. My aunt also helps out at home, she also has her own career that she loves, and she does support at home, with that I see that it's not only a man's job, but it also his responsibility to help feed the family, to help put food on the table for the family, even if it might not be his responsibility its depending on the household, who's working and not."- Katlego

"Back in the days, a man is someone who provide. Is a man who has a power. To take care of everything, wa bona (you see). To take care of the family, kids, but things now have changed, wangtlhaloganya (you get me). Wa bona nou (you see now), even females le bona ba (they are also), women they have money, they can do whatever, wa bona (you see). But back in the days, a man ke (is) the head of the house, wangtlhaloganya (you get me)".- Neo

Despite it being an experience that he had grown up with, Mpho expressed that he did not believe that the responsibility to provide and take care of the family should lie on the man only. However, he did still hold the idea that a man that did not abide by this idea would be man that is avoiding responsibility. Thato believed that an understanding woman would acknowledge the circumstances of the household and therefore offer to help by providing. Tshepo shared that the notion that only men provide is a dated concept and in this modern age, women are becoming independent and are providing. Katlego believed that the idea that women should

take care of the home and men should provide was sexist and that a woman could have a career and provide for the family. Finally, Neo highlighted how the idea of who took charge and took care of the family unit had changed.

Although there was an acknowledgement of the idea that men should be, and are known as providers in families, the majority of the participants were of the understanding that as the world moved towards modernity, more women were becoming independent and were occupying roles of providing for their families. The participants resonated more with the modern approach. Definitions of masculinity in the South African context are being contested and are varied over time (Kumalo & Gama, 2018). O'Brien (2005) may agree with this change of perspective by stating that manhood means different things at different times to different people. He also states that we come to know what it means to be a man in our culture by setting our definitions in opposition to a set of 'others'—racial minorities, sexual minorities, and above all, women (O'Brien et al., 2005). It is subject to change that define and re-define society (Viljoen, 2008). This way of looking at manhood not only changes over time but is also produced through the evolution of gendered ideas and expectations.

In conclusion, the theme of Masculinity and Culture illuminated the intricate relationship between masculinity and cultural norms, reactions to disappointments, coping mechanisms and strategies and modern ideas of gender among unemployed young black men in Mamelodi. The narratives provided by the participants underscored how cultural expectations influenced their emotional expressions and self-perceptions, ways of reacting, coping strategies, and a modern perspective in the face of challenges. By delving into the ways cultural beliefs and societal norms shape the experiences of these men, this theme contributes to a deeper understanding of the intersection of masculinity, culture, and adversity (Mfecane, 2016; Viljoen, 2008).

4.1.5 Theme 5: Obstacles and Persistence

Finally, the last major theme in the interviews was Obstacles and Persistence. It appears that the unemployed young men in Mamelodi faced substantial challenges as they tried to fulfill their dreams. This was seen in the obstacles they faced and their persistence. Obstacles may mean an impediment that hinders an individual's way or prevents any progress from occurring (Merriam-Webster, 2023). Persistence means to persevere in continuing with an action or opinion despite the difficulties one faces (Merriam-Webster, 2023).

The main obstacle that the participants shared was facing financial challenges and their main reason for persisting in their lives was because of the financial obstacles they faced.

Alleviating this was perceived to be the barrier that opened doors for them or to solve many of the struggles they faced. Thato mentioned finances being an obstacle to building his brand and being productive:

“For me It’s funding. I’m still thinking how I’ll fund my brand. Because I have a brand called Victory brushing. I also want to do merchandise, so that’s the things that I’m still wondering about... Yah, they are holding me. Because even my camera is now broken, I also do like photoshoots, I do that for myself” - Thato

Tshepo mentioned not having any financial back up has been an obstacle towards his progress:

“Di obstacles like, it was very hard for me, actually even now it’s hard for me because like financially, you know I used to struggle financially because whenever you want to do something you have obviously have a financial backup, wa ntshwara, so, it become hard when you want to do something but then yet you don’t have that financial backup you know, yah, so, it was very hard for me because I had to, like when I work, maybe I’m working at a retail store neh, I have to like take care of my family, I have to like buy grocery and at the same time I have to like save up for like go to the college or maybe after college, so I have to pay for my own fees so that I could do things and stuff. Like also, I wanted to be maybe like a TV presenter or a Radio personality or an actor. So, it became so hard because, maybe I’m earning like R4500 per month, so, I have to divide that money so that I can maybe build something for my life, so that my life could be better, you know, so, it became so hard for me, because like I had to feed my family and ka mo ke swanetse ke te kapepe (on the other hand I have to take care of myself like buying clothes), and ka mo ke swanetse ke spane (while on the other side I have to go to work) like go ya collegeng (also to go to the college) and something I had to pay for my tuition, you know. So, it was very hard.” - Tshepo

Thabiso also spoke about how household duties and responsibilities were obstacles to his dreams:

“Because you look at your situation at home, you wake up and go to school, there’s no bread, then after Matric, the first thing you want to do is help-out in the household. Eventually, you forget about your dreams and become a working person” - Thabiso

Katlego also expressed that limited finances were an obstacle to attaining further education:

“One of them is finance. I can’t really get at school because of finances. Many people will try to apply for NSFAS, you know, my application failed to go through for the commercial law because I got turned down. When I go to apply for education it was really too late. But now I’m going to apply maybe it will actually happen, I might get accepted and do the education course.”- Katlego

In addition to the financial hurdle, another interesting perceived obstacle, highlighted by Neo, was close family, friends, or the community around them:

“Uh, a black person doesn’t want to see another black person uh, a le (become) successful, wa bona (you see)? So ku ncono (it’s better)... kana wang kitsi gore (you would know me as) we grew up together. Kao itsi o le (I know you to be) that person, o nna kamo (that lives) next door. Motho o le waitsi a ka irang (do you know what a person would do)? Net for gore wa bona (just because he sees your) potential, this guy maybe somewhere o tlo ba shap, a ba successful (will be good, and be successful). Ku ncono a ya ko di (it’s better for him to go to) traditional healers, a ireng (to do what)? A block’e dilo ts gae, wangthlaloganya (to block the person’s progress, you get me)? That’s why ke re (I say), we’re surrounded by sharks and hyenas. Wai bo? Ba, ba stout (you see? They are naughty). Ba, ba go boima, wa bo’ (it’s hard, you see)?” - Neo

Most of the participants expressed that a lack of finances had been a huge obstacle for them in reaching their goals. This included both working to receive an income to provide for themselves and loved ones or receiving funding to build something for themselves, like a business, so they could further provide. Another reason that arose was with Tshepo and how he had to work to help at home which was the actual obstacle between him and attaining his dreams and hopes. The major issue about being unemployed was the financial restriction or hold it had on the participants that prevented them from providing, contributing, and building their independence. It was also perceived that the community members around contributed to the stagnation in one’s

life or the difficulty in reaching one's goals by involving themselves in the individual's downfall.

The theme of Obstacles and Persistence emerged as a critical aspect within the study on unemployed young black men in Mamelodi and highlighted the challenges they encountered and their determination to overcome these hurdles. The participants' narratives revealed a complex interplay between financial obstacles and their persistent efforts to overcome these barriers and realise their aspirations, as has been evident in other studies (Mullagee & Bruce, 2015; Ratele et al., 2012). This included the struggle of finding funding for personal endeavours, such as launching a brand or business, which they saw as integral to achieving their dreams and improving their circumstances. The inability to access funds hindered their progress and restricted their potential for growth.

The participants' discussions of financial obstacles underscored the broader impact on their well-being and self-esteem, which had also been reported in other studies (MacDonald & Shildrick, 2007; Ratele et al., 2012). The statement "I'm not happy with the way I am" reflected the emotional toll that financial challenges could have on one's self-perception and overall satisfaction. The inability to secure financial resources leads to feelings of dissatisfaction and may also contribute to a sense of powerlessness (MacDonald & Shildrick, 2007).

Despite the financial obstacles they faced, the participants' narratives also revealed a strong sense of persistence and determination (Mullagee & Bruce, 2015; Ratele et al., 2012). The phrase "thinking how I'll fund my brand" underscores their commitment to finding solutions and pushing forward despite setbacks. This persistence reflects their resilience and their refusal to be defined solely by the barriers they encounter (Mullagee & Bruce, 2015; Ratele et al., 2012).

The participants' accounts also suggested that their determination to overcome financial obstacles was influenced by broader cultural and social expectations. The aspiration to provide, succeed, and contribute aligned with societal norms of masculinity and self-sufficiency (Mfecane, 2016; Ratele et al., 2012). This illustrated how cultural ideals and societal expectations shaped their aspirations and persistence, further emphasising the interconnectedness of various themes.

The persistence observed among the participants may also be influenced by their communities and support networks. The shared goal of financial independence and self-improvement may foster a sense of camaraderie and collective pursuit of overcoming challenges (MacDonald & Shildrick, 2007; Ratele et al., 2012). The presence of support

systems can bolster their persistence by providing emotional encouragement and practical assistance.

In conclusion, the theme of Obstacles and Persistence shed light on the financial challenges faced by unemployed young black men in Mamelodi and their unwavering determination to overcome these hurdles. Their narratives reflected a complex interplay between financial constraints, personal well-being, cultural expectations, and the drive to persist amidst adversity (Mullagee & Bruce, 2015; Ratele et al., 2012). This theme underscored the resilience of these individuals and the intricate ways in which financial obstacles intersected with broader socio-cultural contexts and personal aspirations.

4.2 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the five themes that emerged from the participants' interviews through the use of thematic analysis. The themes were supported by literature and the theoretical framework of social constructionism, wherein a discussion of the results was situated. The chapter that follows concludes this research report by offering a synopsis of the results and discussing their implications. The chapter also highlights the strengths and limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research and intervention.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The study of this research hoped to gain an understanding of how young unemployed men conceptualise masculinity. This is based on their experience of being young, unemployed, black and living in Mamelodi, and is said to inform their perspective on masculine roles. This chapter will give a final summary of the masculinities in South Africa, what has been previously researched in the field of masculinity, the focus that this research hoped to highlight, a brief synopsis of the findings as well as the strengths and limitations of the study.

5.2 Masculinities in South Africa

Hegemonic masculinity was recognised in South Africa in the early 1990s. Its purpose was to create a hierarchy of masculinities where it positions itself in the highest level, silencing other masculinities (Morrell et al., 2012). However, some forms of masculinity have been able to challenge these dominant ideas of hegemonic masculinity by expressing feelings and possessing characteristics that defy hegemonic masculinity views (Langa, 2017). This includes showing affection, being vulnerable and being present fathers, sons and partners. By doing this, a different kind of masculinity is being constructed and defined (Langa, 2017). In South Africa, the focus has mainly been on hegemonic and violent masculinities. However, young men have currently been able to move away from these traditional conceptualisations into masculinities that are more suited to them (Langa, 2017; Morrell et. al, 2012).

5.3 Previous Research on Masculinity

Past ideas and understandings of masculinity come from cultures and traditions, which are linked to power dynamics (Kumalo & Gama, 2018). It is important to view masculinity in its specific context as it is historically and contextually specific (Shefer et al., 2010). It must also be noted that most research on masculinity have reflected Western society's experience of masculinity, which does not give a voice to men from other societies, therefore making these theories unapplicable to the rest of the world (Mfecane, 2016).

There are many European masculinity scholars who have explored research including how violence informs a masculine identity, how masculinity in young boys is constructed within family and close relationships, and attitudes towards sexual diversity as men age (Cann et. al, 2020). Other research has explored how peer groups influence the perceptions of masculinity, how marginalised men are lined to regression and violence and privileged men are made archetypes of progress (Cann et. al, 2020). In South Africa, previous research has shown interest in how new masculinity and metrosexuality has challenged traditional western assumptions of masculine identity and how masculinities are constantly evolving (Elliott, 2003; Morrell, 1997; Viljoen, 2008).

5.4 Focus of this Research

The township of Mamelodi has an estimate of one million residents who travel out to the city for work (Blokland, 2014). Resources and service delivery in this area are generally scarce, meaning many have to travel to the city centre to gain access to major resources (Blokland, 2014). The area is also characterised by low-income areas and high unemployment rate, which ultimately affects people's behaviours and perceptions of themselves (Qambela, 2021; Ramafamba & Meors, 2012). This is especially true with the men in these areas as it is believed that men are responsible to take on the provider role despite the increasing economic insecurity of unemployment (Gonalons-Pons & Gangl, 2021). Society pressures men to fulfil the "breadwinner" norm and social identity and states are a source influence to the experiences of men's unemployment (Gonalons-Pons & Gangl, 2021).

The study had hoped to obtain a comprehensive concept of the various masculinities that exist, drawing more focus on the evolution of masculinities in South Africa and how they are constructed today. A particular focus was given to the constructions of masculinity among young black unemployed men living in Mamelodi as my interest aimed at understanding how the various characteristics of these participants' identity influenced how they constructed general, as well as their own, masculinity. This was intended to ultimately aid in helping readers understand how these various factors should be considered when understanding this group and their lived experience.

Although there is an increasing amount of research on the effects of unemployment of men's psychological wellbeing, there are few that focus on black young unemployed men in the township of Mamelodi, South Africa, which the research sought to uncover. This was studied to add onto the existing body of knowledge, providing a new perspective and attempting to hopefully give an important voice, in the literature, to these men.

This report was able to introduce the research, detailing the conceptualisations of masculinity, the need for the research and what to expect in the following chapters. It then led into the literature review, which gave an overview of literature that has already been explored in masculinity, the history of the concepts as well as how masculinity has been conceptualised in South Africa up to date. It also gave a general outlook on the relationship between unemployment and masculinities, as well as the theoretical framework that the study chose to adopt. The chapter following this offered a description of the methods used during the study, including the procedure, the data collection and analysis. The report was then able to give the reader the major findings that were collected from the study, along with an analysis and discussion of the findings.

5.5 Brief Synopsis of Results

The main aim of this research report was to observe how men establish and understand masculine identities, including their own, in the context of being young, black, unemployed and living in Mamelodi, Pretoria. In this way, we are able to gain insight on how the socially constructed role of being a provider may impact their psychosocial lives from the perspective of being unemployed.

This research used a qualitative research design to gain in-depth responses of the participants' lived experiences. To easily recruit participants who fulfil the research of the study, purposive and snowball sampling methods were used, where 8 participants were found. The requirements for the participants were that they need to be black men between the ages of 18 and 35, fulfilling the category of youth in South Africa, living in Mamelodi and who had been out of work for a period of at least two years. For the data collection, semi-structured interviews were seen to be best suited to the research as they provided a set of questions which the research saw as important in responding to the aims and research questions but also provided a way for other important areas and experiences to be voiced out (Doody & Noonan, 2014; McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Thematic analysis was used for analysing the data of the research because we sought to identify patterns in the participants' feelings, thoughts and lived experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2015; Alhojailan, 2012). I went through the steps of thematic analysis and also was reflexive throughout the research process.

There were five themes identified across all the interviews that were conducted with the six young black unemployed men from Mamelodi. These were Proactivity, Dreams and Hopes, Unemployment, Masculinity and Culture, and Obstacles and Persistence.

The first theme, Proactivity, meant that participants felt the need to take initiative in pursuing their goals and to take action in bettering themselves and their environment. This was seen through participating in “side hustles” such as informal barbering, making art, tutoring, modelling and printing stationery items. The participants felt as though they could utilise the skills and hobbies that they had and capitalise on them while they are still finding their dream jobs and work. This was a way for them to use their time up and to avoid staying idle. Ultimately, this would help them create a sense of independence and agency for themselves (Grant & Ashford, 2008).

The first sub-theme for this theme is Working and Survival. This sub-theme spoke to how the participants would engage themselves in tasks and informal side jobs around the community. It must be noted that for them, this type of work was not seen as employment, but rather a way of making ends meet and busying themselves while looking for the employment that they truly wished for.

The second sub-theme of victories meant that the participants were able to recall moments and past actions in their lives that they could draw on that felt like memories of pride and reward. These moments were seen as evidence to them that they could achieve things and overcome obstacles and difficult situations in their lives. The victories ranged from what is seen as small to big achievements, as well as those that are personal, for those around them, those that are instant and those that have been an accumulation of work over a long period of time. These victories and achievements included doing things for loved ones, attaining entry grades for school, making continuous progress, investing money and doing things they loved doing.

Pride was the third sub-theme of Proactivity. For the participants, moments of pride include life improvements and being able to use skills to produce work that was self-taught. In this sense, pride did not refer to the feeling of one being better or more important than others but rather to a deep sense of pleasure and satisfaction with one’s achievements, skills, qualities and successes. These moments were not physical gains, and also involve their loved ones and the community around them. The recollection of these moments enabled the participants to develop a sense of self-respect and self-esteem in themselves.

The second theme identified in the analysis was Dreams and Hopes. The study had defined a dream as something that is hoped for or an ideal and inspiration that the participants wished to achieve. Hope was then referred to as a desire or expectation for something good to happen for the participants. These included dreams and hopes that were held in mind while the participants were young growing up, as well as current hopes and dreams in their young

adulthood. It is observed that some participants held the same dreams and hopes as they did when growing up while others had changed due to different interests, their resources and circumstances.

There were two sub-themes identified in Dreams and Hopes namely Teenage Dreams and Current Dreams. The Teenage Dreams sub-theme made reference to the aspirations and hopes that the participants had when they were young with endless resources and possibilities in mind, not restrained by their circumstances or hindrances. These included professions that the participants would be proud to be called by, playing soccer, being artists, teachers and lawyers. It was seen that the aspirations that the participants mentioned had more to do with their careers. This may mean that the participant's career choice was something of importance to them and their families from their young age and would have been influenced by societal expectations (Mfecane, 2016; Viljoen, 2008).

The sub-theme of Current Dreams referred to the aspirations that the participants currently had for their future which have either changed or stayed the same from those they had when they were younger. These included being a stylist and owning a boutique, being a radio personality, a teacher, a real estate agent and being a pilot. Unlike the childhood dreams, the current dreams that had changed were influenced by the participants' lack of motivation, a lack of resources and less access to opportunities, as well as more life pressures and responsibilities that make it harder for them to pursue their childhood dreams (Surender et al., 2010). The current dreams that participants still had and had not changed from their childhood may have been due to a belief and hope that the dreams were still attainable and there was still a passion and persistence to reach these goals (Kumalo & Gama, 2018).

The third theme, Unemployment, was defined as the participants being in a position where they are actively searching for work but are struggling to find the work that they hope for (Surender et al., 2010). This was also a criterion for the selection of participants for this research. It was also observed and understood that the participants who engaged in side jobs and hustles still considered themselves as unemployed because they did not feel settled and secure in their side jobs, and feel as though they would be employed once they find the job they have always hope or aspired for. The participants shared the effects of their unemployment in their lives, such as having the fear of not doing anything, the fear of time passing by and them getting older, being undermined by those around them, not being able to be in romantic relationships, not being able to provide and take care of themselves and their loved ones, putting themselves in debt and not being independent. The participants felt that their unemployment affected various aspects of their lives - emotionally, socially, physically, and psychologically.

Therefore, it can be assumed that unemployment has a great impact on their identity as men, their sense of self-worth and on how they perceived themselves (MacDonald & Shildrick, 2007). An important point was the further impact that the Covid-19 pandemic had caused on these issues of unemployment.

The fourth theme identified is Masculinity and Culture where it was observed that culture and tradition may affect the participants' behaviour and the expectations that society and the community have for them. A general way to describe masculinity included the behaviours, roles, and qualities that a man possesses, as well as the social expectations of a man. This research report has taken on the social constructionist theory which postulates that masculinity is constructed by society. Culture was defined as the customs, behaviours and ideas of a specific people at a specific time and this research focuses on the culture of black unemployed young men in Mamelodi.

The unique perspective of this research allowed for the exploring of experiences of the men and what masculinity meant to them, in the specific context of being a young man living in the township of Mamelodi. The experiences included the hopes of moving away from the township once one has attained a degree of success, but still being able to give back to the community and be an example and inspiration to other young men. Others expressed being able to attain financial wealth, always remembering where one came from, once they have succeeded, and to provide for the family. The hardships of being a young man in Mamelodi included having the pressure of providing for those that were dependent on the young men, and to avoid others leading themselves to dangerous situations.

The participants have expressed the ways in which they reacted to challenges in their lives. These reactions seemed to have been caused by their experience of being unemployed, being dependent and feeling unable to provide and fulfil their role. This meant that the participants perhaps felt that they could not meet society's constructions of what a man should be. These expressions of sadness, isolation and depressive feelings were unlike the general culture and societal expectations of masculinity and illustrated the interplay between the social constructions of masculinity and their personal experiences (Mfecane, 2016; Viljoen, 2008).

Participants have shared the various kinds of behaviours used and actions they took to cope with the situation they found themselves in. These included attempting to shift their mindset to a more positive outlook when they faced obstacles and self-coaching, listening to music, praying when they were disappointed, using alcohol and drugs, as well as involving themselves in crime in order to deal with the pressure to provide. These varied reactions give us an idea of the kind of culture that exists in the way the young unemployed black men handle

and respond to situations. However, there were other responses that implied that the participants would persevere in response to facing disappointment. These responses display a sense of determination and resilience, which are cultural values of a masculine identity (Mfecane, 2016; Viljoen, 2008).

Analysing the results, it was found that most participants believed in a new society where women also assumed the roles of working and providing for the family. The participants felt that this idea was produced as the new modern world progressed. It also appeared that the participants agreed with this idea and were encouraging of a society and family unit where women had also taken on the provider role.

The last theme that was identified across the participants in Obstacles and Persistence. It was observed that the participants face a large amount of obstacles throughout their lives and because of their current identity of being black young unemployed men. Despite these obstacles, most of them have shown persistence in the midst of their challenges and difficulties (Mullagee & Bruce, 2015; Ratele et. al, 2012). Most of the participants had shared that their main obstacles were financial challenges, and these financial obstacles drove them to persist and overcome them. They expressed that finance was the hinderance that blocked them from reaching their goals, which included both the obstacle of employment in order to receive an income and receiving funding to help start-up their dream job. The obstacle of financial restriction that came with unemployment prevented them from being able to contribute, provide and to become independent. Another obstacle that was highlighted involved the perception that other close friends, family and/or the community, who could attempt to stop another black community member from succeeding, due to jealousy.

These financial obstacles have also been seen to impact their sense of self and overall well-being (MacDonald & Shildrick, 2007; Ratele et al., 2012). It seemed that it caused an emotional toll and feelings of powerlessness. However, although these financial restraints exist and impact their feelings, the participants were able to show resilience in being determined and persistent in attempting to reach their goals (Mullagee & Bruce, 2015; Ratele et al., 2012).

With all the findings gathered, it is worth highlighting the implications of the study. Despite the difficulties these black young unemployed men face in their lives, notice can be placed on their resilience and the various initiatives they take to think about and deal with their situations. They have shown a mindfulness of the environment they grew up in and society's expectations of how they should live in their identity as men, and have chosen to attempt in re-defining what masculinity is into more proactive roles such as, being involved in the youth by inspiring and mentoring, being involved in community spaces to help uplift community

members, using their creativity, passions and skills to help bring alternative forms of income generation, and to access opportunities to make ends meet. These proactive roles can be seen as a way to challenge the existing views of young black men in the dominant discourse. However, these positive qualities the young men possess does not diminish the reality of the pain and trauma of their experiences which threaten the hopes and dreams they have for themselves. It would be worth thinking of better ways in supporting this population of young unemployed black men. This could include utilising their interests and skills to help them find their independence and to empower their community.

5.6 Strengths and Limitations

There were a few strengths and limitations that were noted in the research study. A limitation of this research includes having a limited sample size as is expected, given the nature of a qualitative research design. This meant that the external validity of the research may be compromised. However, it is worth noting that the intention of the study was not to generalise as the sample held particular characteristics that were needed for this study, including being black, unemployed, male and living in Mamelodi, Gauteng. Therefore, the findings should be understood from this perspective of rather offering in-depth accounts. This is then seen as a strength because it gives the reader more subjective views of masculinity from a particular sample because the experiences are subjective, despite masculinity being known as socially constructed. Another strength to this is that it highlights the gap that exists and what potential and further research in masculinity studies can focus on.

Another limitation is the possible limited depth of analysis and the quality of data that was retrieved. It was noted that, at times, the men struggled to reflect on some of the ideas posed to them and some appeared less negatively affected by their situations, which spoke to the societal expectations of showing less emotion. This may create gaps and limit some of the findings, and the conclusions need to be observed with circumspection. An advantage can be taken from these identified gaps through further research that can look more closely at the reasons why the participants may have been less open and expressive with certain experiences.

A strength that had been previously eluded to is the potential for this particular group of men and their experiences to be illuminated. Although there is a well-established body of research done on masculinities in South Africa, there is little research on young black men from Mamelodi, Pretoria, and their experiences and constructions of masculinity need further exploration. This could also help with the potential interventions that can be put in place that is

suited to this particular group of men. The potential knowledge could provide the community, and academia, an idea of the context and issues that arise from what has been studied.

5.7 Directions for further Research

More research on masculinity should be conducted in this particular area of Gauteng, to determine any differences and similar experiences and themes that arise from studies that are focused on other locations. Another suggested direction would be finding ways to understand the resistance to fully expressing one's self as an individual who holds a masculine identity and those effects on their experience and wellbeing, which may be due to societal expectations and other factors.

5.8 Directions for further Intervention

Interventions to aid the participants with the challenges they face due to their experience and identity can be put into place. As seen in the nature of the study and the findings, it appears that a community intervention approach would be most useful for these participants and the community members around them. An exploration of any community resources available for young unemployed black men would be useful to start implementing intervention plans. This exploration will also demonstrate any lack of resources that should be focused on. This includes resources that will help in different aspects of their lives- financial, mental, physical, academic and more. In addition, an exploration into the existing policies that benefit these participants can be made to gauge its usefulness and whether it needs to be changed, strengthened or revised.

5.9 Final Comment

It felt like a great privilege to be able to explore and share space with the participants, and to attempt to make an adequate synopsis of the study. Although it appears to be a fraction of the actual day-to-day realities that these participants go through, I hoped to have shed some light on and highlighted just enough to spark more interest to explore this group of participants. The constructions of masculinity in the society we live in today have a great impact on men's mental health and their sense of self, especially in townships where the concept of mental health and being able to express one's distressed feelings and mental state is a new idea that is not totally recognised and embraced. I hope this helps people to be more allowing, receptive and understanding of the mental health states of the young black men in our communities.

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Addendum

Appendix A: Ethics Clearance Certificate



SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE:

PROTOCOL NUMBER: MACC/21/06

PROJECT TITLE:

Exploring the constructions of masculinity of unemployed young black men from Mamelodi.

INVESTIGATOR

Sibanyoni Dineo (1127797)

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR

SHCD/Psychology

DATE CONSIDERED

01 June 2021

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE

Approved unconditionally

RISK LEVEL

Low Risk

EXPIRY DATE

31 December 2023

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE

21 June 2021

CHAIRPERSON

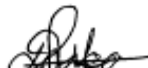

(Dr Vinitha Jithoo)

Cc: Ms Mapule Moroke (Supervisor)

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.


Signature

Date

21 / 06 / 21
24/06/2021

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet



Psychology School of Human &
Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050

Tel: 011 717 4503 Fax: 011 717 4559

Good day Sir/Madam.

My name is Dineo Sibanyoni. I am currently completing my Masters degree in Community-Based Counselling Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. As part of the degree, I am required to conduct a research project. My study seeks to explore the everyday lived experience of young men from Mamelodi. The study aims to unpack the complexities of being a young male adult in contemporary South Africa, unpacking its complexities and intricacies.

I would appreciate if you could receive this as an invitation to participate in an interview. The interview is estimated to last approximately one and a half hours. During the interview, you may refrain from answering any questions, and after the interview you can contact me to access, review, alter or delete any information concerning you. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any point. The research is not remunerated and will not receive any direct benefits from participating in the study. Most importantly there are no disadvantages or penalties for not participating.

With your permission the discussion will be digitally recorded. All information provided and digital recordings from the discussions will be kept confidential, with access only being granted to me, the researcher, and my supervisor Ms Mapule Moroke. All identifiable information will be removed during the process of transcription of the digital recordings and will not be included in the final write up of the study. Within the transcription pace as well as the final report write up pseudonyms will be used to represent your participation within the study. The recordings, transcriptions and associated final notes will be stored on an encrypted storage device and stored

in a locked cabinet for a period of ten years and could be used as secondary data for future publishable academic articles.

If during or after the interview, you feel the need for support or counselling to work through some feelings and thoughts that may have been triggered by the discussion you are encouraged to contact LifeLine (Pretoria) on their National Hotline 0861 322 322 or their 24/7 Counselling line at 012 804 3619. Alternatively, you can contact the SADAG Mental Health Line at 011 234 4837

If you have any questions or queries during the research, please feel free to contact either me or my research supervisor on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the University of the Witwatersrand library website. Should you wish to obtain a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you. If you have any concerns regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact Wits University Human Research Committee (Non-Medical) telephone: +27(0)11 717-1408 or email Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za.

Should you be interested in participating or have any questions, please feel free to contact me on the details listed below.

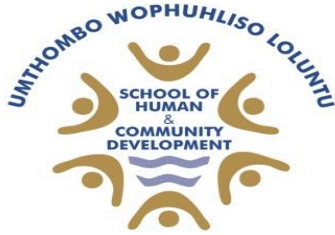
Thank you for taking the time to read about the study. Your participation would be greatly appreciated.

Kind Regards

Dineo Sibanyoni
Mobile: 076 031 1339
Dineonaomibeth04@gmail.com

Ms. Mapule Moroke
Office Number: 011 717 4529
Mapule.Moroke@wits.ac.za

Appendix C: Consent Form (Interview)



Psychology School of Human &
Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050

Tel: 011 717 4503 Fax: 011 717 4559

Exploring the construction of masculinity of unemployed young black men from Mamelodi

I, _____ consent to being interviewed by Dineo Sibanyoni for her study. The research has been explained to me and I am aware of what my participation will involve.

I understand that:

(Please tick for a “yes”, or cross for a “no”)

- ☐ Participation in the study is voluntary.
- ☐ I may refrain from answering any questions.
- ☐ I may withdraw from the interview, with my data, at any point.
- ☐ There are no consequences attached to my withdrawal.
- ☐ No information that can identify me or my clients will be included in the research report.
- ☐ All information provided will remain confidential, although I may be quoted in the research report under a pseudonym.
- ☐ The research may be used in an anonymised format after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers, subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained.

Name of Participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name of person seeking consent: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Consent Form (Recording)



Psychology School of Human & Community
Development

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050

Tel: 011 717 4503 Fax: 011 717 4559

I, _____ give my consent for my interview with Dineo Sibanyoni to be audio-recorded for her study exploring the everyday lived experiences of young men from Mamelodi and how they construct their masculinities in a contemporary South Africa.

I understand that:

- I may refrain from answering any questions and I may contact the researcher to access, review, alter or delete any information that concerns me.
- Participation is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the study at any point.
- The research is not remunerated and direct benefits will not be received from participating in the study and there will be no disadvantages or penalties from not participating.
- All transcripts and recordings will be confidential and only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to them.
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report and pseudonyms such as Participant A or Participant B, will be used instead.
- Once the study is complete, the recordings and transcripts will be stored on a password protected file and could be used as secondary data for future academic articles

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E: Interview Schedule

For the interview, once the interviewer and participant have found a satisfactory room, all issues regarding ethics will be discussed. The researcher will spend time to make sure that the participants understand these terms and what each issue entails. The questions will proceed as follows:

1. Tell me more about yourself
2. What does a normal day look like for you? (This question hopes to get an outline of the participants' everyday life)
3. Can you tell me more about some of the dreams, hopes and aspirations you had for yourself when you were a teenager?
4. What are some of the hurdles and/or victories that you have experienced in trying to attain these goals, dreams and aspirations?
 - 4.1 what achievements are you most proud of up to date?
 - 4.2 How do you handle disappointment?
 - 4.3 How would those around you know when you are upset?
5. What does being a man from Mamelodi mean to you?
 - 5.1 Do you consider this a traditional or non-traditional understanding of being a man?
 - 5.2 Do you feel that you fit that description
6. How important is culture to you?
7. In your opinion, does culture play a role in how being a man is understood in Mamelodi?
8. How are unemployed men viewed within your community?
 - 8.1 What are some of your feelings and thoughts around being currently unemployed?
 - 8.2 What has been the hardest part for you about being unemployed?
 - 8.3 How has unemployment personally affected you as a man?
9. How has your current state of unemployment affected your relationships with family and friends?
10. Are you your family's sole provider?
 - 10.1 If yes, what are some of the difficulties you experience from not being able to provide?
 - 10.2 If yes and no, do you believe it is the man's sole responsibility to provide for the family?
11. What support do you have in place in trying to find employment?

- 11.1 Are you accessing any government social grants? If so, which ones?
- 11.2 What are the key things you spend the grant money on?
- 12. From your family or community, who would you identify as your male role model?
 - 12.1 If there is no one, is there a female in your family or community that you consider as a role model?
 - 12.2 what about that person makes them a role model for you?
- 13. Can you share with me any memorable experiences you had with your role model?
- 14. What are some of the hopes and dreams you have for yourself today?
- 15. If you could imagine a perfect world where everything was equal and you had access to all resources and support, what would that world look like?

After all the questions have been covered, an opportunity will be given to the participant to ask any questions or for clarifications that they might need. In thanking the participant, the researcher will remind the participant of their contact details for future contact.

Appendix F: Interview Schedule (Sepedi)

1. Mpotse ka wena
2. Letsatsi la gao ke le le byang? O dirang ge o tsoga go fihla nošego
3. Ge Io gola ditoro tsa gao be ele eng, ne o nyaka goba eng mo bophelong?
4. Go fihlella ditoro tse ne o naleng tsona, ke afeng mathata a obileng le one? O kgonne go fihlela tseding tsa ditoro tsa gao le tse o di nyakang mo bophelong?

4.1 Ke eng tse feng ditoro tse o kgonne go di fihlella?

4.2. O dira engge o sa kreye se ne o nagana gore otlala se kreye?

4.3 Ba o phelang le bona ba go bona byang gore o tshwenyegile?

5. Go ba monna wa mo Mamelodi go ra goreng mo wena?

5.1 O bona banna kamoka mo Mamelodi ba swana?

5.2 O bona wena o swana le banna bobohle ba mo Mamelodi?

6. Setso (culture)se bohlokwa (important) mo wena?
7. Go ya ka wena o bona batho ba bona banna kamoka ba swana mo Mamelodi?
8. Mo Mamelodi batho ba tseya byang banna ba ba sa berekeng?

8.1 O ikwa byang, o nagana eng ka go se bereke?

8.2 Ke eng se se boima thata ka go se bereke?

9. Go se bereke go ama (effect) byang kamano (relationship) ya gao le family le dichomi tsa gao?
10. Mo lapeng(family) ya gao ba lebeletse wena fela gore o ba hlocomele?
11. O thusa ke eng gore o kreye mmereko?

11.1 O nale se o se kreyang goba tšhelete ko mmušong? If yes, ke ye byang thuso e o e kreyang?

11.2 O berekisa tšhelete yeo go dirang thata?

12. Mo o dulang goba mo lelokong (family) ke mang o odumang go swana le yena?

12.1 Ge go sena mmonna o o dumang go swana le yena ke mosadi o mo fe mo o dulang o odumang go swana le yena?

12.2 Ke eng ka motho o se se dirang gore o nyake go swana le yena?

13. Ke eng se o se gopolang ka nako e ne o nale motho o onyakang go swana le yena?

14. Ke eng ditoro le dilo tse o di dumang mo bophelong ba gao today?

15. Ge o nagana bophelo bo bo monate, mo batho ba lekanang, mo o kgonang go fihlella tse tsohle tse o di nyakang le go ba le thekgo (support), Go ya ka wena lefase leo le ka ba byang?