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The effects of childhood parental loss on adulthood according to gender between child-parent in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Numerous studies show that losing a parent during childhood has various effects on adulthood and this is a global phenomenon. These effects could be negative or positive, however, the prevalence thereof within the different parent-child gender relationships is unknown. Thus, this study aimed to assess the effects that childhood parental loss has on adulthood in South Africa and specifically what differences occurred pertaining to the loss of the same-gendered parent compared to the loss of the opposite-gendered parent. The sample data was obtained through semi-structured interviews and thus used qualitative methods for the data analysis, which, included thematic analyses. The results indicate that the factors and the effects of childhood parental loss are not uniform, thus, not only are the responses to loss varied but even what constitutes loss is varied. There was a degree of impact as most of the respondents had stated that their childhood parental loss merely had a negative impact on them throughout adulthood. While a fifth of the sample stated that losing their parent throughout their childhood had a positive impact on them and a third of the sample stated that it had both a negative and a positive impact throughout adulthood. The loss of the same-gendered parent was proven to have more of a negative impact throughout adulthood in comparison to the loss of the opposite-gendered parent. Furthermore, it was evident that secondary losses are more severe within the loss of the same-gendered parent in comparison to the loss of the opposite-gendered parent. An adult role model was also proven to have a positive impact and made the loss easier to cope with and the aftermath thereof easier. It is also evident that there are certain milestones wherein the loss and longing of the lost parent are suggested to worsen throughout that time.

Keywords: childhood parental loss, adulthood, effects, South Africa