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Black Adult narratives on their Adolescent Years of sibling Rivalry

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Abstract

Sibling relationships are familial and culturally influenced. However, sibling rivalry and how it presents itself has mostly been analysed from a Western perspective but underexplored within the African and South African context. Thus, the aim of this study was to explore black South African adults' narratives about their experience of sibling rivalry during their adolescent years. The aim was to further understand the phenomenon of sibling rivalry within this group as well as extended literature in this area. Ten participants between the ages of 40 and 65 were drawn using snowball and convenience sampling methods and semi-structured interviews were conducted. The interviews were then analysed using narrative thematic analysis. The findings of the study suggest that sibling rivalry is complex in that often it occurs in the context of provocation, sibling exclusion and sibling power dynamics. In addition, the research found that unfair parental expectations, lack of parental guidance and differential parental treatment led to negative feelings among siblings heightening sibling rivalry. During adulthood, sibling rivalry resulted from unrealistic financial expectations placed on others. Interestingly, this study found that even though there were incidents of sibling rivalry, sibling love and warmth were present in these relationships. These findings demonstrate that both love and conflict can exist in sibling relationships. The narratives reveal that sibling rivalry is complex such that external factors like parents, cultural and environmental influences informed the construction of meaning in this group of black South African middle-aged adults.

Keywords; *Sibling Rivalry, Sibling Love, differential parental treatment, narratives, narrative Arcs*

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Structure of the report

There are five chapters in this research report. The first chapter is the introduction chapter and consists of background information about sibling relationships and rivalry, the research problem, rationale, aims, objectives and research questions. In the second chapter, a review of literature is presented and the theoretical framework underlying this research is then discussed. The third chapter discusses the methodology employed. Here the research design, method of sampling, process of data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations and the reflexivity of the researcher are discussed. The fourth chapter presents the findings and discussion. The fifth chapter summarises the findings but also addresses the strengths and limitations of this research and recommends future direction for research in this field. Lastly, we find the required appendices attached.

1.2 Introduction

Family relationships and their influence on siblings' interactions have been studied over many years. The family consists of multiple subsystems such as marital, parent-child and sibling subsystems that consistently influence each other and are interdependent (Brody et al., 1992; Persram et al., 2019). Given the naturalistic shared environment of family interactions, conflict and quarrels are expected within the family (Hashim & Ahmad, 2016). Family dynamics have been noted to have the ability to affect how a child develops and matures (Krejцова, 2023). Parental or marital conflict and a negative emotional climate in the family have been stated to cause distress in children (Brody et al., 1992). This is because children are always exposed to their family members' or parents' interactions, whether they are cooperative or conflictual and are either negatively or positively affected (Persram et al., 2019). For example, in the context

of marital conflict, spousal disagreements and less cohesion in the family leads to maladjusted child behaviour and internalizing and externalizing problems (Persram et al., 2019; Brody et al., 1992). Siblings, first experience socialization in their families, where they learn behavioural patterns and develop their character (Johnson & Ray, 2016). This learning occurs relationally when children observe how parents or adults in the family interact with one another, then model this behaviour in their sibling dynamics (Bush & Peterson, 2012). In addition, the parent-child relationship may be another example that the siblings look to on how to relate to one another. For example, children learn from parents within the family, thus, when the marital or parent-child relationships is conflict-laden, siblings may learn to engage with one another in the exact manner (Kong & Goldberg, 2022). This demonstrates that sibling relationships are influenced by other people, surroundings and obstacles. Furthermore, research states that parenting also has an impact on sibling relationship quality, with authoritarian and harsh parenting linked to more conflictual sibling interactions while parents who employ conflict-resolution strategies such as reasoning and perspective-taking with their children, are known to have a positive impact and thus enhance harmonious sibling relationships (Feinberg et al., 2012). Moreover, since siblings are under the care of the same parents, sibling rivalry can start when the second child is born and the older child experiences jealousy when having to compete for parental affection (Hashim & Ahmad, 2016). However, violence in the family may lead to sibling closeness or rivalry. Kong and Goldberg (2022), also state that when a child lacks a sense of security or stability from a parent, they may seek support and comfort from their sibling and this sibling relationship may consist of love and warmth. Thus, higher levels of positivity in the parent-child relationship were linked to positive sibling relationships while negative parent-child relationship was associated with aggression and self-protective behaviours in sibling relationships (Brody et al., 1996) Hence, this constant interaction between children, parents and other family members influences how a child will treat others around

them (Bush & Peterson, 2012). This is made possible by the systemic nature of the family structure and the parental involvement in the child's development (Cox, 2010; Palacios et al., 2016).

The impact of the family system on sibling relationships has also been investigated in terms of varying parental treatment of siblings (Donagh, 2022). Therefore, there have been questions in research about how the parent-child relationship affects the way a child develops. Differential parental treatment can occur in different domains such as chores, discipline and warmth (Whiteman et al., 2011). Whites et al. (2011) found that when one parent shows preferential treatment toward one sibling and not the other, this may lead to hostility and negativity. Conversely, when children receive the same treatment from their parents, sibling relationships tend to be more harmonious (Trippet & Wolke, 2014). The family systems approach emphasizes that the relationship between siblings is influenced by their broader social context, demonstrating that sibling relationships are interconnected and not independent (Donagh, 2022). For instance, the parental subsystem can impact the relationship between siblings, and vice versa (Donagh, 2022) and these may be influenced by the external environment.

Siblings have also been known to have great impact on one another's development due to the role they play from childhood until adulthood. Firstly, due to proximity, sibling engagement is heightened and this provides them with countless opportunities to learn and be influenced by one another's behaviour and choices (Rawat & Malik, 2024). Dunn and Kendrick (1981), explain that siblings tend to imitate each other resulting in sibling relationships being training fields for children where they learn different behaviours whether good or bad. In addition, siblings can affect each other's psychological adjustment and psychosocial functioning. During childhood, in more positive sibling relationships, siblings can serve as a child's first peer thus influencing social cognition and language acquisition through play (Rawat & Malik, 2024). In adolescence, siblings can assist each other in navigating peer relationships but also influence

the development of their sense of self (Rawat & Malik, 2024). Furthermore, during conflictual interactions, siblings may learn perspective-taking but this may also lead to emotional difficulties and behavioural problems (Rawat & Malik, 2024; Wolke et al., 2015). However, when the relationship is harmonious, there is more positive adjustment and fewer psychological difficulties as this relationship may be a buffer during adversity and lead to psychosocial competence (Wolke et al., 2015; Whiteman et al., 2012).

Broader contexts such as culture but also factors such as age and birth order have been noticed to have an impact on sibling relationships. Despite the similarities of sibling relationships in the family, there are cultural variations in prescribed and ascribed sibling roles, the relationship dynamics and the extent and nature of their daily interaction (Updegraff et al., 2011). There are differences between collectivistic and individualistic cultures (Wolke et al., 2015). Collectivistic cultures are more focused on the group as a whole and its functioning while the individual takes preference over the group in individualistic cultures (Louw & Louw, 2014). In both collectivistic and individualistic cultures, the role of the older sibling as a caregiver and nurturer varies. For instance, in Western cultures, older siblings are given this role when necessary while in non-Western cultures this role is mandatory for family survival (Updegraff et al., 2011). In addition, the caregiving role prescribed to older siblings in collectivistic cultures has led to more compassion and warmth in older siblings. However, younger siblings are forbidden to assert themselves in their interactions with older siblings in collectivistic cultures while individual autonomy is encouraged in individualistic cultures (Updegraff et al., 2011). Furthermore, Triandis and colleagues (1988) found that relationships in collectivistic cultures were more interdependent and supportive while they were more distant and self-reliant in individualistic cultures. Moreover, interdependence among siblings was emphasized in collectivistic cultures (Updegraff et al., 2011). Therefore, there was better coping and more connection than rivalry among individuals in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic

cultures (Triandis et al., 1988). Thus, there was more unity and harmony encouraged in collectivistic cultures than rivalry (Updegraff et al., 2011).

In South African cultures, mostly black cultures, the first male child is usually regarded as most important (Brandel-Syrer, 1979). The oldest male sibling is one that is usually regarded as the heir to inherit the father's personal belongings and has certain privileges (Brandel-Syrer, 1979). Updegraff et al (2011), found that older brothers usually have greater status and are given more resources in the family. In addition, in some African cultures, older brothers are expected to have a leading role and support their sisters as they are regarded to have a submissive role in the sibling dyad (Updegraff et al., 2011). Furthermore, South African mothers are said to use an authoritative parenting style to their daughters as compared to their sons. This may further reveal that sons are seen as superior (Mijlof et al., 2020). However, these views may lead to resentment by younger siblings, especially younger male siblings towards their older brother (Brandel-Syrer, 1979).

Through narrative analysis, this study explores how black middle-aged South African adults make meaning of their experiences with a sibling during childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

1.3. Research Problem

The nature of sibling relationships is not thoroughly understood particularly from the experience of siblings. Researchers debate the nature of sibling rivalry with some believing that these are solely based on love and/or conflict. Others suggest that love and conflict usually co-exist in these relationships (Delara, 2022; Malik, 2024; Campione-Barr & Killoren, 2019).

The experiences of sibling relationships, whether love or conflict and the narratives thereof are influenced by one's cultural context (Louw & Louw, 2014; Cicirelli, 1994). However, sibling rivalry has been explored mostly from the Western standpoint. This suggests that the large pool of research on siblings from a Western perspective disregarded the role of culture in attempts

to understand black adult narratives of sibling rivalry. In addition, this area of study is especially underexplored within the South African context. Due to this, there is an assumption that sibling relationships are similar across all cultures. This is problematic in culturally diverse populations and contexts since culture shapes one's behaviour, interactions as well as relationships with those around them (Cicirelli, 1994; Tamm et al., 2018). Thus, there is a need to understand sibling rivalry as it occurs across African cultures, particularly within the South African context.

1.4. Rationale of the study

Sibling rivalry/violence is the most prevalent yet understudied form of family violence (Eriksen & Jensen, 2009). When mismanaged, sibling rivalry can lead to psychological problems (Eriksen & Jensen, 2009; Suresh et al., 2020). Even though sibling rivalry is common in families, very little research has examined how it may constitute adverse childhood experiences. Generally, relationships among siblings have been the subject of little research despite their salience in childhood and adolescence development (Tucker et al., 2013). Most research done in this area has been from the Western perspective and from a specific cultural perspective (Cicirelli, 1994). In Western nations, incidences of sibling rivalry and abuse have been studied to promulgate literature (Hashim et al., 2015). Hence, Hashim et al. (2015) found that due to family violence such as parental conflict, the parent-child relationship is affected leading to rivalry in sibling relationships. In addition, the few studies that have been done sibling power balance have mostly been done in Western societies. For example, an examination of the use of power in sibling conflicts among white Canadian pupils was done and found that power imbalances between siblings were associated with aggression and coercive behaviour between siblings (Buist et al., 2017). However, there are differences in sibling relationship dynamics among different cultures. As a result, researchers suggest that sibling relationships and culture are “inextricably tied” (Buist et al., 2017). Thus, due to minimal research, especially

in South Africa considering its cultural diversity, this study explored sibling rivalry and sibling relationships within a South African context. To enrich our understanding of this phenomenon, we collected stories from black South African adults and explored the meaning of sibling rivalry across various cultures. We also shed light on how culture and language play a role in how these black adults frame their experiences, narrate and construct meaning on their experiences with a sibling (Cicirelli, 1994). This was done to provide new insight into what weighs as rivalry among black South African cultures. In addition, this study, through exploring sibling rivalry through a cultural lens enriched understandings of the cultural roles and how they inform sibling dynamics (Whiteman et al., 2012). The hope is that the findings of this study will improve the research quality on siblings by providing a holistic view and broadening the scope to include a South African element.

This study explored the experiences of sibling rivalry by black adults using a narrative paradigm/approach. The narrative paradigm was used in order to provide the participants with a space to tell their stories in a way that made sense to them. It further allowed the researcher to understand how they perceived, shaped and interpreted their reality (Spector-Mersel, 2010). These narratives allowed the participants to produce their life experiences in an orderly way, that made sense to them, allowing for the exploration of embedded meanings in their life stories (Ntinda, 2020). Narrative methods helped in understanding how stories were created and the cultural elements they were based on (Ntinda, 2020). This approach was fitting for this research as it provided a space for learning of the participant's cultures and uncovered the nuances around their lived experiences (Spector-Mersel, 2010; Ntinda, 2020).

The black middle-aged adult population group was chosen given their ability to reflect on the meaning made of their past experiences and how support stabilized during this stage. The principle of non-maleficence was applied ensuring minimal harm to the participant group through the support provided (Singh & Chauhan, 2015).

Thus, a study of sibling rivalry within the South African Context, using a narrative approach was deemed necessary to close the research gap shown in literature.

1.5. Research aims, objectives and questions

Aims of the study

The study aimed to explore the narratives of middle-aged black South African adults on their experiences of sibling rivalry in childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

Research questions

- What stories do adults tell about their childhood (0-18) years of sibling rivalry?
- How do middle-aged black adults make meaning of sibling rivalry?
- What kinds of narrative arcs do middle-aged black adults rely on in discussing their early sibling relationships?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the literature on studies of sibling relationships. To understand this phenomenon, this chapter explores sibling relationships as they occur in the family and cultural context. This is because research states that sibling relationships cannot be studied in isolation, but other systems need to be acknowledged (Donagh, 2022). Literature shows that both love and conflict co-exist in sibling relationships (Iftikhar & Sajjad, 2023). Thus, this chapter explores the nuances as presented in the literature. There is also an exploration and discussion of sibling relations across developmental stages. Thereafter, the context of culture is brought in since the study is focused on the black population within the South African context. Lastly, the impact of sibling rivalry on adverse childhood experiences will be reviewed, and vice versa.

2.2 The Nature and Influence of Family on Relationships

2.2.1 Defining Family

Family is a challenging concept/ institution to define. This is because there are variations in the nature of relationships that an individual may believe make up a family unit. To demonstrate this, there are various ways in which the family has been defined and these definitions have been grouped into three categories, namely, structural, functional, and transactional (Baxter et al., 2000). In addition, different scholarly definitions of the family have been included for an in-depth understanding of this concept. Structural definitions tend to be more traditional in their understanding of the family and define family based on the relations of people who are related by birth, marriage or adoption who reside in the same household (Baxter et al., 2000). This

structural definition speaks to the belief that a family may represent a relationship between spouses, siblings and parent-child. For instance, Burger and Locke (1976) as well as Shukla (2017) describe a family as a collection of individuals linked by marriage, adoption, or blood, residing in the same home and engaging in interpersonal relationships. Functional definitions on the other hand, focus on the tasks that the family performs such as socialization, financial and emotional support or reproduction and childbearing as a key function of the family (Baxter et al., 2000). In this way, the concept of family is described as a social unit distinguished by economic collaboration, procreation, and individuals residing together (Shukla, 2017). Moreover, transactional definitions of the family emphasize the role of communication among family members as well as shared history and emotional bonds within the family context (Baxter et al., 2000). Furthermore, various scholars who have defined family are firstly, Pearson (1993), who defines the family as an organized relational transactional group that occupies a common residence (Floyd et al., 2006). Another is Yerby et al (1998), who views the family as a multigenerational social system that consists of interdependent people and have a degree of emotional attachment and involvement (Floyd et al., 2006). According to Floyd et al. (2006), Turner and West (2002) define the family is a self-defined group of intimates who are maintained by interactions with others and this family may involve involuntary or voluntary relationships. While Pearson's (1993) definition puts emphasis on the transactional and embedded systems within the family. On the other hand, scholars such as Yerby et al. (1998) and Turner and West (2002), highlight a dynamic approach to family such that their definitions shed light not only on the emotional attachment and patterns of interaction among family members but also on their interconnectedness and influence on one another (Floyd et al., 2006). Thus, Yerby et al (1993) and Turner and West (2002)'s definitions are the most relevant in this study as they demonstrate the most salient aspect of what makes up sibling relationships because these sibling relationships are made up of emotional bonds, learning from one another

as well as positive and negative interactions between them. There is a need to note that the definition of family can be subjective such that one may view other relationship forms, including friends and neighbours as a family due to the emotional bonds shared. Lastly, the family has multiple types, namely, nuclear, extended or blended families. (Floyd et al., 2006).

2.2.2 Family as a System

Most of the definitions of family emphasize that the family consists of interaction and interdependence among its members (Floyd et al., 2006). This statement substantiates the research that is done by Murray Bowen that the family is a system that is interconnected and interdependent thus influential on subsystems within it (Cox, 2010). When understanding families using a theoretical model that uses a systems approach, these perspectives highlight that family is a “complex integrated whole” (Cox, 2010,95-96). This approach illustrates that family members rely on each other and have a constant and mutual impact on one another (Cox, 2010). Wendel Ray (2016) suggests that the family serves as the main relational environment where individuals acquire and strengthen their character traits and behavioural patterns. From this perspective, families are considered to be structured in a hierarchical manner, with each part having the potential to influence another part within the family. For instance, the actions and dynamics within the parental subsystem can impact the sibling subsystem, and vice versa (Donagh, 2022).

2.2.3 Structure and dynamics of a family

The family serves as a social context in which children develop. The family serves as the primary ground for socialization in an individual’s life and this affects one’s development (Krejцова, 2023). There is constant interaction between parents, siblings and other members of the family where behaviour is learned, meanings are formed and roles are described and prescribed (Bush & Peterson, 2012). This interaction also involves parents taking an

authoritative role and guiding their children in their ways of life, and children are expected to listen to their parents and follow their instructions (Bush & Peterson, 2012). However, the parent-child conflict that may arise when rules are not followed by children or there is a disruption in the harmony established in this relationship will result in psychological difficulties such as internalizing or externalizing symptoms (Johnson & Ray, 2016).

2.3 The nature of sibling relationships

Sibling relationships are unique because they are known to be the most long-standing relationships during an individual's life as they persist even to late adulthood (Tucker et al., 2013). In the study of family dynamics, Wolke et al (2015), found that most children worldwide either have one or more siblings that are biological, half siblings or adopted. Sibling relationships are crucial for an individual's development. They can serve as significant socialization agents and ensure that other siblings are well acquainted with the customs, values and behaviours that are practiced within the family context (Rawat & Malik, 2024). The bonds within sibling relationships are those that are marked by a unique blend of intensity, intimacy and complexities. The first point to note is that sibling relationships are defined by strong emotions and unrestricted expression of those emotions. Secondly is intimacy. Siblings know each other very well and this intimacy means the relationship can be a source of support or conflict (Rawat & Malik, 2024). Siblings play a crucial role in the lives of individuals because they are usually the primary candidates for attachment relationships (Whiteman et al., 2012). Siblings may serve as confidants and role models. When considering a theory to describe and understand sibling relationships, one may see siblings as each other's competitors because the social comparison theory suggests that people tend to assess their own worth by comparing themselves to others. Thus, siblings often engage in comparison such as how their parents treat them as compared to their siblings because they feel they are alike in many ways. In addition, when using the social learning process to explore sibling dynamics, we know that an individual

acquires behaviours through observation and reinforcement. Thus, Whiteman et al. (2012) state that siblings shape their behaviours by observing and imitating one another (Whiteman et al., 2012).

Research states that because one does not choose their siblings, interactions that occur may present as positive and negative (Tucker et al., 2013). This is because sibling relationships are unique such that they can involve rivalry, warmth and conflict (Iftikhar & Sajjad, 2023). There is a balance of nurturance and conflict among sibling relationships (Rawat & Malik, 2024). The coexistence of love and conflict in sibling relationships is perceived as normal as it promotes social competence. For example, this balance of positive and negative emotions gives children the opportunity to develop the ability to understand people's standpoints, learn to manage internal states such as feelings of anger and resolve problems that arise (Rawat & Malik, 2024). In addition, through conflict children can also learn perspective-taking and emotional expression (Wolke et al., 2015). They also develop the ability to tolerate negative effects that may occur in these relationships (Malik, 2024). Thus, a better development of their socio-emotional skills (Wolke et al., 2015). Moreover, sibling relationships can affect one's psychological adjustment and well-being as one matures through the developmental stages (Iftikhar & Sajjad, 2023). To substantiate, when children are involved in conflictual situations, they learn to stand their ground and this encourages their ability to individuate thus increasing the development of their sense of self (Rawat & Malik, 2024). Furthermore, research into parental influence on sibling relationships indicates that parents typically try to manage and shape sibling interactions by getting involved in resolving disputes between siblings. When parents model appropriate and effective conflict resolution strategies, children are more inclined to utilize these strategies, including compliance and considering different perspectives, to settle disagreements with their siblings (Whiteman et al., 2012). In addition, parents also tend to use reinforcement techniques to encourage and enhance the repetition of appropriate

behaviour among siblings (Whiteman et al., 2012). Whiteman et al (2012) also adds that parental intervention during sibling conflictual interactions can positively influence the overall sibling relationship.

Sibling relationships may be supportive and serve as a safeguard against difficulties (Donagh, 2022). Siblings can take the form of a caregiver or companion and thus they can influence how each one develops (Wolke et al., 2015). This support in sibling relationships may lead to the psychosocial competence of children (Whiteman et al., 2012). Due to the support that is experienced in sibling relationships, there are reports of increased positivity, intimacy and overall satisfaction with decreased hostility and conflict in sibling relationships (Kramer et al., 2019). On the other hand, sibling relationships also have the potential to negatively affect a child's development (Rawat & Malik, 2024). For instance, sustained conflict in the context of sibling rivalry may lead one sibling to experience adversity from childhood until adulthood (Delara, 2022). The effect that a sibling can have on one another's development can be direct or indirect. A direct influence is based solely on how the child's siblings interact with each other. In contrast, an indirect one may involve one sibling influencing their parent and therefore an automatic effect on the other sibling. This will be explored in later sections (Wolke et al., 2015).

2.3.1 Sibling Rivalry (Conflict, Jealousy and Aggression)

Sibling rivalry refers to the sense of jealousy, envy, competitiveness, and conflict that occurs between siblings within the family (Volling et al., 2010). Sibling rivalry as a concept may be complicated to understand. This is not only because of the overall complex nature of sibling relationships but also because of the many forms that rivalry among siblings can take. The rivalry between siblings can take many forms, from competing for academic success and valued possessions or experiences of intense emotions of envy over a sibling's

accomplishments. In addition, sibling rivalry may be characterized by aggressive behaviour, annoyance, hatred or anger or feelings of resentment towards one's sibling (Kamil et., 2024).

Furthermore, siblings may be in competition for the love and attention of their parents or guardians and because siblings share their parent's love and warmth as well as family resources such as property, space and different goods, they are natural competitors (Volling et al., 2010). Differential parental treatment has been associated with conflict in sibling interactions (Tripplet & Wolke, 2014). Differential parental treatment is when one child receives, whether it's perceived or in actuality, less warmth, less affection or unequal treatment from a parent (Iftikhar & Sajjad, 2023). This can occur in various domains such as chores, support, warmth, privileges or discipline (Whiteman et al., 2011). When one parent shows preferential treatment toward one sibling and not the other, this may lead to a negative sibling relationship (Whiteman et al., 2011). This conflict in sibling relationships may be due to the repressed feeling of being the least preferred and the need to defend themselves as no one will extend warmth and affection to them. In addition, there may be built-up resentment towards the favourite sibling by the less preferred one as they would be getting less approval, less affection and fewer material resources (Louw & Louw, 2016).

Moreover, Oktaviani and Tentamo (2019), found that parents usually have to split their attention among each of their children and this possibly uneven distribution of their attention can lead to sibling rivalry. This is because although siblings may live in the same household, they are unique in their characteristic traits and needs. Therefore, a parent may struggle to ensure all their children's respective needs are met appropriately (Hashim, 2016). Parents may unconsciously compare the siblings to each other and children may have conflict with one another to overcome the feeling of inferiority when they feel their sibling is their competitor. When one child is compared to another, this may encourage competitiveness among siblings (Oktaviani & Tentama, 2019).

Rivalry among siblings can present through siblings physically and verbally attacking each other such as hitting, punching, spitting, screaming or hurtful insults as well as emotional dysregulation, fear, anxiety, and a demand for attention from parents (Suresh, 2020). For instance, one sibling, usually older, will suddenly express neediness and regress in emotional maturity in attempts to recover their parents' attention. This is mostly present when there is a lack of preparation of the elder sibling for the arrival of a new sibling (Suresh, 2020). Thus, older children may not be welcoming of younger siblings (Suresh, 2020) especially if they feel that parental love is shifted towards the second child (Kamil et al., 2024). As a result, siblings' rivalry may be driven by the desire to gain parental approval or reward (Hashim, 2016). In contrast, when siblings do not experience any unfair treatment or favouritism from their parents, there tends to be a more harmonious relationship between siblings (Trippet & Wolke, 2014).

This conflict among siblings may begin in the early stages of childhood but can persist even into adulthood (Suresh, 2020). Hashim and Ahmad (2016) stated that sibling relationships in general are not dependent upon the siblings themselves but they are influenced by people, the environment and other factors.

The motive of the rivalry among siblings may also be to devalue another sibling or to exercise the power and control one has (Hashim & Ahmad, 2026). A determining factor of conflict in sibling rivalry is when there is an unequal distribution of power (Buist et al., 2017). In addition, age and birth order are underlying factors that influence sibling rivalry (Hashim, 2016). In the study of the changing nature of power and control among siblings, Campione-Barr (2017) focused on sibling dynamics of power and stated that sibling dyads are hierarchical in that, the age gap and order of appearance in the family dictate a rank order. Therefore, older siblings are considered to have more social, cognitive and physical advantages over their younger

siblings. For instance, siblings that are higher in the birth order hierarchy tend to have higher status and can be regarded as role models.

In addition, the perception that another is more powerful may lead to frequent circumstances of conflict among siblings (Tucker et al., 2010). Gender is a concept at play, especially in the perception of power. Male siblings, although young, may challenge their older siblings who have been put in charge. This is because males are usually more physically strong. Thus, the perception of having more power due to their physical strength may lead to instances of them fighting other siblings (Tucker et al., 2010).

2.3.2 Sibling Love (Care and Support)

In British and Canadian studies, positive social actions from younger to older siblings increased significantly in frequency as the babies grew up (Dunn, 1993). The siblings not only cooperated in playing but there was affection among them and when one sibling experienced distress or frustration, there was an expression of concern and attempts to show comfort to the other sibling (Dunn, 1993). This is known as sibling love or sibling warmth. Sibling warmth is “the positive aspect of a sibling relationship such as support, affection and closeness” (Shackelford & Salmon, 2012).

The positive dynamics in sibling love or support include those of trust, companionship, and intimacy and there is often less conflict (Kramer et al., 2019). In positive sibling relationships, siblings are known to be a source of support, guidance and instruction (Campione-Barr et al., 2015). For example, younger siblings usually seek advice and guidance from older siblings on how to navigate new challenges such as schooling experience and older siblings may play the protective and caring role while helping younger ones to overcome obstacles (Kramer et al., 2019). In addition, siblings in their adolescent stage may turn to their siblings for support when it comes to addressing and managing issues related to relationships with peers and family

(Kramer et al., 2019). Moreover, individuals in their youth still report their siblings as their greatest confidants because self-disclosure builds their intimacy (Campione-Barr et al., 2015).

These warm and supportive sibling relationships boost the self-esteem of individuals (Sherman et al., 2006). Additionally, it is associated with emotional and social health such that they develop prosocial behaviour, better self-regulation and overall better adjustment (Soysal, 2016). Furthermore, positivity in sibling relationships fosters better coping (Wałęcka-Matyja, 2015).

2.3.3 Controversies of sibling relationships

Sibling relationship is not static it is ambivalent and fluctuates because there is a constant “complex interplay” of cooperation and conflict (Punch, 2008). The ambivalence or the coexistence of positive and negative feelings is often considered the unique hallmark of sibling relationships (Campione-Barr & Killoren, 2019). Siblings can be playmates, protectors, providers of support and sources of annoyance (Soysal, 2016). There is intimacy and conflict in this relationship. However, this intimacy is double-edged in that it allows for authentic expression of emotion but may also lead to conflict in the case of blunt honesty (Punch, 2008).

Sibling relationships are complex in that a sibling may be a friend whom one can confide in one day and another day be one to aim to exercise authority over another sibling. This ever-changing dynamic may cause conflictual emotions. Additionally, these conflicting emotions may be due to the importance of power. For instance, there may be conflict when older siblings use intimidation to resolve disputes with younger siblings but when older siblings use the same intimidation in their defence, feelings of appreciation may resurface (Campione-Barr & Killoren, 2019). Furthermore, controversies may be caused by the fact that siblings may look and act like peers but unlike peers, they cannot dissolve the relationship when conflict arises. They are forced to tolerate their sibling as most of them are confined in one household and are

forced to share their space and territory (Punch, 2008) Thus, it may be too difficult to sustain pretence long term. However, the coexistence of emotions of both love and hate are because, although lengthy time spent together as siblings creates a connection and tight bonds, there is an opportunity for increased irritation in these situations (Punch, 2008).

Lastly, sibling relationships have implications on siblings' development. However, because positive and negative sibling relationships have differing effects on how one develops, this implication on development is not always in expected ways (Campione-Barr & Killoren, 2019).

2.4 Sibling Relationships in Adolescence

Adolescence is a critical phase where a person transitions into adulthood and goes through physical and psychological changes ((Deshpande & Chhabriya, 2013). Sibling relationships during adolescence are not exclusively conflictive but still involve support and help (Oliva & Arranz, 2005). While in childhood siblings can play the role of being a playmate, during adolescence, this “function” presents itself as siblings being supportive and sharing intimacy during this moment of socioemotional and cognitive changes (Oliva & Arranz, 2005). In addition, when there is harmony and unity in parent-adolescent interactions, this is linked to positive sibling relationships. However, perceived parental rejection is associated with increased hostility between siblings and a greater frequency of conflict, according to research by Oliva and Arranz in 2005.

During the period of adolescence, there is an exploration of roles and identities beyond what was ascribed within their family context (Feinberg et al., 2003). In addition, the main concern of an adolescent during this phase is how others view them (Darling-Fisher, 2019). For example, Tseung and Schott (2004) conducted research on late adolescents' responses in structured interviews about their sibling relationships and found that rivalry included how

adolescents perceived themselves in comparison to their sibling and them being in competition with their sibling for approval (Volling et al., 2010).

When attempting to understand differential treatment in adolescence, it is crucial to consider that psychological changes that occur during adolescence lead to shifts in family dynamics. For instance, there is a decrease in the inclination to engage with family members, while the desire to connect with peer groups increases (Oliva & Arranz, 2005).

The perception of differential parental treatment may peak during adolescence (Volling et al., 2010). During this stage, adolescent siblings aim to diverge in their development and they explore their interests and pursue competencies to garner a share of their parental love and attention. Erickson characterises adolescence as a time of “identity crisis” in which individuals use their career, religion and sexual identity to define themselves and find their place in society (Sigelman & Rider, 2018). In addition, they may make efforts to present their career dreams and interests to their parents to receive praise and approval. This is also an attempt to gain a sense of self by overcoming the crisis. However, if this is not achieved by one sibling but received by another, it may lead to envy and jealousy (Feinberg et al., 2003). Additionally, parental differential treatment is a form of social comparison, specific to sibling relationships that adolescents use to evaluate their sense of self and worth (Rolan & Marceau, 2018). In such cases, parents may, for instance, compare their children according to career roles and will allocate more resources such as finances and emotional investment to the sibling who performs better in that particular domain (Iftikhar & Sajjad, 2023). Furthermore, certain parental practices change as children progress through developmental stages. For example, while some adolescents in the same house may be given responsibilities, freedom privileges and a sense of autonomy, others may be strictly supervised and guided (Rolan & Marceau, 2018).

While parental influence may play a role in sibling relationships, the impact of the developmental changes associated with this stage, on sibling rivalry, cannot be ignored. For example, there are emotional and physical changes that take place during this stage and these may lead to challenges in sibling relationships (Harper & Marshall, 1991). For instance, as a result of a not yet developed frontal lobe, individuals in the adolescent stage are likely to have mood swings and emotional outbursts (Louw & Louw, 2014). In addition, during puberty, the part of the brain that assists adolescents with emotional regulation is not fully developed yet thus during this stage adolescents may experience emotions more strongly (Harper & Marshall, 1991). Hence, there are more events where adolescents are easily upset or show sensitivity to issues. Thus, they have become more argumentative and opinionated. This then might lead to increased rivalry among siblings.

Acceptance of the physical changes that take place in the body is one of the tasks that adolescents must overcome and there may be challenges in this regard (Louw & Louw, 2014). Since appearance is observed to affect an adolescent's sense of self and self-esteem, if they struggle in this aspect it is stated to escalate sibling rivalry during this developmental stage (Harper & Marshall, 1991). The age at which adolescence reaches their physical maturity affects their psychological development (Louw & Louw, 2014). For example, boy siblings who experience a later growth spurt may compare themselves with siblings who mature quicker. Girl siblings may be concerned about their increase in weight and may even develop low self-esteem (Harper & Marshall, 1991).

However, sibling relationships are described as emotionally ambivalent because they include both warmth and rivalry. Moreover, less companionship and less conflict have been reported by early adolescents than their younger siblings (Scharf et al., 2020). For example, research shows that when individuals approach late adolescence, they report an increase in intimacy with their siblings and a drop in rivalry. This may be because the siblings may see no reason to

compete for resources such as those benefiting their career path if they would have already discovered their identity within that particular career (Scharf et al., 2020). Thus, it would be misleading to describe the relationship between these young siblings along a single dimension of warmth-hostility (Dunn, 1983).

2.5 Sibling Relationships in Emerging Adulthood

When looking at sibling relationships in emerging adulthood, which is from 18 and 29 years of age, individuals experience reduced conflict with their siblings compared to when they were adolescents. There is reduced competitiveness, less power-related conflict and less quarrelling (Scharf et al., 2020). The reason may be that emerging adult siblings spend little time together. In addition, during this period, siblings may be transitioning as in moving away from their homes. It may also be because they opt for minimal communication, indicating their proficiency in resolving conflicts through negotiation rather than force (Scharf et al., 2020). As the day-to-day competition among siblings decrease, the warmth between them increase. For example, emerging adult college women believed they could seek advice and guidance from their closest sibling, making them a valuable source of support, despite having less frequent interaction. However, Stocker et al. (1997) demonstrated that emerging adults might experience mixed feelings, including warmth and conflict or rivalry.

2.6 Sibling Relationship in Middle Adulthood

Furthermore, when exploring sibling relationships in middle adulthood, which is from 40 until 65 years of age. Sibling relationships change as an individual enters into adulthood. Adults' involvement and focus are now with their immediate families and careers during this developmental stage. This is because, during this stage, adults may be transitioning into marriage or parenthood (Bush & Paterson, 2013). Thus, siblings' connections are emotionally significant in later life, although not as intense as they are earlier in life (Stocker et al., 2020).

The majority of adult relationships experience closeness with the siblings that they are geographically close to even though, generally, the quality of adult sibling relationships is based on their earlier shared bond (Bush & Peterson, 2013). There are reports of a more positive sibling relationship among adults, as there are reports of exchange in emotional and instrumental support (Stocker et al, 2020). For example, they usually serve as a support base in terms of assisting each other financially, providing advice on current matters and even ensuring care to parents or running their childhood homes as a team after parental death. In addition, they feel they can turn to each other in life's unfavourable events.

2.7 Gaps in Literature:

To fully understand sibling relationships, research studies should include cross-cultural perspectives and comparisons of these dynamics among siblings. The absence of this literature is problematic because available data is not entirely representative of certain populations, including black adults. Therefore, although the literature was used to understand sibling relationships broadly, there were loopholes in that it is not specific to how these relationships appear in African cultures.

There are differences in sibling relationships from Western and African perspectives. Firstly, the definitions and identifications of siblings are different. Secondly, the roles and responsibilities are different, with prescribed roles in Western cultures being voluntary while those in African cultures being an obligation (Cicirelli, 1994). There are also differences in how siblings are expected to show care to one another and this will be outlined in the next section.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter provided a brief literature review of sibling relationships. It discussed sibling relationships within the context of family which gave it a contextual frame. The nuances of love and conflict that exist within sibling relationships were discussed and how they presented

across developmental stages. Further, there were attempts to explore and describe these sibling relationships within the context of culture as a way to accommodate the research population of this study. However, there were gaps in the literature concerning cross-cultural perspectives of sibling relationships. Thus, these gaps were also briefly discussed above. Lastly, the links between sibling rivalry and adverse childhood experiences were discussed and found that they both have an impact on each other.

2.9 Theoretical Framework

Sibling rivalry is a common but complex and nuanced occurrence in most families, yet these nuances are underrepresented in the literature on sibling relationships. Siblings mainly experience rivalry because they are in constant competition for equality in various areas and aspects, such as tasks, opportunities, and even parental treatment. Therefore, this is an important area to enrich our understanding. In particular, understanding the siblings' subjective experiences of sibling rivalry may highlight these dynamics and how they vary.

Research states that defining sibling rivalry is complicated (Hashim & Ahmad, 2016) hence it has been defined differently by different researchers. According to Chauogain et al. (2016) and Suresh and Chandran (2020), sibling rivalry occurs when there is competition among siblings for the approval, love and attention of parents. This definition is similar to Nithyapriya et al.'s (2019) article that defined sibling rivalry as siblings competing for parental attention.

Other researchers define sibling rivalry as the competition, jealousy and fights that occur among siblings (Hashim & Ahmad, 2016). Volling et al., (2010) support this definition as he states that it is when negative feelings such as jealousy, envy and competitiveness exist among brothers and sisters. The current study used a combination of Hashim and Ahmad, (2016) as well as Volling et al. (2010)'s definition of sibling rivalry as it incorporates the nuances that exist in the way sibling rivalry presents in individual's lives and how they experience it.

Adler's theory of individual psychology aligns with the above definitions and literature in this study that sibling rivalry is due to every child seeing the need to conquer their feelings of inferiority that surface in these sibling interactions (Whiteman et al., 2011).

The narrative theory was used as a framework for this research study. This is because narrative theory is fundamental to understanding human beings (Kirkman, 2002). In addition, this theory examines lived experiences by studying peoples' narratives of stories (Gonzalez-Rico et al., 2018). The choice of a narrative approach for this study was due to its focus on the process of making meaning and how people's life stories are constructed in relation to their respective environments (Shlomith, 2002). Thus, this approach was used in order to re-contextualize the participants as narrators of their own lives and their narratives as texts to be interpreted (Sandelowski, 1991). According to Bruner (1991), people organize their experiences and memories of human occurrences mainly through narratives. Narratives are stories that people share about what has happened or is happening in their lives and these stories can contain a series of events occurring within a time period (Berger, 1997). This research intended to explore the lived experiences, meanings and constructions made by black adults about their experiences of sibling rivalry. Thus, a narrative framework was fitting as it shifted away from positivism and towards a focus on constructivism within the social sciences field (Sandelowski, 1991). This approach made it easier to conceptualise how the participants constructed their experiences. In addition, in this framework, there was a possibility to produce and analyse stories worth exploring. Furthermore, this approach is multileveled, which means that the focus was not only on what the narratives mean but also on how they have been experienced (Riesmann, 2005) and constructed.

Given the fact that this study explored narratives on sibling rivalry across a specific developmental stage, this narrative framework was sufficient as it imposed order and temporal meaning into stories. This is because throughout life people consciously and unconsciously

construct stories to organise the chaos of events and occurrences in one's life into a coherent narrative (Shlomith, 2002). These stories can be shared as they occurred within a certain time period (Berger, 1997).

Narratives can either be told, written or seen and the form they take reveals how individuals construct their past and current life events (Sandelowski, 1991). Narratives do not mirror but reflect the past and this is useful in research because storytellers interpret the past rather than reproducing it as it was (Riesmann, 2005). Thus, through narratives, we find ways to interpret knowledge, interactions and experiences in the social world (Andrews et al., 2013). This research focuses on individuals from various cultures and this was beneficial in understanding their lived stories because culture influences what and how the narratives are being told (Kirkman, 2002). For these reasons, this is an ideal theory for not only understanding the reflexive narratives of adults on their adolescents' years of sibling rivalry but understanding the meanings attached to these narratives as a methodological endeavour.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, firstly, the qualitative research and its relevance will be discussed. Secondly, the sampling process, participants, and the data collection procedure are described. Third, the data analysis process and its implications will be thoroughly outlined. The researcher will reflect on her subjectivity and positionality throughout this research process. Lastly, the ethical considerations that were undertaken in this study will be explained.

3.2 Research design

This study is situated within the qualitative approach. To understand the reflexive narratives of adults about their adolescent years of sibling rivalry a narrative exploratory approach located within an interpretive paradigm was adopted. In the interpretive paradigm, the focus is on the subjective experiences, perceptions, perspectives and meanings of participants' stories (McAllum et al., 2019). I chose this approach because I wanted concrete, heavy, and realistic experiences of sibling rivalry among participants and it allowed an uncovering of real-life, unfiltered experiences that individuals shared with their siblings. In addition, I was able to focus on how participants understood and made meaning of their respective experiences and how they interpreted them. This paradigm allowed me to gain the participants' perspectives and viewpoints on their experience of sibling rivalry. This study was based on narrative research which involved a collaboration between the researcher and participants, producing stories about their experiences and their adolescent years of sibling rivalry (Riesmann, 2005). The narrative research approach was chosen for this particular study because it was accommodative of the research question for a study of this kind. It allowed participants to give chronological accounts of their experiences of sibling rivalry during adolescence. In addition,

the choice of narrative research was fitting in this study because it allowed for the inclusion of participants' contexts. The qualitative approach was chosen to achieve an in-depth understanding of participants' stories about sibling rivalry and to allow for a slower process of generating meaning (Levitt et al., 2017).

3.3 Research Population

The research population was South African black middle-aged adults aged between 40 to 65 years.

3.3.1 Sampling Method

This study used a non-probability convenience and snowball sampling approach to select the participants. It was important to ensure that the sampling method used aligned with the aim of the study (Golzar, 2022; Terre Blanch et al., 2006). The snowballing technique, in which the participants were requested to assist the researcher in identifying other suitable potential participants was used (Emerson, 2015). This process was more convenient as participants did not have to search too far but the individuals who were available to participate did so. These two methods were also convenient due to the geographical closeness among the potential participants, as some were colleagues and it meant easier access and an understanding of their availability by work schedule. These two sampling techniques facilitated an easier sampling process due to their benefits of being less time-consuming (Golzar, 2022). The sampling criteria were based on the participant's willingness capacity and character suitability to participate in the research study.

3.3.2 Research Participants

The study recruited approximately ten (10) black adults in their middle adulthood stage of development. Their ages ranged from 40 to 65 years old. Seven of the ten participants resided in Johannesburg and the other three were from Bloemfontein. The choice to use this

developmental stage emanated from the understanding that, at this stage of life, a sense of meaning was well-developed (Dewitte, & Dezutter, 2021) including an assumed sense of self-knowledge. In addition, from middle adulthood, people's narratives are not motivated by a need to construct a self-concept such as in adolescence or young adulthood (Rice & Pasupathi, 2010). The participants had at least one biological sibling who lived in the same household during childhood and adolescence years. In addition, they shared either a rivalrous or loving relationship with their siblings. The types of rivalrous relationships were physical, verbal, name-calling, and being in constant competition for parental attention and love. On the other hand, the other second dimension of a relationship to be explored was that of love, support, protection, warmth, and friendship. The study sample is represented in the table below (See Table 1)

Table 1: Profiling of research participants

Number	Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Age	Home Language (also denoting cultural background)	Number of siblings
1.	Thabo	Male	Black	41	Sesotho	1
2.	Christina	Female	Black	46	Xhosa	6
3.	Brenda	Female	Black	42	Xhosa	1
4.	Lindi	Male	Black	49	Sepedi	8
5.	Erick	Female	Black	53	Sesotho	6
6.	Mashudu	Female	Black	45	Venda	6
7.	Nthabiseng	Female	Black	54	Sepedi	9
8.	Phillip	Male	Black	52	Sesotho/Setswana	5

9.	Zoleka	Female	Black	40	Sesotho/Xhosa	7
10.	Cathy	Female	Black	59	Sesotho	8

This research was inclusive of black adults, irrespective of their language and cultural background and this allowed for participants from different cultures and languages. The cultural diversity between the participants was beneficial for the research because it assisted in providing a richer understanding of sibling relationships across different cultures (Cicirelli, 1995).

3.4 Data Collection Process

3.4.1 Participant Recruitment

Due to the target population being easily accessible, in part, due to the sampling method, the researcher did not use any fliers or social media platforms. The researcher initially started by approaching potential participants either at the University of Witwatersrand main campus or the Wits Junction Residence. The researcher also managed to get referrals from some of the participants after she requested them to identify suitable candidates for the research. This request was made after the interviewing process was complete. The last remaining three (3) participants were approached by myself, the researcher.

3.4.2 Data Collection Technique

The researcher arranged the interview appointments with the participants at a location and a time suitable for them. One interview was conducted on the University of Witwatersrand main campus while the majority of the interviews were done at the Wits Junction Residence for participants who worked night and day shifts on the premises. The advantage of conducting interviews on the premises where participants worked was that there was no need for extended

travel by participants or the researcher. There was a level of comfort that resulted from the fact that participants picked out the location themselves and it was overall less time-consuming as compared to traveling elsewhere. However, there was a challenge due to time constraints as the participants were working on a shift and had given the researcher only a few hours in their day for the interview. Despite these challenges, there was no opportunity to interrupt the interview or break it in half as some participants had asked a colleague to stand by and some just wanted to get through the interview process as soon as possible. The researcher noted that these time constraints may have affected the ease with which the participants participated and expressed themselves.

3.4.3 Data collection tool

In this research, semi-structured interviews were used to facilitate free expression and allow for exploration by using follow-up “why” and “how” questions (Adams, 2015). This approach was flexible and allowed the researcher to have an interview guide and still not be constrained in only one direction an interview will take (Ruslin et al., 2022). Due to the participants’ hesitancy and restricted responses when they shared certain experiences with their siblings, employing the semi-structured interview was helpful as it enabled the researcher to take a different approach in the framing of the research question (Ruslin et al., 2022). This was done to accommodate the love and warmth aspects of the sibling relationship. Although, using semi-structured interviews was fitting for this study. The general challenge is that the researcher and participants may experience challenges in accurately explaining concepts in vernacular. Also, validity might be affected because semi-structured interviews are flexible and there is usually no set order. Particularly in this study, because some languages do not encapsulate the accurate meaning/ definition of concepts used in questioning, there was a slight risk of a language barrier which led to a limited understanding by participants and thus some gave superficial responses.

This research also made use of narrative interviewing. Narrative interviewing is a method of qualitative data collection where people share stories about their life experiences through an interview (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2016). Narrative interviewing allowed participants to be the narrators of their experiences and the researcher was cast as the listener (Allen, 2018). In addition, the participants were seen as the heart of the research in these interviews (Allen, 2018). Due to the nature of a narrative interview, the researcher had the option of doing one or multiple interviews with the participants. However, most participants were not available and displayed low interest in having a follow-up interview. The researcher decided to use an on-shot approach where each participant was interviewed once. The researcher allowed the participants to direct the interview to ensure that their real experience and meaning would come through. Even when the participants' narratives shifted away from rivalry as a focus of the interview, their perspective on the story was prioritized (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2016).

The interview schedule was structured based on the research questions of the study and past literature that explored the relationship among siblings (see Appendix D).

The majority of the participants in this research felt that it was easier to express themselves in vernacular although they could speak English. Therefore, the majority of the interviews were conducted in vernacular. Although the researcher could understand all languages spoken by the participants, speaking other ones was a challenge. To overcome this challenge, the researcher made sure to use reflective language and allow the participants to confirm that is what they meant. Although this was one solution, participants were still able to understand English but could still respond in vernacular. This allowed a flow of the interview process although a mixture of languages was used.

Moreover, the researcher first gave each of the participants a contract consisting of an information sheet (Appendix 1A), a consent form for both interviews (Appendix 1B) and audio

recordings (Appendix 1C). Thereafter, the contracts were read with the participants and thorough verbal explanations were given in a clear way to enhance comprehension among participants. The participants were able to read and expressed understanding of the interview contract.

3.4.4 Recording

All interviews were recorded to allow a transcription process afterward and participants appeared at ease knowing there was a written and signed contract of confidentiality.

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Data Transcription

During the process of this research, there was a change of supervisors after the data was collected and transcription of data was in progress. This was because my previous supervisor had left the university and now had new students leaving him no time to take on extra supervision. Thereafter, a new supervisor was appointed for this study.

A process of transcription and translation of the interview audio was followed by the researcher and the use of third-party services for isiXhosa interviews. The researcher drafted a confidentiality contract which was signed by both parties, the researcher and transcriber. To check for the accuracy and completeness of the transcriptions, the researcher submitted the first few transcribed interviews to the supervisor for feedback. In addition, the researcher thoroughly reread the transcripts to check the data provided by participants for any mistakes in translation or misinterpretation of questions. However, following this check, the research supervisor noted that additional data should be collected. The researcher approached two of the participants for follow-up questions but were unwilling to participate in another interview. The researcher then took it upon herself to engage in more probing and clarity questions in the next

batch of interviews that followed and to broaden the inclusion criteria to avoid insufficient data and ensure data saturation after the advice of the supervisor.

3.5.2 Preparation and organizing of data

After the interviews were conducted, firstly the audios were kept in password-protected files. Thereafter, the researcher then listened to the audios and read through the transcriptions multiple times. This re-listening and rereading was beneficial for the analysis process because it allowed the researcher to obtain greater familiarity with the data. The emersion into the data also assisted in determining if the questioning was sufficient to allow rich data collection. In addition, immersing myself in the data was useful as it facilitated the process of data translation (Creswell, 2014). The researcher consulted with other people who fluently understand and speak the respective languages to check whether the translations to English were accurately done. In addition, the researcher approached and recruited an individual offering transcription services and made use of the service by paying for the transcription when it came to the Xhosa language translation. This was to ensure that the translation was not lost due to a limited understanding of the language. Lastly, the assigning of pseudonyms was done to ensure the identity of participants was protected.

3.5.3 Coding

Coding in qualitative research is a process that involves organizing collected data into discrete story units and then from these, themes were developed. This process served an important function as it provided a structured foundation for the construction of meaning by participants (Williams & Moser, 2019). In this process, all the transcriptions were printed out and the researcher used a pencil and paper to code the data manually. The researcher read each interview transcript and coded data that spoke on similar topics or issues under the same colour code. Because this study followed a narrative analysis, the researcher coded the participants'

data in chunks of stories and not just discrete data units. The researcher focused on understanding and following the narratives in the participants' stories. The focus was on understanding the narratives as defined by the story entry and exit. Thereafter, the codes were then grouped into categories according to covering the same general topics. During this analysis process, codes were evaluated to check if they answered the research question. It was noted then that there is a shift in the narratives of participants towards more ambiguous and nuanced of their sibling relationships not neatly fitting just sibling rivalry. Thus, new codes that accommodated the nuances were added such that similar codes were assigned quotes and then grouped to form themes (Creswell, 2014). These themes were reviewed by the supervisor to ensure interpretations were accurate and trustworthy.

3.5.4 Gain a general sense of the information

The transcription process facilitated a process of identifying and noting down the recurrent patterns and themes that were observed by the researcher. This was to ensure that the reflexive meaning of the narratives of the adults is kept and that these themes were still within the focus of the research (Creswell, 2014). The researcher checked if the themes answered the research question or not.

3.5.5 Analysis

3.5.5.1 Thematic Analysis within Narrative Approach

The participants' narratives were grouped together in story chunks in accordance with their similarities (Creswell, 2014). These stories were then examined further to explore the plot lines presented by the narratives. These themes were analysed to explore the participants' interpretations and meaning making. Thematic analysis is an approach that entails identifying and documenting patterns within a data set, which are subsequently interpreted to uncover their inherent meaning (Naeem et al., 2023). Themes of sibling rivalry and sibling love emerged.

Whilst data was focused on rivalry the themes of sibling love were heightened in the data and were reflected upon. Different plotlines relating to the “protagonist”, the participants, against their “antagonist”, including siblings and or parental figures were noted, explored and interpreted.

3.5.5.2 Narrative Arcs

A narrative usually involves a set sequence consisting of a beginning, middle and end. This is called a narrative arc (Boyd et al., 2020). A narrative arc illustrates how emotions, tensions and themes develop throughout a story (Matthewson et al., 2020). In analysing the narrative arcs, the researcher analysed the data to check the kinds of narrative arcs that the current participants relied on in discussing their early sibling relationship. Here, the researcher demonstrated these arcs by highlighting the differences and similarities that emerged in how participants talked about their early sibling relationships and the meaning this had. The researcher searched and analysed the structuring of the narratives by participants by checking which of these narratives included or excluded the exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution of the narrative and what that meant.

3.5.6 Interpretation of the findings

The researcher had to interpret the meanings made by these black middle-aged adults while narrating their stories. Since this study was focused on narrative analysis, the researcher took time to analyse the complexities and nuances of how sibling relationships are presented. The researcher employed a few strategies when it came to the interpretation of the narratives. These were checking for the focus, omissions, additions, appropriations and transpositions in narratives as explained by Curator Jorge J. E Garcia (Kim, 2016). The researcher checked and highlighted what the majority of the participants focused on and noted what they seemed to omit in their narratives. This was done to facilitate an understanding of the phenomenon

showcasing how the narratives were used to make sense of the participants' experience of sibling rivalry (Kim, 2016).

3.6 Trustworthiness and Rigour

Trustworthiness is a term that is used to indicate the evaluation of the worthiness of research. It is the degree to which the researcher and the reader are assured that the research study has truly captured the stories and experiences about the topic (Levitt, Motulsky, 2017). Five measures ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative research.

Firstly, credibility. This measures to what extent the findings and interpretations are truthful in the representation of the participant experiences and phenomenon in the study (Ryan et al., 2007). Credibility in this study was established by extended engagement with the research material and also peer debriefing of the data analysis. This was through holding discussion meetings with fellow master's students to exchange ideas and gain diverse perspectives and whether the topic and the narratives are in alignment. However, member checking was not possible in this research due to the time constraints of participants but clarification questions were employed throughout the interview process. Transferability looks at whether or not the findings in the study can apply to other contexts when applied generally, such that the researcher can apply it to their own experiences (Ryan et al., 2007). Transferability in this research was ensured by providing a thick description of what sibling rivalry is and the various forms it took but also highlighting the nuances of this phenomenon as they occurred consistently. This was to ensure that the data could be incorporated in other contexts. In addition, the analysis of this phenomenon cross-culturally has also allowed for transferability across different contexts. Dependability is when the researcher can give thorough details about the processes they followed in the research study so that the reader can measure the extent to which these research practices have been followed (Ryan et al., 2007). In this instance, the

researcher provided detailed information regarding the reasons for broadening the research scope and adjusting the framing of questioning to ensure the reader understands the direction of the research study. In addition, the researcher consulted with my supervisor, sent through the collected data, and extracted themes to ensure that they were interpreted according to participants' experiences. Lastly, confirmability is when it has to be established whether the findings have been obtained from the existing data. In addition, the arrival conclusions and the interpretations have to be verified by the researcher (Nowell et al., 2017). These conclusions I arrived at and interpretations were noted in detail in this study to ensure that my interest and positionality in struggling to accommodate the new direction of the research did not interfere with the participant's narratives. I also quoted all statements made by participants which ensured the integrity of the research.

3.7 Reflexivity

Reflexivity addresses the researcher's subjectivity and there is a requirement of self-awareness. Reflexivity is defined as thoughts and conscious self-awareness (Finlay, 2002). Reflexive analysis in research encompasses a continuous evaluation of how subjects; respond, the intersubjective dynamics, and the process of the researcher itself (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). It refers to the way we can shift from how we understand data collection but moving towards a detached scrutiny of "What I know and how I know it" (Finlay, 2002). The question of how much personal details can be disclosed in research, its formation, and how the researcher can have many voices without hiding themselves is answered by the self-reflexivity of the researcher. Self-reflexivity unveils the complex political and ideological agendas hidden in our writing (Finlay, 2002). This self-awareness enables the researcher to be cognisant of their position and bias that may potentially influence the research. (Pillow, 2003).

The rationale behind this topic is my general interest in family dynamics, especially family violence since it is my lived experience. More specifically, my attention was drawn to sibling relationships as I grew up with an older brother. My experience led me to conclude that there may be lived conflictual elements to a sibling relationship. This hostility may be normalized and accepted within the family context. Thus, I was aware that this topic may lead to me, potentially, over-identifying with certain participants and thus being biased. In the early stages of my interviews, due to my own experiences and the position I was in with my brother at the time, all I wanted was data on sibling rivalrous experiences. This was despite sharing experiences of warmth with their sibling, making it difficult for me to accommodate the data. This created an impression that I was “fishing” for details from the participants about their most vulnerable moments with their siblings which were in alignment with my own experience. I later realized that I had so many details about my rivalrous relationship with my brother that I went into the interview with the same expectations and preconceptions about the data I was to receive from participants. Reflecting on this helped me to allow the participants’ narratives to unfold in ways that they wanted to tell their stories. In addition, my position as a student psychologist and a sibling who went through a difficult relational experience seemed to influence my need to receive the raw details of sibling rivalry despite participants’ reluctance. Furthermore, my expressive nature and personality of openness and ability to be vulnerable created frustration in the early stages of my interviews when I experienced the participants as not open enough. However, asking open-ended questions through semi-structured interviewing allowed participants to be the directors of the interview and share their stories as they lived them. Some participants, however, did not stick to the ordering of the questioning as some would speak about their sibling relationships in adulthood first before discussing their experiences in adolescence. This, at first, created distress as I felt as though I had lost track of the focus of my research but I later realized that this allowed genuine and authentic narratives.

My positionality as a researcher seemed to be in question as some seemed to show more reluctance the more I asked about fights with their siblings. Thereafter, there was one question that consumed my mind after several interviews, “was the fact that my brother wanted to stab me a few months before this research process influencing my series of questions”? or “Had I not engaged thoroughly with the literature to know that sibling rivalry did not only mean physical fighting”? Nonetheless, there was not much discussion about sibling rivalry in the first interviews and I was frustrated. I was frustrated by certain participants and their lived experiences. The frustration and panic heightened when my supervisor suggested that we change the topic and broaden it to accommodate these narratives. I thought all my work had now come to waste but that was not what it meant. This emotional aspect affected the research process going further, however, better and more progress was made thereafter.

I experienced language as another challenge in this research process. Although I could hear most of the languages due to my exposure, this exposure was limited to some languages that the participants spoke except for Sesotho. I experienced difficulty in articulating myself during the interview. The language barrier affected the flow and the direction of the interview. Most participants assumed I was fluent in their languages which meant that the difficulty I experienced was unexpected for them. This resulted in some questions being asked in English if the accurate phrases of the respective language were not known by the researcher. However, this may have led to lost translation during the interview process.

The method of data collection that was chosen was useful for this researcher, however, because a snowballing method was used it meant that a similar pool of participants was selected for this research. In this case, the majority of the participants in this research were from the Wits Junction Residence that I resided in during the first stage of the interviews. The proximity between the researcher and participants may have influenced the level of transparency that the participants felt they could have, considering the many occasions they and the researcher would

meet unexpectedly on the residence premises. In addition, the time constraints and the location of the interview due to specific work shifts affected the ease with which participants participated. As a result, the pressure of time became a weight on my shoulders during the interview process as the participants even had to request a colleague to stand by for the duration that they would be doing the interview.

3.8 Ethical Considerations:

The first step was to get ethical clearance from the Wits Human Research Ethics Committee. Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Witwatersrand Ethics Committee. This process ensured that all the ethical dilemmas that may arise are well considered beforehand. This research study was considered low risk because it did not pose harm to the participants in any way. An ethical clearance is provided when members of the Ethics Committee are satisfied that no harm will be done to the participants (Weiten & Hassim, 2016). Semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility. Before that, when the interviews started the participants were briefed about all the ethical issues. The potential participants were invited to participate in the research study. However, they were notified of their right to a choice of whether or not to participate. They were also assured they could discontinue and withdraw participation at any given moment during the interview process (Weiten & Hassim, 2016). The participants of this study were required to sign but the researcher explained that the research aims and intent are to gain information about their experiences of rivalry with a sibling. The participants were informed about the need to audio record the interviews and the estimated time the interview would take. This researcher ensured that the informed consent was obtained without coercion of the participants but based on their understanding of what participation entails (Weiten & Hassim, 2016). Thus, the interviews only commenced after participants had given verbal and written consent to participate in the study. The researcher was conscious of the fact that the participants were black adults and they might not understand English, therefore she explained

the participant information sheet using the language that the participant understood (Weiten & Hassim, 2016).

The researcher did not withhold any information about the nature and intention of the study from the research participants. The researcher was clear from the beginning that she wanted their experiences of sibling rivalry and how the data was going to be used and this ensured non-deception (Weiten & Hassim, 2016). Furthermore, the concept of anonymity was discussed with the participants. The researcher ensured confidentiality by keeping the audio recordings and transcripts in a password-protected computer. The participants were also informed that only myself and my supervisor would have access to the raw data. In addition, the data was reported in abstraction without revealing the identifying particulars of the participant. The use of pseudonyms in place of the participants' names was used to protect their identity. Lastly, the interviews were done in a location chosen by the participants to ensure they felt safe and comfortable.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter follows a presentation of the findings through a narrative thematic analysis that explores the meanings and themes that arose from black middle-aged adults' experience of childhood sibling rivalry. This chapter also discusses using literature to further understand these findings as shared narrative accounts. The analysis revealed three main themes namely; (i) sibling rivalry as a complex and nuanced relational matrix, (ii) sibling love and warmth, and (iii) the negative psychological effects of sibling rivalry. Following the main themes were multiple subthemes that will be later discussed. This findings and discussion chapter therefore presents the findings, interpretation and discussion of the data in this study.

The research questions are used to structure the results and discussion.

What stories do adults tell about their childhood (0-18) years of sibling rivalry?

This section focuses on stories told by participants on their experiences of early life sibling rivalry. It also demonstrates how they narrate the varying ways rivalry with their sibling presented as a result of different underlying causes. This section has one main theme namely; sibling rivalry as a complex and nuanced relational matrix and subthemes which are physical violence as a core defining term participants used for sibling rivalry, the second subtheme is complicated relational dynamics as a precursor to sibling rivalry and the last subtheme being unrealistic expectations as a precursor for sibling rivalry.

4.2 Sibling rivalry as a complex and nuanced relational matrix.

This theme speaks to the way the participants, through their narratives, made sense of their rivalrous experiences with their sibling/s. The participants mainly defined and explained

sibling rivalry in terms of physical violence. It is important to note that individual narratives arise from the cultures within which they are being told (Kirkman, 2002). Thus, sibling participants may have felt that because of how they have been socialized, some of their hurtful experiences with a sibling do not qualify as rivalry. Hence, only certain aspects of sibling rivalry were acknowledged as such, these included jealousy, competition and physical fighting between siblings. In part, these findings are aligned with previous studies (Hashim & Ahmad, 2016). However, the findings of this study also reveal that unrealistic expectations and complex relational dynamics lead to sibling rivalry. This section discusses the three subthemes that explain how participants conceptualized sibling rivalry, these were: physical violence, relational dynamics and unmet expectations.

4.2.1 Physical violence as a core defining term of sibling rivalry.

A large number of participants defined sibling rivalry mainly as an expression of physical violence between siblings. This definition limited how participants viewed their sibling relationships resulting in many stating that they had not experienced sibling rivalry. This is because the meaning that has been attached to sibling rivalry by participants only involved physical violence. This is congruent with Hashim and Ahmad (2016)'s assertion, that there have been complications in how the concept or definition of sibling rivalry has been understood within cultures. While other researchers define sibling rivalry as involving competition for the attention and approval of parents (Suresh & Chandran, 2020; Nithyapriya et al., 2019), others highlight physical conflict as a feature among negative feelings such as jealousy or frustration (Hashim et al, 2015; Hashim & Ahmad, 2016; Volling et al., 2010). However, most participants' understanding of sibling rivalry as physical fighting speaks to how their culture has influenced their perception. To demonstrate this, cross-cultural research has highlighted that in non-Western societies, cultural norms define sibling dynamics through roles, responsibilities and expectations about siblings (Cicirelli, 1994). Thus, due to these defined roles and

responsibilities and despite emotional difficulties experiences, their relationship with their siblings is perceived as positive unless a physical altercation transpires. However, the physical fights in the current study seemed to have been underlined by an escalation of repressed emotions such as anger and frustration. These physical fights were also understood to have been driven by a need to defend oneself against a sibling's provocative and accusatory behaviour.

For example, Phillip mentioned that he felt his older siblings were bullying him because he was younger and this led to a build-up of frustration and anger. Philip felt provoked and unable to match his sibling's verbal assault. Thus, he felt the need to defend himself against them. Physical fighting seemed to be the only way he could express himself.

"I liked to fight during those times. Yes. You know, the issue with sisters is that they talk too much you see, you always know how women are actually. Yes yes, exactly that, a person would speak until you become mad. Yes and because they were older, they felt like they could bully me and I would show them who I am. The one I remember is when we were fighting about her blouse, I cannot remember what I poured on it. I think it was something like oil or whatever that thing that smells bad is called "madobola". Yes, then we got mad at each other about that. Yoh, what was painful was I don't remember well but I think I threw her with her steel cup or it was a steel iron. It then happened that I hit and broke the room divider that was made of wood. Yes, that is the one I remember"- Phillip

Thabo concurred with Philip and explained that conflicts with his sibling were driven by revenge against his brother's initial attack on him. He stated,

"He used to take the stick and I used to take it too and when I see that he is defeating me, I will just hit him with the stone. I will used say eish this brother is hit me and I will grab the stone. When they said I won't hit you anymore and I say "ohh", while he is [faces the other

way] going there and say no is finished, I will start taking the stone and hit him. Yeah, I said enough is enough... ”- Thabo

These findings show that the participants felt that their siblings intentionally provoked them stirring up painful feelings leading to a need to retaliate. This resulted in them physically attacking, or retaliating on, their siblings. Research states that when one sibling causes harm towards the other, it is because they were provoked and due to feelings of anger. Hence, they tend to respond in emotionally expressive or explosive ways (Recchia et al., 2013). While some experience physical fighting such as hitting or punching others may experience sibling rivalry as jealousy or a persistence of negative emotions such as anger, and frustration (Suresh, 2020; Hashim & Ahmad, 2016). Despite its presentation, sibling rivalry is common in sibling relationships (Lindell & Campione-Barr, 2014).

These participants expressed sibling rivalry through physical fights as means of survival in their household and also to ensure their safety. They felt that it was a resistance against enforced authority by another sibling such as through shared chores and responsibilities in the house. These kinds of narratives are supported in literature that rivalry among siblings is due to one sibling, usually younger, feeling as though they are the victim of their older sibling (Hashim & Ahmad, 2016). Thus, this will lead to the victim striving to challenge their oppressor and go to extremes to show their dissatisfaction and make their territory (Hashim & Ahmad, 2016). Furthermore, older siblings may enforce and exercise authority over younger siblings by beating them or coercing them to follow their orders (Shackelford & Salmon, 2012; Buist et al., 2017). As a result, younger siblings may fight back against their older siblings enforcing a dominant role (Campione-Barr, 2017). Thus, physical fighting is an end product of a longer complex interaction of external expressions and internal reactions.

4.2.2 Complicated relational dynamics as a precursor to sibling rivalry.

Current results revealed that relational dynamics impacted the participants' experiences of being siblings. Some participants expressed that they felt isolated from their siblings. They felt distanced from their siblings who formed cliques that led them to feel alone and ostracized. This seemed to have heightened conflict amongst siblings.

For example, Lindi described her experience, “ *The three of them, they were close and I felt left out at times you see. So, I will go there and then because they are older when you try to speak, they will say, no you are a kid. So you will spend time by yourself a lot of times. Conflicts would arise, you find one of them has put money somewhere and because I'm the youngest they will say I took it. So then they hit me then I would want to fight for myself you see...* ” - Lindi

Christina's narrative also showed that she suffered a similar fate where she would always be blamed by her siblings. They felt ostracised and then targeted by their siblings.

“*They always used to blame me and when there is a mistake, they would blame me. Ya, you would find that sometimes I didn't do anything but they blame me and that*” what are you doing that time you are old”, you see? “*Children are messing up and you are there, you see?. I would be blamed for those type of things*” - Christina

The above narratives show how common sibling accusations were, especially in cases when the older sibling blamed the younger one for certain things. In these narratives, the participants felt that they were not given a platform to defend themselves, against accusations, but always felt they were ganged up on.

In the above accounts, the participant, Lindi, also expressed how age was a factor in how the conflictual situation unfolded with her siblings. She explained how she was never allowed to speak for herself. Furthermore, generally, the participants felt that the age difference compared to their older siblings negatively impacted their relationship. They felt that the older siblings took advantage of them by not taking responsibility for certain things and blaming them. These

findings are supported in literature where factors such as age and imbalance of power among siblings can lead to rivalry (Buist et al., 2017). Some explanatory theories have been advanced for sibling rivalry including the fact that they may be because older siblings have better reasoning and intellectual ability which they may abuse in shifting the blame to younger siblings (Campione-Barr, 2017).

This illustrates how siblings may use their older age as an advantage to exercise a more dominant role over others (Minnett et al., 1983). In addition, this indicates how sibling rivalry can show up as exclusions, accusations and blaming by other siblings.

4.2.3 Unrealistic expectations as a precursor for sibling rivalry.

Unrealistic expectations from siblings were stated as contributing to adult sibling conflicts. Participants felt that conflicts during adulthood were related to money and support that is expected by other siblings. They expressed that their siblings showed a sense of entitlement to their resources and that there was a lack of understanding or disregard of the participant's current financial circumstances.

For example, Zoleka commented on the change of the relationship with her siblings.

“We used to get along you know but just a bit because she would ask me for things I could not provide for her. Yes, also they started thinking that since I am in Bloemfontein, I am not struggling and I have everything. I remember us fighting over a cloth she has asked me to buy for her. After I told her I do not have the money, she was upset with me. They have told themselves that I have everything, they don't know the life I live this side. Yes, so that is the main thing that caused misunderstandings... Like right now, there is no maize meal at home and he would call and say “you guys didn't buy the maize meal so what must I eat in the house. Mm, so now he always annoys us with food and money.”- Zoleka

“He is the one who had a problem and not only to me only even other relatives and his own family they will talk and say when I refuse to give him fifty rand, he would wake up the next day angry and not talk to anyone. He will call asking for fifty rand and then if I say I don’t have, he will get angry, then he no longer speaks to me until such a time after three months.”-
Erick

The participants experienced their siblings as having unrealistic expectations of them. They felt that their siblings had placed an obligation for them to provide without any assistance. In addition, the siblings seemed to lack a sense of empathy for the current life experience of the participants. Research suggests that when there are unrealistic expectations in sibling relationships, without reciprocity, then tensions arise in those relationships (Descartes, 2007).

How do middle-aged adults make meaning of sibling rivalry?

To answer this question participants narrated their early and current sibling rivalry in a way that demonstrated a nuanced and complex understanding of sibling relationships. The participants felt that their relationship with siblings were impacted by various aspects that included the interaction between siblings and the impact of external forces. The following subthemes emerged as demonstrating the ways in which participants made meaning of these rival relationships. These themes included (i) experiences of power struggle in sibling relationships, (ii) parental role expectations, and (iii) differing parental treatment and need for parental guidance.

4.2.4 Power struggle amongst siblings

The narratives of some participants revealed that power struggles in sibling relationships are embedded in the context of culture and role expectations. Their stories suggested that gender, age and perceived physical strength were underlying the dynamics of conflict/ rivalry among siblings. Older siblings' positions were seen as being imbued with authority which was used

against the younger ones (Shackelford & Salmon, 2012; Buist et al, 2017). This is attested to by Erick when he speaks on how his younger siblings showed him respect but also how this respect persisted even in adulthood;

“Yeah, exactly, I have a younger brother and even now we talk on the phone a lot, he respects me a lot...”

On the other hand, Christina explained how her older sister attempted to exercise power by beating them as younger siblings.

“Yes, we were scared of my older sister, because she would take advantage when my mom is gone, when we were left behind alone. She would beat us up for thing we do when mom was there. And then when she’s gone she would say, do you still remember what you did? And then beat us for that. So, we were afraid of her and she was older, you see?. That’s why after some time when she wanted to beat me, I would say no, you won’t hit me. Also, I would protect the smaller ones and say that there is no one who is going to get a beating here.”- Christina

Lindi reiterated this experience and stated that her older brother would beat them if they did not listen to him. She expressed;

“No, its only my older brother that I wouldn't talk back to because he would hit us. Because he would beat us if we didn't listen to him. Yes, he has hit me before. I didn't follow his orders because I don't like being ordered around at all. But, not the little ones because they would listen to him”- Lindi

The above narratives show two different perspectives, in accordance with the birth position of the participants. Younger participants narrated stories of frustration and anger whilst older siblings expressed narratives of respectability. Again, this shows the desired respect by the older siblings and how it seemed to cause them frustration when it was not given. This is

consistent with Buist et al.'s (2017), assertion when they stated that conflict amongst siblings resulted from unequal power distribution. Participants in this study revealed that older siblings were regarded as role models and demanded respect from younger ones. Literature demonstrates that older siblings may exercise their possessed authority in unhealthy ways which lead to conflict in sibling dynamics (Shackelford & Salmon, 2012; Buist et al., 2017). These narratives whilst from different perspectives seem to demonstrate a sense of frustration, feeling of being unseen and unheard.

4.2.5 Parental Role Expectation in Sibling Rivalry

Siblings in the families of the participants were expected to perform chores in the household irrespective of their age or gender. The responsibilities of these chores were non-negotiable and formed part of their everyday activity. In addition to household chores, older siblings were expected to assist younger siblings with these chores as a result of ascribed roles by parents.

Most of the participants stated that there was an expectation from parents to assist with chores around the house. However, the completion of these tasks came with a lot of frustration and resentment among siblings which we will later observe.

The examples below demonstrate the sense of frustration that participants were left with as a result of parental expectations. For example, Christina on talking about her relationship with her mother.

She expressed “ja, we will not go there. If you want to go there you must clean the house. I must go fetch water. You must go prepare, there is maize, mealie meal. There is a machine that we used to make mealie meal. We must go do that first and leave everything ready for her (mom) to cook, then after you can go and play...” -Christina.

“They were the ones who were supposed to fight for dishes and everything. Our aim was to make sure that the goats and cows and everything’s fine. Yes, this is our job and you have to

understand that if you a boy or girl, you cannot do the same job. There is a specific job for girls and for girls. Yes, this is what we learn”-Erick

“And then after ten to fifteen minutes they would call me, you understand? And in my mind I would think that if only there was another child. How I have to do things on timing. As for water, we fetch in the morning because there were rules”- Brenda

“Yes, everyone knew what each had to do around the house, one would wash the light glasses, one would put up the fire to cook and one would clean the floors and the others would wash the dishes. We all did our part in keeping the house clean”-Cathy

“We used to help one another a lot with our chores. For example, if I cook today, then tomorrow someone else will cook. We had a routine where we were all involved”-Nthabiseng

In these narrative excerpts, there is an illustration that the assigned responsibilities to siblings by parents were to assist the parents as they focused on work. In addition, the above participants also expressed that this was an obligation and there was no room for negotiation regarding the prescribed roles and responsibilities. These findings are supported by literature where previous studies revealed that children felt that they had no opportunity to negotiate with their parents (Triandis et al., 1988). However, there was a sense of frustration that was expressed by the siblings. In addition, the parental expectation for siblings to split and share household chores led to rivalry and conflict as some felt the expectations were too high. In alignment with the literature, the current findings showed that the majority of siblings experienced conflict related to the completion of tasks assigned by their parents (Campione-Barr et al., 2014; Lindell & Campione-Barr, 2014).

Participants in the current study expressed their frustration when there was unfairness with chores but most participants attested to how one had no choice when it came to the expectations that had been placed on them. The examples below attest to this.

“So they will not do any chores of theirs and they would give them all to me because I am the youngest. That is when I saw that we are not you know, since then we never been close” -Lindi

“My older sister would do it for us (prepared beds) but she did not like it at all. She would get angry and sometimes be on the verge of crying.” In another account, she states “I would sweep the stoep and the kitchen. My sister would wash all the dishes and mop the floor. As for my older brother, he refused to do anything and it used to upset me and my sister a lot” -Zoleka

Thus, siblings, although ensuring to adhere to their responsibilities expressed resentment towards their parents and their siblings as a result. Therefore, sibling rivalry about equality and fairness is because there was a violation of another's rights or rules that have been established within the family household. Hence, when siblings felt the rules were not fair, conflict was heightened. Thus, research supports the findings in this study that conflict which arises, as a result of unfairness experienced by siblings, is influenced by parental role expectations (Odudu et al., 2020).

Even though the majority of the participants expressed that the assigned responsibilities were an obligation, the unfairness experienced and expressed by participants is seen to have been an underlying cause of negative emotions and eventual rivalry among siblings. This is due to the heightened emotional frustration among siblings, especially older siblings who had to care for their younger siblings, leading to more incidents of conflict (Cicirelli, 1994). These findings resonate with those found in a study among adolescents, which found that sibling conflict was mostly experienced due to issues involving invasion of personal space and issues of equality and fairness such as who is supposed to do chores (Campione-Barr et al., 2014; Lindell & Campione-Barr, 2014). Overall, research has found that there are better sibling relationships in families with a more egalitarian split of household tasks (Dawson et al., 2015).

4.2.6 Different parental treatment as a precursor for sibling rivalry

The role of parents was another recurring subtheme in stories among the middle-aged adult participants. In some stories, the role of parents in the form of parental differential treatment was the cause of rivalry among siblings in the form of jealousy, envy, resentment and frustration. Through these narratives, participants revealed how this treatment by parents and competition for parental love negatively influenced siblings' emotions towards each other.

Some participants in this study felt as though their parents treated them differently in the way they showed support and warmth, or how they were disciplined as compared to their siblings (Whiteman et al., 2011). This then led to rivalry among siblings in the form of jealousy or envy. However, for others, it was seen as a normal part of family dynamics and was not internalized as an extremely negative experience although it affected them during that particular time.

For example, Christina and Brenda expressed feelings of frustration and envy towards their siblings when they shared stories of how they experienced different treatments from their mothers as they were quick to enforce discipline on them as compared to when it was towards their sibling. They expressed feeling as though they were less preferred sibling thus leading to internalized emotional difficulties.

"I don't know about the others, but myself, I did feel it, because my mum was beating me a lot. There was this time that I even thought that maybe she is not my mother. So I would always think, maybe this is not my mum. What is happening, because I always get beaten up? Why me?" -Christina

"But then even if I went there on holidays, I still had the mindset that my mom doesn't care about me because even when my little brother had to be disciplined she would tell me I am not fair because he is still young and to me I would be like, I used to get disciplined with a wet towel" -Brenda

Parents tended to have a soft spot for one of their children and not the other. However, this perception of parental behaviour seemed to have been internalized by participants leading to siblings competing for parental love, attention and validation. This is supported in literature where it is postulated that siblings in this kind of situation may view each other as competitors in attaining parental love, attention and resources (Volling et al., 2010; Whiteman et al., 2011).

In the preceding narrative excerpts, we observe how feelings of jealousy, envy and frustration arise as siblings feel that the other sibling easily attained parental resources such as approval, money, and material goods. This is seen to be true especially when the other sibling desires the same opportunities and privileges as the other.

Participants felt as though they had to compete for parental love, attention and resources. They expressed that unequal and differing opportunities from their siblings translated to them not being loved or being disfavoured as compared to their siblings.

One participant shared that the disagreements between him and his siblings were influenced by them experiencing him (Philip) as preferred and loved by their parents as compared to them. In his view

“It was okay but there would be disagreements because it seemed as though all the love was coming to me now. The love from my parents. Remember they were not used to living with me anymore so I would get a lot of attention from them. Yes, it would always be Philip this, Phillip, that and the others did not like that at all”- Phillip

Similarly, Zoleka had the same experience as Philip in relation to her brother. See example below;

“We were really struggling, because of things like stationary and my father did not really help. My brother dropped out and my sister and I was the only one left. It was really difficult...” “... However, my brother would say such hurtful words to me. He would say things like “who said

you should go to school, so the rest of the house must be stressed because you are crying” and also things like “ You know we are struggling at home, why must our parents hustle for you. it was very painful, he used to say I wanted attention because there are other people who are also struggling. But my mother would make a plan sometimes”- Zoleka.

In this narrative we see that due to parental struggles at the time the parents redirected resources to one sibling while leaving the other with nothing. Literature supports these findings that although rivalry is inevitable in sibling relationships, parents should make an effort not to compare their children and show obvious favouritism among them (Ahmad et al., 2017).

4.2.7 Need for Parental Guidance

The majority of the participants felt that they needed more parental guidance. However, this need for parents in this study was expressed in different ways and was dependent upon the context within which participants existed. This has been communicated as a need for a more invested role by parents as a teacher, nurturer and when it comes to fairness in conflict intervention. The findings in this study found that participants needed their parents to be more involved as they felt that it could result in less conflictual interactions (Perlman & Ross, 1997). For example, Thabo and Erick, expressed longing and wishing for a balanced parental presence during their experience of sibling rivalry and parental favouritism. This led to a sense of hopelessness concerning having no one to turn to during adversity.

“It was caused by, if my aunt was there most of the time and worked in Gauteng which was close and did not sleep at work but was there every evening. It was going to be easier for someone to talk to her and my brother would have said “no aunty, this one does not listen” and I would have been able to say “no, he is the one that does not listen”- Thabo

Erick shared the following

“No, not at all because we understand that our mother is not around. Yes, we really understand that but a younger stage we didn’t understand that thing but the older brothers and sisters seat with us down and explain that no, don’t worry about this, this is a life. Everybody is everybody treated like this if your mother or father is not around. You have to grow up. Yah you know I love my mum and my mum is not around, like I have to see her maybe in two months’ time. It’s very difficult but that is you have to understand if you know where you come from, you know.”-
Erick

These participants expressed how their experience with siblings would have been different had there been a more involved and attentive parental figure. This is consistent with literature that supports that siblings do express a need for parental involvement as means to lessen conflictual interactions (Perlman & Ross, 1997). In addition, this resonates with the literature that parents are responsible for mitigating the instances of rivalry that occur among siblings from a young age (Hashim & Ahmad, 2016). Researchers state that because sibling conflict is not constructive, parents need to intervene and by intervening, parents disrupt the power dynamics that exist between children (Kramer et al., 1999; Perlman & Ross, 1997). In addition, when parents are involved, children can gain a different perspective on the conflict and learn conflict management strategies increasing their social-cognitive development (Kramer et al., 1999). However, there are contradictions within research about whether or not parental intervention/guidance leads to sibling rivalry. Firstly, some researchers stated that parental intervention is not beneficial as it disrupts the power apportionment that is already found within the sibling relationship (Kramer et al., 1999). However, this may be speaking to instances where parents side with one sibling than the other. This is true as one child may feel less favoured and may perceive this sort of treatment as unfair. However, this may indicate that the intervention strategy chosen by the parent is not effective if it leads to more conflict than countering it (Kramer et al., 1999).

In the following accounts, the results reveal that participants felt as though they had no opportunity to explain themselves, to learn and to engage in appropriate conflict resolution skills because of the method their parents used to address their sibling conflict.

“...Yeah, he beat us. Both of us. And when beating us, he was telling us that no one must cry. But from that time we could never fight.” - Mashudu

“Yoh he was very strict, he would beat us. yes, even when we fought amongst ourselves he would beat us...”

“Uhhh he will hit us both and say no he doesn’t want to take sides and that he is going to hit us both. So we also say “ ahhh baba you didn’t even ask who started but you are beating both of us”- Thabo

The above participants avoided conflictual situations with their siblings due to fear of being punished or beaten by their parents. However, it is evident that although parents intervened through negative punishment, there was a lack of modeling by parents or teaching of conflict resolution skills. Research states that when parents intervene, their intervention style must lead a constructive form of conflict resolution. In cases of intervention, parents should intervene in a non-violent way and this interaction should not be coercive towards children (Perlman & Ross, 1997; Bouchard et al., 2018). In these findings, parents used control strategies. This is where punishment is used by parents to put an end to the sibling conflict. However, the disadvantage of this intervention strategy is that there is no modeling and children are not involved in the conflict management process (Perlman & Ross, 1997). Hence, participants in the current study stated that they did not know how to resolve disagreements and conflict in healthier ways.

4.3 Sibling Love and Warmth

The theme of sibling love and warmth speaks to the nuances experienced in sibling relationships. This theme accommodated the shift in the narrative that took place during the interview process. In some participants' stories, sibling rivalry had lost ground as participants could mostly access the positive aspects of their sibling relationships. The sibling narratives revealed that irrespective of hostility among siblings, there are always elements of love and support that stand out in the conflict. The nuances are that there is uniqueness in sibling relationships because they include intimacy and love but also rivalry and conflict (Sumbas, 2022).

4.3.1 Differing experiences of sibling love

The love among siblings was presented differently depending on the relationship and context in which these relationships occurred. Older participants shared moments of caring for their siblings while younger ones shared how they felt supported and loved by their older sibling. These narratives are anchored from different parts but seem to connect in complex and nuanced ways. Phillip and Lindi both showed how each of them extended or received sibling love in different ways.

“Argh no, it was nice because I would take care of them, like even when I came from school, I would fetch her from creche, the one I would bath her like it was nice for me. You see, I would cook for them. It, it was nice. We weren't even children that liked going around, we would just sit in one place. So I felt a bond with them, too much”-Lindi

“So she would be someone who suddenly wants to take responsibility for me because I am their last born... she was one person who always ensured that my things were straight. She would make sure that I focus on good things such as church and all that”-Phillip

In the above narratives, the younger sibling for example, Phillip reports this experience of love more than older sibling, like Lindi in this case, because she was expected to be the caregiver

and nurturer while the younger ones were the ones on the receiving end of this love and support. This narrative seem to demonstrate a sense of obligatory expression of care and support.

Some participants expressed that they experienced a sense of friendship beyond just being siblings. Their experiences of love were that of sharing the love and care.

However, when it came to relating to the younger siblings, they also felt a sense of responsibility and that they had to guide them in some way, whether it was through caring for them or advising them about the correct path to follow. Sibling love was expressed through participants advising their siblings and ensuring they are on the right track. The participants below expressed this sense of dual interpersonal interactional pattern.

Cathy shared her experience as follows;

“I was close to my younger sister because we very close in age so we were also friends. We were so close. we gossiped a lot too. With the younger ones I felt too responsible for them to consider them my friends but we all played together.”- Cathy

“Ja, I would tell her. I was always telling her, because as clever as she was, I will say she was clever, or ja, she was doing a lot of things that were not right, like going out and lying to my mum that she’s going to a relative, while knowing that she’s going to her boyfriend. And I will tell her that, no, what you are doing is wrong, and all that. But she would understand, ja- Christina

The current study revealed that sibling love is expressed as a dual role with one aspect being a sense of carefree connection and a sense of responsibility. These findings reveal that siblings can improve one’s childhood experience. These experiences can be expressed where a sibling is experienced as a friend, a protector and greatest supporter (Greer, Campione-Barr & Lindell, 2015). The findings on this study are supported in literature where Kramer et al, (2019) found

that younger siblings usually turn to older siblings for advice, guidance and assistance in navigating issues they are faced with. Similarly, the contrarian view that the same elements of love and support experienced by younger siblings could be experienced by older siblings as exhausting is also supported in literature (Cicirelli, 1994).

4.3.2 Sibling support during adulthood

Participants report displaying sibling love by caring for their adult sibling during adulthood. Some participants felt a sense of responsibility for their sibling even in adulthood while others reported taking the responsibility because they recognize that there is a need for support during this stage. During adulthood, sibling love is usually shown through emotional or financial support. This resonates with research that states that siblings are important in adulthood because they are a source of financial and emotional support (Herhandez-Pena et al., 2023). For example, the following excerpts demonstrate the continued role of sibling caring and support.

“I would say it was okay but when my mother passed away, my sister’s marriages started stumbling and they started coming home. I became close to the one I come after a lot. Very much, very much. So she would be someone who suddenly wants to take responsibility for me because I am their last born. She was one person who always ensured that my things were straight. She would make sure that I focus on good things such as church and all that.” - Phillip

The findings revealed that siblings usually feel a sense of responsibility towards each other in adulthood. In addition, adult sibling relationships tend to be more emotionally meaningful because people usually lean on their siblings when they experience distress or are in need (Volkom et al., 2011; Stocker et al., 2020). In a study of sibling relationships in adulthood, it was found that 33% of adults stated that they can rely on their sibling in cases of emergency

while the other percentages also reported support in the form of companionship and frequent contact (Volkom et al., 2011).

4.4 Negative psychological effects of sibling rivalry

In this theme, the negative psychological effects experienced due to sibling rivalry were explored. The current findings as in literature revealed that sibling rivalry led to emotional, and psychological difficulties such as feelings of built-up anger, inferiority and emotional withdrawal (Suresh, 2020).

Participants expressed a longing and a wish to experience closeness with their sibling. Although this desire was not articulated to their siblings, it led to feelings of frustration and sadness. These unexpressed needs led to a built-up of anger and frustration that, to an extent, showed up in how they interacted with those around them.

“Ahh I used to get angry because all the time I never fought with anybody else. Everytime I used to fight with my brother and I ended up having that anger that aii it’s actually the same as me not having a brother you see? Because I would always fight with him and everytime he hits me and I would have to hit him back. So it affected me. Yeah it really affected me.” - Thabo

“The three of them, they were close and I felt left out at times you see. Yes, they used to just live by themselves. So I will go there and then because they are older when you try to speak, they will say no ways, you are a kid. So you will spend time by yourself a lot of times.” - Lindi

“It affected me a lot because the same thing we are talking about now is happening with my three children at home. The same thing we are talking about. One will say “papa I am way older than this boy” and the other will say” why doesn’t he talk to me properly and he says my head is big” so you see the one will hit the other one and that one will also hit back. So, you see this thing ends up affecting me as well as I grew older and started having children” - Thabo

These narratives highlight the fact rivalry among siblings may also lead to feelings of withdrawal and aloneness. Kumador et al.'s (2018), support this and state that conflictual interactions among siblings can lead to a feeling of worthlessness, and inferiority and these are known as internalizing issues.

These feelings seemed to have been borne out of a sense of being victimized by their sibling. Literature supports the view that negative sibling relationship is a cause of emotional and behavioural problems (Buist, 2014). Furthermore, there was a longing expressed among sibling to be close to their sibling. Buist et al.'s (2013) argues that if siblings feel as though their conflict with a sibling is unresolvable, they may experience hopelessness, especially in cases where they have no one to turn to.

What kinds of narrative arcs do middle-aged black adults rely on in discussing their early sibling relationships?

4.5 Narrative Arcs used in telling stories of sibling rivalry and love

Narratives are resources that serve as a template in which one can construct and structure their personal stories (Smith & Monforte, 2020). Narrative analysis is not only about what is said but how it is said. There is special importance on how a person tells a story and what is in the story (Smith & Sparkes, 2009). Thus important to understand narratives because they shape how people feel and what they believe (Smith & Monforte, 2020).

Two forms of narrative arcs were visible in the participants' stories. One was a complete arc where the story of sibling interaction went on to its conclusion (falling action and resolution) from its beginning and rising action. Other narratives only stopped at the climax of the story. This was curious as to what made some narratives to be completed whilst others were not. On discussing the first narrative expression, a complete narrative arc, the narratives shared by the participants were similar. The participants seemed to begin telling their story from a point of

situation origin and then laid out the escalation, then the climax and finally the de-escalation and resolution. For example;

These participants' narrative arcs related at certain points where participants seemed to experience similar pressures from their siblings where they felt powerless against a sibling. They experienced this as being unfair. However, whilst, all seemed to share the feeling of a sense of unfairness, they differed in their reaction to it. Some succumbed to the pressure and others were resistant. The pressure was both indirect and direct. Where it was indirect participants succumbed to it and where it was direct participants resisted it. So, it seems the way a sibling applied pressure to another to do certain tasks is directly linked to how the other reacted and made meaning of that experience. These narrative arcs show nuanced ways in which sibling relationships do rivalry. For example, see the narratives below.

*“I used to fight with my brother. He tell me hey! You are smoking and I said you must be busy cleaning and washing-**this is an opening of the narrative**, and you are busy there and I would tell him that no, you teach me how to smoke. He will then start chasing me and I will go to my neighbour and say “you see? Please help me” and he will tell the neighbour that “no he does not listen to me” Me I make a meal and I said he must wash his clothes for school and he doesn't want to. **The middle of the narrative**. And I would say “no, don't tell me what to do”.- **the end of the narrative**. Thabo*

*“So they will not do any chores of theirs and they would give them all to me because I am the youngest. **This is an opening of the narrative** That is when I saw that we are not you know, since then we never been close. Then you do other chores maybe that the day is her day to do or it's their week to cook, then she will arrive late every day, so now you must do it because you do not have a choice. Yave she will arrive at seven, six and that time we eat at six and then she will arrive late then it will be half past four and then you eventually do those things, you see. **the middle of the narrative**. You will end up doing them” **the end of the narrative**- Lindi*

The above narratives demonstrate a complete narrative arc.

The following narratives demonstrate the second narrative presentation, an incomplete narrative arc, that was present in how the participants made meaning of their stories. The narratives below followed a similar narrative arc where both participants share the same experience of being provoked by a sibling (the beginning) and having the need to stand their ground (rising action) then the process of retaliation (climax). The narrative arcs below seem to stop at the climax of the event described.

“He used to take the stick and me I used to take it too and when I see that he is defeating me, I will just hit him with the stone. I will used say eish this brother is hit me and I will grab the stone. When they said I won’t hit you anymore and I say “ohh”, while he is [faces the other way] going there and say no is finished, I will start taking the stone and hit him. Yeah, I said enough is enough...” - Thabo

“I liked to fight during those times. Yes. You know, the issue with sisters is that they talk too much you see, you always know how women are actually. Yes yes, exactly that, a person would speak until you become mad. Yes and because they were older, they felt like they could bully me and I would show them who I am. The one I remember is when we were fighting about her blouse, I cannot remember what I poured on it. I think it was something like oil or whatever that thing that smells bad is called “madobola”. Yes, then we got mad at each other about that. Yoh, what was painful was I don’t remember well but I think I threw her with her steel cup or it was a steel iron. It then happened that I hit and broke the room divider that was made of wood. Yes, that is the one I remember” - Phillip

The narrative arcs above share the initial experience of being provoked by a sibling and the need to retaliate or defend the self. This is demonstrated where the older sibling seems to exert some form of power against a younger sibling who then feels the need to lessen such power

imbalance. Recchia et al.'s (2013), support this as they state that conflictual interactions among siblings are driven by anger and lack of control as one responds to another's provocation. However, siblings also tend to blame their siblings for disputes and justify their own actions (Wilson et al., 2004). In both participants, there is a relatable sense of having reached their tolerance threshold and feeling the need to ensure their own safety. The ending narrative arc reveals resistance through physical conflict from both participants. This view is supported in literature where it is shown that if the aggression between siblings is frequent and repeated, the younger siblings will feel the need to challenge the other sibling (Shackelford & Salmon, 2012; Buist et al., 2017; Campione-Barr 2017). It seems the way participants made meaning of experiences of violence was conceptualised such that the violence marked the end of the narratives but perhaps of the pressure of conflictual relationship.

In the example below, participants shared stories of how complicated relational dynamics led to sibling rivalry. We observe the following narrative arc. The narrative arc of both participants was related as they shared experiences of being blamed by the other sibling. There is a sense of being overpowered by other siblings. This is supported by research that states that older siblings tend to take full control over interactions (Recchia et al., 2023) and younger children will in turn submit in instances when the older one bullies them (Felson, 1983). This is because the age gap between siblings has been linked to sibling power dynamics (Buist et al., 2017). The narrative arc differed as one participant felt that the blaming was influenced by age while for the other, this was not the reason. Due to the birth order, the larger the age gap between siblings, the greater the reports of power imbalances especially during middle childhood (Tucker et al., 2010). This was consistent with research that older siblings use complex problem-solving skills, and thus are more likely to win arguments while younger siblings may feel powerless in supporting their behaviours (Rajput, 2014). Thus, because firstborns are usually bigger than their younger siblings, they are more likely to employ intimidation and

physical aggression (Sulloway, 2002). In addition, due to birth order, older /first born siblings may have feelings of envy towards their younger siblings and thus may behave abnormally (Kamil et al., 2024). Gender is an underlying factor in the power imbalances among siblings. For example, male siblings, even though they may be younger, may challenge their older siblings. Thus, because they are physically stronger, their perception of them having more power due to physical strength may lead to instances of them fighting other siblings (Kamil et al., 2024). Furthermore, the participants both share similar experiences of not having a voice and being subjected to this negative treatment. Therefore, there was a sense of defeat in these narratives.

Conflicts would arise, you find one of them has put money somewhere and because I'm the youngest they will say I took it. So then they hit me then I would want to fight for myself you see. You find that I didn't even take it, it might have been taken by one of them but because I am the youngest that will say it's me"- Lindi

"They always used to blame me and when there is a mistake, they would blame me. Ya, you would find that sometimes I didn't do anything but they blame me and that" what are you doing that time you are old", you see? "Children are messing up and you are there, you see?. I would be blamed for those type of things"-Christina

In conclusion, the above narrative arcs seemed to allow the participants to share their stories in ways that made sense to them. They seemed to make meaning of their stories through the ways they shared them. When it came to nuanced relational pressures, the narrative arcs completed to a state of resolution. However, when the conflict seemed to be explicit, the narrative arcs seem to stop at the climax stage of the arc. This is curious and interesting since it shows that there are different responses to covert and explicit expressions of sibling rivalry that impact the way meaning is made.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary of findings, strengths, limitations, recommendations and conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The final chapter concludes this research study by summarising the findings as they relate to the research questions and aims of this study. There is also a discussion of the strengths and limitations of this study. Further, the future directions and recommendations are outlined considering this research focused on black people in South Africa. Lastly, I will conclude this research study.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The study explored narratives of black adults on their childhood, adolescent and adult years of sibling rivalry. To answer this aim, three questions were asked and the following findings were made.

The first question that was asked was “What stories do adults tell about their childhood (0-18) years of sibling rivalry?”. The following paragraphs summarise the findings: here an important feeling is reported; sibling rivalry is a complex and nuanced relational matrix.

These findings show that talking about sibling rivalry can arouse and intensify difficulties that are hard to explore. Also, that sibling rivalry can be difficult to define. For example, most participants initially reported that they had not had any sibling rivalry because most understood it as involving only physical violence. However, their narratives revealed that these experiences of this physical conflict were underlined by deeper issues. For example, participants reported that this physical fighting was due to provocation which led to a build-up of anger and them being left no choice but to retaliate in their defense, which is consistent with research (Recchia et al., 2013). The participants also reported that sibling rivalry in the form of physical conflict

was to resist their older sibling enforcing authority over them. This was supported by research on sibling relationships and rivalry (Hashim et al., 2016). This spoke to the nuanced ways in which the participants made meaning of their experiences.

A few participants also reported that cliques formed within the larger sibling group led to them to feel excluded and thus ganged up against during disagreements. For example, participants report rivalry in the form of blaming, accusations and eventual isolation by the targeted sibling. Also, some noted that age played a role in the way their older sibling had more advantage over them in arguments.

During the adult years of sibling rivalry, rivalry arose from siblings expecting financial provision and support but showing a lack of empathy for their financial struggles and having a sense of entitlement. This type of sibling rivalry is supported in literature that tensions arise when there is expectation without reciprocity (Descartes, 2007).

There were interesting subthemes that emerged under the question “How do middle-aged adults make meaning of sibling rivalry?” and the following was found.

Majority of participants reported that most rivalrous interactions with their siblings were due to the struggle for power in these dynamics. For instance, older siblings felt they were entitled to respect and would use their perceived power, whether by age or physical strength to exercise authority (Shackelford & Salmon, 2012; Buist et al., 2017).

In another subtheme, participants reported that unfair parental expectation on participants and their siblings was the underlying cause of sibling rivalry. When roles and tasks are unequally split, resentment and frustration were heightened among siblings, as is seen in the literature (Odudu et al., 2020).

In addition, a large pool of participants reported feelings of jealousy, envy and resentment that arose as a result of parents treating them differently from their siblings. Most participants stated

that rivalry was a result of siblings competing for the same amount of love, opportunities and attention from parents. This is consistent with research on parental differential treatment (Volling et al., 2010; Whiteman et al., 2020).

As participants made meaning of sibling rivalry, they also described how their incidents of sibling rivalry were due to a lack of parental guidance. The participants felt as though their sibling interaction would have been different in cases of parental presence. In addition, some reported poor parental intervention and guidance during occurrences of conflict. Thus, the participants felt they could not learn appropriate conflict management skills which is related to research that states that the parental intervention method should be effective (Perlman & Ross, 1997; Bouchard et al., 2018).

An interesting main theme that emerged was participants' reports of experiences of love and warmth in their sibling relationships. These narratives revealed the nuances in sibling relationships as they involve both love and conflict (Sumbas, 2022). Older participants reported caring for younger siblings while younger participants reported being protected and advised by older ones. In addition, other participants reported experiencing meaningful relationships with their siblings during adulthood as these relationships involved care and emotional support as elaborated by research (Herhandez-Pena et al., 2023).

In making meaning of sibling rivalry, another key finding is that some participants highlighted the negative emotional effects they experienced as a result of rivalry with their siblings. This further highlights the influence that sibling rivalry has on one's development. For example, participants reported having feelings of anger, frustration and aloneness as a result of sibling rivalry.

The third question looked at the kinds of narrative arcs that middle-aged black adults relied on in discussing their sibling relationships. Here, in cases where there was physical conflict

present, participants' narrative arcs seemed to not complete the full arc, they started from the beginning (exposition) but stopped at the climax. However, when the nuances, beyond direct physical confrontation, related to sibling rivalry were reported, the resolution in the narrative arc was reached. These narratives provided evidence of the uniqueness in the way participants made meaning of their experiences of sibling rivalry.

5.3 Strengths and Limitations

The strength of this study lies in the methodology used to obtain and analyze data. This includes the type of research design, sampling method and data collection tool., The narrative approach that was used by this study allowed for the inclusion of the participant's context and subjective construction of their experiences. It allowed for narratives from participants in different cultures and languages. In addition, the narrative approach allowed free expression from participants and we were also able to conduct interviews in the language preferred by the participant. Thus, this facilitated a process of collection of heavy and in-depth stories because language plays an important role in meaning-making and interpretation. Furthermore, conducting semi-structured interviews was beneficial to this research because by answering open-ended questions, there was a natural flow in how participants expressed themselves and less rigidity in the direction of interviewing. This study focused on the black participants, a population that is usually underrepresented within sibling-related studies. Thus, addresses the gap since most studies about siblings have been focused on the Western perspective and less on black South African families.

Some limitations were identified in this study. Firstly, there were fewer research studies on sibling rivalry across cultures but most literature focused on Western cultural experiences. Although this study aimed to fill in the gap, there was not much comparison to be made between black and white South African adults in the existing literature. However, this will be discussed

in the future directions of research in this field. Secondly, participants did not fully comprehend sibling rivalry as a concept, which may have influenced how they constructed their narratives. However, the narrative approach allowed participants to share their stories based on how they made meaning of them. Thirdly, accessing some participants presented a slight challenge as there was a certain level of reliance the researcher had to have on previous participants to refer others to the interviews. In addition, participants struggled to share and reflect on their experiences in chronological order, meaning in the correct order according to their developmental stages such as childhood, adolescence and adulthood but narrated their life stories according to how significant the events were for them. Due to this study focusing on the subjective experiences of participants, there were risks of biases in narrative recall. This threatened the reliability and validity of the study because this recall of experiential information was based solely on memory. Furthermore, although the use of participants' home language was beneficial to this study. There were risks of loss of meaning and translation due to the researcher and participants' difficulty in articulation during the interview process. Also, the translation process may not fully capture the authentic narratives of participants.

Time constraints were another issue during this study. The participants' tight work schedule negatively affected the duration of the interview as few participants were under extreme time pressure of having to return to work at a specific time. This led to rushed interviews and fewer possibilities for participants to return for follow-up interviews.

5.4 Recommendations and Future Directions

The first recommendation is that future research could explore sibling rivalry and relationships in black South African families and highlight how it varies from the Western perspectives studies already existing in the literature. This is because South Africa is unique and this would lead to more understandings and alternative truths about how different siblings in different

cultures relate. Future research should also incorporate how differently siblings across African and Western cultures areas grow up. To do this, future research should employ a longitudinal study in order to study and understand the lived experiences of black adults with a sibling. This longitudinal study gives more advantages to gaining in-depth information, accurate perception and analysis because it allows observation of sibling dynamics in real time (Wood et al., 2024). This would provide insight into sibling interaction, love and conflict as a result of environmental and contextual influences. In addition, research that explores the nature of sibling relationships in past generations as compared to the modern generation is recommended. This will provide literature that will be essential, especially in reflective narratives of adults.

5.5 Final comment

In conclusion, sibling rivalry among black adult South Africans was expressed as physical conflict. However, sibling rivalry as a complex and nuanced relational matrix was evident since during adulthood sibling rivalry presented less as physical conflict but as quarrels regarding unmet financial expectations. In addition, the uniqueness of these sibling relationships was evident as some participants could interestingly only recall the positive experience with their sibling despite the question being about the rivalrous experiences. Throughout this study, there was a shared experience of a sense of pressure among participants from their siblings and parents in the form of unequal power, tasks and expectations which cultivated the way they constructed meaning of their lives with a sibling.

It is my wish that further studies should be done on black South African families or collectivistic cultures to ensure context-relevant studies. Hence, it would be important to value the context in which these narratives have arisen as it will be significant in the body of research about siblings and allow more in-depth knowledge of black siblings in South Africa.

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APPENDIX 1A: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Greetings,

My name is Mosa Mathebe and I am a Masters student in Community-Based Counselling Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project. The project explores the adult reflexive narratives on their adolescent years of sibling rivalry. The research is supervised by Professor Hugo Canham. The aim of this research project is to explore and understand meanings, experiences, and stories of adults as they reflect on adolescent years.

As part of this project, I invite you to take part in an interview which will involve telling stories about your adolescent years with a sibling. This interview will take about 60-90 minutes. With your permission, I would also like to record the interview using an audio recorder. Participation will not involve personal costs to you. You will not receive any direct benefits from participation but there are no disadvantages or penalties if you choose not to participate. You may withdraw at any time and you may choose not to answer particular questions. If you experience any distress or discomfort at any point in this process, we will stop the interview or resume at another time. The interview will be confidential, and data will be safely stored in a password protected computer. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the interview data. I will maintain anonymity by removing identifying information from the data. I will write up the data using a pseudonym (false name) to ensure that you are unidentifiable. If you have any questions about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are

welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee , telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408.

Email hrec-medical.researchoffice@wits.ac.za.

Your participation in this study will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely.

Mosa Mathebe

Email: 2579266@students.wits.ac.za

Phone number: 068 090 8550

Supervisor: Professor Hugo Canham and Ntokozo Gqweta

Email: hugo.canham@wits.ac.za

Ntokozo.gqweta@wits.ac.za

APPENDIX 1B: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW

I, _____, consent to being interviewed by
Mosa Mathebe, for her study exploring the reflexive narratives of black adults on their
adolescent years of sibling rivalry.

Please tick relevant boxes. I understand that:

- Participation in this study is voluntary.

☐

- I may refrain from answering any questions.

☐

- I may withdraw my participation and/or my responses from the study at any time before the
research report is examined.

☐

- There are no risks or benefits associated with participation in this study.

☐

- All information provided will remain confidential, although I may be quoted in the research
report

☐

-If I am quoted, a pseudonym (Participant A, Respondent B etc.) will be used

☐

- None of my identifiable information will be included in the research report.

☐

-I am aware that the results of the study will be communicated in the form of a research report or journal articles.

☐

- The research may also be presented at a local/international conference and published in a journal and/or book chapter.

☐

Signed: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX 1C: RECORDING AND QUOTATION CONSENT FORM

I, _____ give my consent for my interview with Mosa Mathebe, to be audio recorded for their study.

Please tick the relevant boxes. I understand that:

- The audio-recordings and transcripts will not be seen or heard by anyone other than the researchers and/or their research assistants. ☐

- The audio-recordings and transcripts will be kept in a password protected computer. ☐

- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report. ☐

- Although direct quotes from my interview may be used in the research report, I will be referred to by a pseudonym. ☐

Signed: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX 1D: INTERVIEW GUIDE

I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. Before beginning with the interview, I would like to assure you that everything you say during this interview will be kept confidential. Before beginning the interview, I will need you to read through and sign these two consent forms (See Appendix A and B).

Thank you. If you are ready, we can begin the interview.

QUESTIONS

The following are the three broad questions that will be asked:

1. Please describe how home was for you while growing up? How was the family dynamic in general?
2. How would you describe growing up with a sibling?
3. What was your parents role in your relationship with your sibling?

However, additional questions that may be asked as to follow up questions that underpin the preceding three, are as follows.

4. Please share your earliest memory of experiencing conflict with your sibling?
5. What do you think was the cause of the rivalry between you and your sibling/s?
6. How did the rivalry make you feel about yourself?
7. How did the conflict and rivalry with your sibling influence your childhood experiences?
8. How is your relationship with your sibling now that you are an adult?
9. How do you make meaning of how your adolescent years with your sibling were? Looking back as an adult, has your view of your relationship changed? Please tell me about this

10. How do you think your relationship with your sibling has evolved over the years since you were an adolescent?



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

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE:

PROTOCOL NUMBER: MACC/22/06

PROJECT TITLE:
of sibling rivalry.

Adult reflexive narratives on their adolescent years

INVESTIGATOR

Mathebe Mosa (2579266)

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR

SHCD/Psychology

DATE CONSIDERED

13 May 2022

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE

Approved unconditionally

RISK LEVEL

Low Risk

EXPIRY DATE

31 December 2024

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE

23 May 2022

CHAIRPERSON



(Dr Vinitha Jithoo)

Cc: Prof. Hugo Canham (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 25 August 2022

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES