# THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF UNEMPLOYED BLACK MEN FROM A LOW SOCIOECONOMIC PERI-URBAN MOTSOALEDI TOWNSHIP IN SOWETO

**A report on a research study presented to**

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**For the degree: Master of Social Development**

**by**

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**March 2025**

# DECLARATION

I, **PHATHUTSHEDZO MUKONA,** hereby declare that "**The lived experiences of unemployed black men from a low socioeconomic peri-urban Motsoaledi township in Soweto**" is my work and that all the sources used, and quotes have been fully cited. I hereby certify that the research report has never been submitted to accomplish any other degree locally, regionally or internationally.

**SIGNATURE** **DATE**

**21 October 2025**

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# ABSTRACT

Inequality continues to rise globally, with more evidence of an increased gap between the rich and the poor. The 2022 World Inequality Reports indicate that the richest 10% of the world's population holds approximately 76% of global wealth, while the poorest 50% own just 2%. The impacts of inequality include unemployment and poverty. In line with the masculinity discourse men are viewed as the financial providers for their families. In South Africa, the rising rates of unemployment often disproportionately affect Black men. According to 2024 Statistics South Africa Report, an estimated 30.1% of men are unemployed. Unemployment eradicates men's economic power and their role as their families' financial providers. This erosion of power affects and influences certain behaviours in men. Resultantly, men may be involved in domestic violence, substance abuse, and suicide. The current study aimed to explore the lived experiences of unemployed Black men in a low socio-economic, peri-urban township called Motsoaledi, to understand the consequences of unemployment in their lives and the coping strategies that they employ. This qualitative study used semi-structured interviews to collect data from 15 unemployed Black men who lived in Motsoaledi Township located in Diepkloof Soweto. Narrative analysis was the method utilised for data analysis. Narrative research design was also employed. The researcher used purposive sampling to access participants through a non-governmental Organisation in a selected township. Key findings reveal that men experience numerous hardships due to unemployment. These hardships include inability to start, or maintain their own families, separation from their families, mental wellbeing issues, and failing to start businesses to sustain their lives. However, findings also demonstrated that ubuntu, a collective spirit of oneness and strong spiritual beliefs, offer support for the men to escape poverty.



***Key Words:*** Inequality; Unemployment, poverty, masculinity, lived experiences, low socio-economic.

# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

## 1.1. Introduction

There is a continued increase in the gap between the wealthy and the impoverished, globally. In 2019, the world`s billionaires, which were 2,153 individuals, had more wealth among them compared to the 4.6 billion people (Coffey et al., 2020). Gbedoah (2018) views this gap as the legacy of colonialism and exploitation. Since the 1980s, multiple factors have contributed towards the growth in global economic disparity including globalisation, international trade, and technological advancement.

Technological advancements have improved people's lives in disadvantaged countries such as India and Brazil. However, it has impacted on the type of jobs being created. Individuals with no skills or semi-skilled are often unemployed due to low demand for their skills (Greene, 2021; Mokofe, 2024). Furthermore, technological skills require high cost of training, which most of the developing world cannot afford. This leaves many people in the developing countries unemployable. Resultantly, there is persistent unequal distribution of opportunities, resources, and wealth at a global level. Due to the high rate of inequality, there is continuous growth in the number of unemployed individuals (Mokofe, 2024).

Economically, Africa is deemed one of the poorest continents (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development., 2024). According to the dependency theory, Africa`s economic state can be attributed to the lack of support from industrially developed continents (Motolani & Virtanen, 2017). Hickel et al. (2022) notes that unequal exchange theory posits that economic growth in the "advanced economies" of the global North relies on the appropriation of resources and labour from the global South, extracted through price differentials in international trade.

Olaoye et al. (2023) states that global cases of people living in extreme poverty have declined from 1.9 billion in 1990 to 736 million in 2015. However, in the same period, sub-Saharan Africa witnessed a rise in the number of people living in extreme poverty. There are numerous factors that contribute to poverty in Africa compared to other continents. Some of the factors reported to worsen poverty in Africa are unemployment, increase in population, low economic

growth, inadequate budgets for poverty reduction expenditures, as well as high cost of capital for small and medium entrepreneurs (Olaoye et al., 2023).

South Africa is still geographically divided due to inequality, which favours the minority race (Branson et al., 2024). Structural inequality remains a primary driver of unemployment among Black people. In South Africa, the socioeconomic divide is a legacy of the apartheid's laws. Hence, Black people remain the most affected by economic decline and high unemployment rates, which leads to poverty. According to Bowleg et al. (2013), Black people do not have equal employment opportunities compared to their White counterparts.

In South Africa, poverty is multi-dimensional, with many individuals, particularly those in the areas around the metropolitan cities, and rural areas, do not have access to basic services such as proper housing, healthcare, and infrastructure (Gordon et al., 2020). The effects of unemployment differ significantly between racial groups. For White men, unemployment may only present economic challenges, whereas for Black men, the effects can further be associated with the loss of financial power. Thus, in relation to masculinity in societies, they may lose respect of being the financial provider for their families (Sibanyoni, 2024). The Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) was introduced by the African National Congress (ANC) as a strategy aimed at addressing the racial economic inequalities. It helped Black people to participate more in the South African economy (Southhall, 2007). The policy aimed to increase Black ownership of businesses and promoted skills development among Black people. It also ensured that through affirmative action, Black people, who were historically disadvantaged, received first preferences in government procurement processes (Southhall, 2007).

Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) was criticised for empowering only few Black people connected to the ruling party, leaving the majority still impoverished (Southhall, 2007). Resultantly, in 2003 the BEE was changed and legislated as Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003, (BBBEE). It expanded its strategy to include skills development for Black people and corporate social responsibility for businesses to contribute to the socioeconomic development of disadvantaged Black people. Another criticism of BEE was that it could block foreign investment (Southhall, 2007). Patel and Graham (2012) found that although BBBEE made efforts towards empowering Black people, especially the previously

disadvantaged including women, it has not made a significant difference to the lives of the majority.

As part of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), the transition from the apartheid regime to a democratic government was followed by the introduction of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). The RDP aimed to address issues of poverty and inequality brought by the apartheid government (Tangri & Southhall, 2008). The RDP became the new government's central reform agenda, which involved various socioeconomic, institutional, educational, cultural, and employment initiatives (Harsch, 2001, cited in Francis & Webster, 2019). Under the RDP, there was a notable reallocation of expenditure from the military to social sectors such as housing, education, and healthcare. This shift was supported by the establishment of the RDP Fund, which financed prominent residential projects (Harsch, 2001, cited in Francis & Webster, 2019). Consequently, the RDP is often credited for laying the groundwork for South Africa's current comprehensive social security programme.

The RDP was replaced by the Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR). The primary objectives of the RDP, such as labour market reforms, enhancing productivity, and skills development, were all incorporated into GEAR. Unlike the RDP, which had a broader focus, GEAR was specifically a macroeconomic policy designed to attract foreign investment and promote growth through job creation (Francis & Webster, 2019). The neo-liberal nature of GEAR had a different effect to what was intended with the RDP.

According to Mosoetsa (2011), macroeconomic policies aimed at accelerating the integration of the South African economy into the global economy had the adverse effect of deepening inequalities. GEAR was replaced by Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa aimed at achieving high economic growth, reducing inequality and poverty through job creation, as well as promoting inclusive growth (Francis & Webster, 2019). The premature replacement of RDP by subsequent policies resulted in perpetuation of unemployment and poverty within the country.

Other policies that contributed towards reducing the inequality gap in South Africa include Affirmative Action (Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998). Affirmative Action offered Black men opportunities to advance in their careers and for women to have access to the same opportunities. This created more competition for limited jobs since the most previously

disadvantaged, Black women received first preference in employment opportunities. According to Statista (2024), most women are still unemployed in the formal economy, compared to men. However, there has been a faster increase in the number of the unemployed Black men in the past few years, since the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 1.2. Statement of the problem and rationale for the study

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, South Africa`s economic status has significantly declined, with an increasing number of men losing their jobs, while those wishing to enter the workforce struggle to find employment (Ranchhod & Daniels, 2021). According to Statista (2024), unemployment among men increased from 24.6% in 2016 to 31% in 2024. However, due to limited economic opportunities in rural areas, a significant number of Black men with limited skills still move to peri-urban areas in search of employment. Despite, the rise in technology requires high skill sets for employment yet many Black men seeking employment had low access to tertiary education. Therefore, they encounter high rates of unemployment and poverty.

Unemployment can impact individuals' psychosocial wellbeing and societal roles (Ichou, 2008). Despite progress made toward gender equality, traditional masculinity norms continue to dictate that men derive much of their identity and self-worth from being the financial providers and breadwinners of the family. According to Khan and Raana (2023), these gendered social norms contribute to stress, strain, and conflicts on men.

In most societies, there is a pervasive expectation that men should be the primary providers for their families. This norm places additional pressure on unemployed men, who may struggle with feelings of inadequacy and social exclusion. As Zizzamia (2020, p.9) highlights in his study of unemployment in Khayelitsha, one participant expressed the emotional and social toll of unemployment, stating:

> When you are a man and you are not responsible, people look at you funny, even your family. They treat you funny, look at you funny, look at you as a nobody. Even your mother will say things that she wouldn’t say to you if you were working.

In the above quotation, Zizzamia (2020) revealed the profound impact of unemployment on individuals, particularly when societal expectations surrounding masculinity are inextricably

linked to one's ability to financially support others. Zizzamia (2020), drawing on Dawson (2018), asserts that the psychosocial costs of unemployment are particularly acute for men. In a society where masculinity is closely tied to economic provision, the inability to fulfil this role can result in deep humiliation. Furthermore, Dawson (2018) argues that for young men, being at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder can be profoundly demoralising, as it challenges fundamental cultural ideas of male identity and self-respect.

Hunter (2013) argues that while numerous patriarchal structures have historically disadvantaged women, little attention has been given into analysing the impact of socioeconomic factors on men. Hunter (2013) further asserts that with the replacement of agriculture as the main livelihood strategy and the emergence of men working for survival, they moved out of their homesteads into peri-urban areas to earn a living. Resultantly, men became distant providers. With men being away from home for extended periods, new expectations were placed on them, thus, they took the role of breadwinners (Hunter, 2013). Hunter (2013) rightfully points to the challenges associated with fatherhood due to unemployment and chronic poverty, where men have limited abilities to build their families. However, this ambiguity between the expectations of men and their realities may also contribute to absent fathers

Eddy et al. (2013) highlight that fathers feel that they are placed in a situation where they can only be parents to their children if they can financially provide for them. This confirms the study by Hunter (2013), stating that the role of men regarding parenting is mainly associated with being a provider. According to Eddy et al. (2013), the reason behind fathers' disengagement from their children's lives are deeply linked to the broader historical, social, economic, and cultural context in South Africa. Rather than being an isolated issue, the widespread absence of fathers' stem from ideological factors, such as materialistic views of fatherhood and masculinity; socioeconomic factors, like poverty and unemployment; cultural influences, including the cost of "ilobolo" and "damages," as well as various relationship challenges (Eddy et at., 2013).[1]

[1] Ilobolo is the price paid by the groom to the bride`s family, resulting in customary marriage
Damages or Inhlawulo is money paid to a woman`s family by a man who has impregnated her out of wedlock.

The increasing number of male suicides led to more studies focusing on what it means to be a man and as of the early 1990s, being a Black man in South Africa. Langa (2020) conducted a study on young boys from the Alexandra Township, focusing on how they developed their identities, growing up in a South African township with several challenges such as a history of political violence, characterised by violent crimes, unemployment, domestic violence, and lack of infrastructure. Mfecane (2020) focuses on what it means to be a Black man, focusing on physical identification, following the Xhosa culture and their initiation processes.

Ammann and Staudacher (2021) argues that research on masculinity must consider the geographic setting of men. Citing Mfecane (2018), Ammann and Staudacher (2021) highlight that studies conducted in the Global North cannot be fully applied in the African context, as they fail to account for what it means to be a person in most African settings. Therefore, there is a need to study the experiences of South African Black men, focusing on their socioeconomic settings in different parts of South Africa, where there are limited prospects, and the economy continues to deteriorate. The current study explores the lived experiences of Black men who have limited access to health facilities and financial resources in South African peri-urban townships. These men live in areas with inadequate infrastructure, such as poor housing and roads, as well as limited education. Despite these challenges, societies continue to expect men to be financial providers in their households, even as they also struggle with unemployment and poverty.

## 1.3. Aims and objectives of the study

### *1.3.1. Research aim*

The study's aim is to explore the lived experiences of unemployed Black men living in a peri-urban township. It focuses on understanding the strategies and coping mechanisms that they employ to navigate their daily lives. Additionally, the study investigates how Black men's unemployment status affects their psychosocial and economic wellbeing. By exploring the intersections of race, unemployment, and geographical context, the study sought to provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by this community and the broader implications of unemployment in peri-urban communities.

### *1.3.2. Research objectives*

- To assess the family circumstances of unemployed Black men living in Motsoaledi Township
- To understand the past and present financial circumstances of unemployed Black men living in Motsoaledi
- To discover the coping strategies Black unemployed men, employ to cope with their experiences.
- To ascertain the unemployed men's perspectives of societal views about unemployed men in their community
- To identify if participants have any formal or informal source of financial support

## 1.4. Overview of research methodology

Methodology refers to a systematic and theoretical analysis of the methods used in a study (Gounder, 2012). The current study followed qualitative research approach. The study employed narrative design for data collection. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured individual interviews, offering flexibility to investigate key themes in depth, while enabling the researcher to adapt the conversation based on participants' unique responses. After data collection, narrative data analysis was conducted. Narrative data analysis focuses on both the structure and content of the stories shared by participants.

## 1.5. Definition of concepts

### *1.5.1. Psychosocial*

Psychosocial refers to the influence of social factors on an individual's mind or behavior, and the interrelation of behavioral and social factors" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2024). In this study, psychosocial refers to the ways in which social conditions (e.g., unemployment, family dynamics, social stigma) affect the emotional and psychological wellbeing of unemployed Black men in peri-urban townships. This will be explored through participants' narratives of stress, identity challenges, feelings of inadequacy, or social exclusion during in-depth interviews

### *1.5.2. Lived experience*

Lived experience is defined as a depiction of a person's experiences and decisions, as well as the knowledge gained from these experiences and choices (Talking Health Tech, 2024). Lived experience will be understood as the personal accounts and reflections shared by participants about their day-to-day lives, including how they make sense of unemployment, masculinity, survival strategies, and family responsibilities. These will be collected using qualitative interviews focusing on participants' perspectives and life stories.

### *1.5.3. Peri-Urban township*

This is defined by Lopez and Mathews (2021) as a type of settlement located on the outskirts of an urban area, where the characteristics of both urban and rural environments intermingle. These townships are situated in the transition zone between densely populated urban areas and rural regions, often encompassing a mix of urban infrastructure and rural land. They typically experience rapid population growth and urban sprawl, leading to diverse socioeconomic environments that encompasses residential, commercial, and agricultural activities. For the purposes of this study, a peri-urban township is defined as a settlement on the outskirts of aSoweto where there is a combination of informal housing, limited infrastructure, and a mix of urban and rural characteristics. This setting forms the physical and socio-economic context in which the participants reside.

### *1.5.4. Socio-economic status*

Socio-economic status refers to the social and economic position of individuals or families within society, encompassing various dimensions such as income, parental education level, occupation, as well as access to resources and opportunities. Socio-economic status will be assessed based on the participants' educational attainment, previous or current employment status, access to income, housing quality, and availability of social services. Data will be gathered through demographic profiling during interviews

### *1.5.5. Low socio-economic status*

Low socio-economic status is defined as having low access to financial, educational, social and health resources (Mistry et al., 2010, cited in Munir et al., 2023). Participants were considered of low socio-economic status if they report limited or no income, minimal educational

qualifications, reside in informal housing, and lack consistent access to healthcare, transportation, or social services. This classification helps to frame the depth of social exclusion and vulnerability in the study.

### *1.5.6. Masculinity*

Refers to social expectations of being a man. It concerns the roles, behaviors, and attributes considered appropriate for boys and men within a society. Masculinity is constructed and defined socially, historically, and politically, rather than biological (Nayak,2023). Masculinity was explored in terms of how participants define what it means to be a man within their community. The study will examine social expectations, roles, pressures, and behaviors tied to being male, particularly in relation to providing for the family, coping with joblessness, and maintaining status in the household or community.

### *1.5.7. Unemployment*

Uemployment is defined as a situation where a person actively searches for a job but is unable to find it (Hayes, 2023). Unemployment referred to the participant's current lack of formal employment despite the willingness and efforts to work. The study will also include those engaged in informal, precarious, or irregular work that does not provide stable income or social protection

## 1.6. Organisation of the research report

### *1.6.1. Introduction and overview*

The introduction and overview chapter one provided a comprehensive foundation for the study, contextualising key issues of inequality at a global, regional, and national level. Specifically, the chapter addressed how these issues manifest for Black men residing in low socioeconomic townships, highlighting the intersection of race, gender, and class in shaping their experiences of unemployment as well as poverty. Furthermore, the chapter provides a concise explanation of the methodology adopted for the study, detailing the study's research design, data collection methods, and methods of analysis. The chapter also defines the key concepts used throughout the report, ensuring clarity. It then introduces the theoretical framework underpinning the study, followed by a discussion of the existing literature relevant to the current study.

### *1.6.2. Theoretical framework*

In chapter two theoretical framework, the dissertation outlines the framework underpinning the study, which is multi-dimensional poverty. The framework is divided into three dimensions, namely, education, health, and standard of living as well as discussing the indicators for each dimension. The chapter further outlines additional dimensions that were applied specifically for this study, including social, cultural, and economic. The purpose of these additional dimensions was to allow the study to outline the psychosocial impact of unemployment on Black men from a low socioeconomic township. Thus, to understand how they experience and manage being unemployed, while there are several societal expectations placed on Black men. The chapter also explores the transgenerational transmission of poverty theory which posits that poverty can be transmitted from one generation. It particularly applies to the research participants who come from poor backgrounds and living in poor economic conditions. The theory argues that without intervention the cycle of poverty can be passed on to the next generations.

### *1.6.3. Literature review*

The literature review in Chapter three examines scholarly work on inequality, poverty, and unemployment, focusing on the experiences of Black men. It contextualises these issues globally before narrowing the focus to South Africa, particularly within townships. It explores the intersections of Black masculinity and socioeconomic challenges, tracing the historical roots of inequality shaped by colonialism, apartheid, and their legacies. The review highlights the harsh conditions in low socioeconomic townships, where high unemployment, poverty, and marginalisation exacerbate struggles for Black men. Additionally, it delves into the psychological impact of unemployment, discussing how prolonged joblessness affects mental health, self-esteem, and identity, especially regarding traditional male breadwinner expectations. Overall, the chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of how unemployment, Black masculinity, and socioeconomic factors intersect, offering insights into the complex challenges faced by unemployed Black men in South African townships.

### *1.6.4. Methodology*

The methodology in chapter four provides a detailed explanation of the research design, data collection, and analysis methods used for the study. It outlines the use of a semi-structured

interview guide as the primary data collection tool and explains the rationale for its selection. It also explains the pretesting tool to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study's objectives. The pretesting of tools of the current study involved testing the interview guide on a population constituted of participant who met the criteria for inclusion, and this was to refine questions and address any ambiguities. Additionally, this chapter outlines the data analysis procedures, detailing how the collected data were systematically processed and interpreted.

The other main reasons for pretesting the research tool in qualitative research helps identify unclear or confusing questions, awkward phrasing, or inappropriate language; refine the wording of questions, ensure a logical sequence, help identify questions that might be sensitive or uncomfortable for participants

### *1.6.5. Presentation and discussions of findings*

Chapter five presents the study's findings. It begins with an overview of the participants' biographical information, presented in graphical format, followed by brief profiles of the research participants. The chapter then discusses the emerging themes, breaking each one down into subthemes and providing an in-depth analysis. Direct quotes from participants are included to support and strengthen the findings. Furthermore, the chapter connects each theme to relevant literature, further contextualising the results.

### *1.6.6. Main findings, conclusions and recommendations*

Chapter six evaluates the extent to which the research objectives have been achieved. It then focuses on the key findings and presents the conclusions drawn by the researcher. Additionally, the chapter offers recommendations for policy and intervention strategies aimed at better supporting unemployed Black men in peri-urban townships. Suggestions are also provided for potential avenues for future studies.

## 1.7. Summary

The current chapter gave an overview of the introduction of the study, exploring the global view of inequality and how it led to Black male unemployment. The chapter presents a brief outline of the structure of the entire dissertation. The following chapter discusses the theoretical framework used in the study.

# CHAPTER TWO

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## 2.1. Introduction

This chapter employs the multi-dimensional of poverty and the intergenerational transmission of poverty theories to explore the lived experiences of unemployed Black men from a low socioeconomic township. The multi-dimensional theory of poverty addresses how Black men living in low socioeconomic townships experience poverty harder than those residing in high socioeconomic areas. The intergenerational transmission of poverty theory suggests that Black unemployed men living in low socio-economic townships may have inherited hardships from their parents.

## 2.2. Theoretical framework

The study employed the multi-dimensional theory of poverty (Alkire & Santos, 2024) as a theoretical framework for the study. According to this theory, poverty is an economic factor, linked to other dimensions, namely, education, health, and standard of living. In addition, each dimension has indicators to measure the level of poverty. For the education dimension, the indicators are the number of years of schooling. For the health dimension, the indicators are nutrition and child mortality, while the standard of living dimension is indicated by cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing, and assets (UNDP & OPHI, 2023).

Some scholars argue that the money metric approach, which identifies poverty based on low income, does not capture the multiple aspects that constitute it (Francis & Webster, 2019; Fransman & Yu, 2018). As a result, a multi-dimensional approach is necessary. Fransman and Yu (2018) further highlight that poverty involves numerous non-money metric dimensions such as health and educational deprivation, physical and social isolation, lack of asset possession and access to services, feelings of vulnerability, powerlessness, as well as helplessness.

### *2.2.1. Education*

Sen (2000, cited in Espinoza-Delgado & Klasen, 2018), states that being unable to achieve an educational level is capability deprivation. Education is one of the contributing factors to wellbeing. In developing countries, a key factor contributing to high unemployment rates is

the lack of technological skills, often linked to limited access to education. According to Espinoza-Delgado and Klasen (2018), adults are considered education deprived if they have not completed secondary school. Education plays a crucial role in addressing inequality, ultimately leading to poverty reduction. Moyo et al. (2022) note that the low quality of education received by a significant proportion of the population has maintained high unemployment rates and continues to hinder progress in skills development.

### *2.2.2. Health*

According to the Oxford Dictionary (2024), health is defined as a state of being free from illness and injury. According to the Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI), health constitutes the second key dimension of poverty. The importance of this dimension lies in its fundamental role in an individual's overall wellbeing, as it influences their ability to fully engage in various aspects of life. As highlighted by Espinoza-Delgado and Klasen (2018), poor health can significantly restrict an individual's capacity to participate in economic, social, and educational activities, thereby perpetuating cycles of poverty. When individuals suffer from health issues, they may encounter reduced productivity, social exclusion, and low quality of life, all of which contributes to poverty.

Espinoza-Delgado and Klasen (2018) further elaborate on the criteria for identifying health deprivation, particularly in relation to adults. They argue that an individual is considered health-deprived if they have experienced chronic illness within the preceding month. Chronic diseases, which are long-lasting and often require continuous management, can severely impact an individual's ability to lead a normal life. As such, the presence of chronic illness serves as a significant indicator of health deprivation in the MPI, highlighting how persistent poor health can compound poverty, limiting access to opportunities and resources essential for economic and social advancement. Thus, health is a critical dimension and a key determinant of an individual's capacity to overcome poverty across other domains**.**

### *2.2.3. Standard of living*

Standard of living refers to the material wellbeing of individuals within a population (Kelly, 2024). The Oxford Dictionary (2025) defines standard of living as the degree of wealth and comfort available to a particular individual or community. The standard of living dimension of

poverty is typically assessed through various indicators, as outlined by the MPI. These indicators often include access to cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing quality, and household assets. In the current study, the selected indicators closely align with those used by Espinoza-Delgado and Klasen (2018), with one notable addition: the inclusion of the "people per bedroom" indicator. This choice was influenced by the specific characteristics of the households within the area of study, to accurately reflect local living conditions.

With a focus on gender and multi-dimensional poverty in Nicaragua, research states that traditional ways of measuring poverty, primarily through household surveys, fail to capture the nuanced gender disparities within households (Espinoza-Delgado & Klasen, 2018). Such approaches often overlook the intra-household dynamics that reveal significant variations in poverty levels among individuals, especially between men and women. By relying on aggregated household data, these surveys may obscure the extent to which certain household members, particularly women, experience poverty differently from others. To address this limitation, Espinoza-Delgado and Klasen (2018) advocate for an individual-based multi-dimensional poverty analysis. This analysis seeks to provide a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of poverty at an individual level rather than the household. This methodology allows for a clearer assessment of how poverty uniquely impacts different members of a household. Additionally, it offers a more nuanced and gender-sensitive perspective on poverty.

The Decent Standard of Living project was established in South Africa to identify indicators for what has been regarded as Socially Perceived Necessities (SPNs). It measures the goods needed by South Africans to be perceived as having a decent standard of living (UNICEF, 2022). These include flushing toilets in the house, tarred roads, someone to take you to hospital when unwell, and an outdoor area for children to play. The study findings highlight that for most South Africans living in urban cities, their standard of living improved in 2022 as compared to 2015. However, the rate at which these are improving differs from individual-to-individual and community-to-community.

In addition to the above dimensions adapted from the MPI, the researcher employed the following dimensions of poverty: economic, social, cultural, and psychological.

### *2.2.4. Economic dimension*

The most noticeable consequences of unemployment include experiences of poverty. Three decades post-apartheid, unemployment, and economic exclusion continue to pose significant challenges, particularly for Black men in South Africa (Arora & Ricci, 2006). In many countries, being unemployed often means a lack of stable income, which inevitably leads to poverty. To help mitigate the negative effects of unemployment, some countries implemented social security grants. For example, South Africa introduced the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant in 2020, to provide financial assistance in response to the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, unemployment still has various implications, especially for men, as it prevents them from meeting their own and their families' financial and financially related needs. This deprivation significantly affects their quality of life, including their living conditions, transportation options, access to healthcare, and even the partners they attract or choose. Arora and Ricci (2006) argue that economic growth is necessary for eradication of unemployment. The current dissertation, in its different parts, discusses the political, structural, and historical causes of unemployment among Black men.

### *2.2.5. Social dimension*

Jo (2013) states that the conceptual lens of poverty should be broadened to include non-material aspects. Jo (2013) further articulates that poverty encompass elements of shameful corrosive social relations. In support of this, Du Toit et al. (2018) states that as a social dimension, unemployment is associated with stigmatisation, labelling, unfair judgement, and marginalisation. Unemployed men are perceived to be lazy and unwilling to seek employment, thus, they deserve the hardships they experience. Households often reflect the society, where people with more economic power are perceived as more responsible and wiser. Therefore, they influence the direction of the household and families, just like individuals with power in a society lead it.

Referring to the marginalisation experienced by unemployed individuals in their own households, Cristiano et al. (2020) state that households reserve more incentives for their employed members compared to those unemployed. According to Jo (2013), certain social

needs are fundamental for living and engaging in a society, as they can significantly affect the improvement or worsening of poverty conditions. For instance, Lister (2004) describes a "lack of voice" as the inability to participate in socio-political activities, which is seen as a basic social necessity for everyone in a communal environment. This has been observed in Black families during family gatherings such as funerals, where those who are employed are afforded more power in decision-making than unemployed family members. Economic power in most instances trumps biological privileges such as being the firstborn male of a household. These have also been witnessed through the use of the term “rich aunt”, where female members of households with economic muscle often have more decision-making power than other family members.

### *2.2.6. Cultural dimension*

Culture plays a crucial role in shaping experiences of poverty, particularly in relation to how individuals negotiate their challenges. Bray et al. (2020) argues that culture delineates the social norms that influence the opportunities available to individuals, and the financial demands they must navigate. These cultural norms determine the opportunities available for individuals to improve their economic status and individuals expected to engage in paid versus unpaid labour, further shaping their socioeconomic realities.

For Black men, cultural identity can be profoundly significant, shaping both how they are perceived within their communities as well as how they navigate poverty and unemployment. In most African cultures, including Black South African communities, a man’s wealth is a central aspect of his identity and social value. This is exemplified by the Zulu saying *"ubuhle bendonda zinkomo zayo,*" which translates to "the beauty of a man is in his cattle." In a traditional Zulu society, cattle are a key symbol of wealth and status, thus, the saying implies that a man’s social worth is determined by his material success. The ability to accumulate wealth determines social status and facilitates social mobility, particularly regarding marriage and family life. Thus, having wealth makes it easier for a man to find a wife and establish a stable home.

The cultural theory of poverty and inequality, as discussed by Royce (2022), proponents of this theory argue that poverty is primarily the result of the behaviours and attitudes of less privileged individuals. It suggests that anyone can escape poverty if they are willing to put in

necessary effort and take personal responsibility. This perspective holds that there are ample employment opportunities available, and individuals should be able to improve their circumstances through hard work. This perspective is also reflected in critical race theory, which posits that unemployment is an individual issue. Furthermore, lack of employment opportunities is understood not as a systemic problem but one stemming from individual shortcomings. However, this view fails to acknowledge the broader historical and structural inequalities that continue to shape the experiences of Black men.

As highlighted by Royce (2022), the individualistic perspective on poverty overlooks the persistent structural inequalities entrenched over time, particularly in post-apartheid South Africa, where Black men remain disproportionately affected by unemployment. Despite the claims that employment opportunities are abundant, the South African reality suggests otherwise. The government and the private sector fail to create sufficient employment opportunities. Since the early 1990s, retrenchments have been increasingly widespread. In this context, no personal responsibility can alter the broader economic landscape. Alenda-Demoutiez and Mügge (2019) support this argument, stating that unemployment should not be viewed as an indicator of individual failure but as a condition influenced by structural economic factors beyond their control. Alenda-Demoutiez and Mügge (2019) further suggest that the persistent high levels of unemployment are rooted in economic systems that fail to provide adequate employment opportunities, particularly for marginalised groups. Therefore, poverty and inequality cannot be addressed through individual efforts alone.

### *2.2.7. Psychological dimension*

Unemployment and poverty are economic challenges but also carry significant psychological consequences, particularly for men. Extensive studies have demonstrated that unemployment can lead to various mental health issues, with unemployed men often suffering from increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Paul & Moser, 2022; OECD, 2021; WHO, 2022). Gross et al. (2020) argue that the experience of unemployment, compounded by societal prejudices linked to this status, can undermine both self-esteem and self-confidence. This negative self-perception can further hinder an individual's ability to re-enter the labour market. Additionally, the stigma associated with being unemployed can create a sense of inadequacy and hopelessness, making the prospect of securing employment even more daunting.

Employment opportunities are increasingly reserved for those with advanced skills, further entrenching poverty among those who lack access to such education.

Additionally, access to basic services such as quality healthcare and housing is a significant barrier. The multidimensional nature of poverty encompasses economic deprivation and the lack of access to essential services, which are integral to improving an individual's quality of life. These factors are critical in understanding the broader context in which poverty is found. The multidimensional poverty theory provides a useful framework for exploring how these various dimensions interact in shaping the experiences of Black men in South Africa (UNDP & OPHI, 2023).

By applying the multidimensional theory of poverty, this study explores how Black men in Motsoaledi, a peri-urban community located on the outskirts of Johannesburg, experience poverty through the lens of their unique identities and social positions. The geographical location of the Motsoaledi township is crucial, as the cost of living in peri-urban areas is often higher than in rural regions, yet the opportunities for economic advancement remain limited. The cost of utilities, such as electricity and water, places further financial strain on residents of these areas.

In the current study, for unemployed Black men, the multi-dimensional aspect of poverty illuminates how their race intersects with broader systemic inequalities in South Africa. The historical and socioeconomic disadvantages faced by Black South Africans continue to shape their experiences of poverty, creating unique challenges in accessing opportunities and resources.

Furthermore, the multi-dimensional theory of poverty helps unpack the gendered dimensions of poverty, examining how societal expectations placed on men, particularly being providers, interact with their lived experiences of unemployment. The intersection of race, gender, and socioeconomic status creates a complex web of marginalisation, where Black men in South Africa face certain challenges that are shaped by individual circumstances and by the larger structural forces of inequality. Through these lenses, the study also explores the coping strategies employed by Black men in such adversity. The study seeks to understand how they navigate the complexities of poverty, unemployment, and societal expectations in their daily lives.

## 2.3. Intergenerational transmission of poverty (IGT)

Several scholars explore various intergenerational influences shaping individual lives, with a particular focus on education inequality (Bolivier & Capsada-Munsech, 2024), social class mobility (Heath & Li, 2024), and intergenerationally persistent poverty (Nolan, 2024). According to Scorza et al. (2019), political and socioeconomic factors can contribute to inherited hardships. The IGT theory posits that fetal exposure to maternal prenatal distress associated with socioeconomic disadvantage compromises offsprings' neurodevelopment, affecting short- and long-term physical as well as mental health, psychosocial standing and resources (Scorza et al., 2019). This is supported by Buccelli and McKnight (2024) who state that children who grow up in poverty are most likely to become less privileged as well. This transmission of poverty is further perpetuated by a lack of family investments, family stress, aspirations and correlation of multiple disadvantages. Moore (2001) asserts that intergenerational poverty is the most chronic form of poverty.

Bird (2013) discusses models used to explain intergenerational transfer (IGT) poverty. The economic model argues that low-income parents have limited time, financial resources, and energy to invest in enhancing their children's skills or earning potential. Furthermore, due to their weak social connections, poor parents are unlikely to assist their children in securing high-paying jobs. According to Bird (2013), the family structure model proposes that children raised in "non-intact" families may experience diminished outcomes due to limited access to both parental economic resources, and non-economic resources, such as parental involvement and supervision.

Overall, Black men in South Africa come from a background of inequality and oppression. The apartheid-era dispensation in South Africa stretched for about four and a half decades, impacting the current adults, their parents, and grandparents. According to the Bucelli and McKnight (2024), hence Black men are considered more prone to poverty compared to their White counterparts who grew up in high socioeconomic conditions.

In a study of transgenerational poverty in Australia, McCoull and Pech (1998) found that over and above the transmission of poverty, multiple generations in one family often rely on social security. This phenomenon is also dominant in South Africa and more specifically, among Black people where more than one family members are receiving different forms of social

grants. The IGT theory suggests that the cycle of unemployment and poverty will continue unless interventions are made to change the trajectory.

## 2.4. Summary

This chapter explored two theories, multi-dimensional theory of poverty and the IGT of poverty. These theories demonstrate that unemployed Black men face multiple dimensions of poverty across generations. As a result, they are prone to pass it on to their children. The next chapter reviews the literature relevant to the current study.

# CHAPTER THREE

# CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MALE UNEMPLOYMENT

## 3.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive discussion of existing scholarly work on unemployment. The review is extensively focused specifically on the unemployment of Black men in South Africa. The chapter first establishes a global perspective on male unemployment, drawing on international studies and data to highlight broader trends and challenges faced by men in the workforce. The chapter then transitions to a more regional focus, examining the African context of male unemployment, considering how socioeconomic, political, and cultural factors across the continent influence the employment prospects and experiences.

The review then narrows its scope to the South African context, with particular emphasis on the experiences of Black men within the country's township communities. By delving into the specific dynamics of unemployment in these areas, the chapter sheds light on how historical and structural factors, such as the legacy of apartheid, systemic inequality, and limited access to education, continue to shape the employment opportunities and experiences of Black men in South Africa.

The reviewed literature includes both qualitative and quantitative studies offering an in-depth understanding of the lived realities of unemployed Black men in low socioeconomic townships. It also highlights the socioeconomic and psychological challenges they face. Additionally, the chapter explores how these men navigate the intersection of race, class, and gender within the context of unemployment, providing a nuanced understanding of their experiences in the contemporary South Africa.

## 3.2. Inequality

According to Orrnet (2018), inequality is characterised by disparities that exist between individuals and groups across various domains such as wealth, income, education, space, nutrition, politics, and social identity. Orrnet (2018) further asserts that, in some cases, individuals may experience intersecting inequalities, where multiple forms of disadvantage overlap, amplifying their marginalisation. For instance, an unemployed woman with no formal education may experience compounded inequalities rooted in her gender, economic status, and

lack of educational opportunities, rendering her particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse at various levels. These intersecting inequalities underscore the complexity of social disadvantages and highlight the need for a comprehensive approach in addressing inequality.

Inequality arises from a range of structural factors, including race, gender, social class, and economic standing (Francis & Webster, 2019). In the African context, one of the most prominent issues is economic inequality, which is starkly evident when compared to Western, or "first world," countries. The legacy of colonisation continues to exert a profound influence on the continent's economic landscape. Colonial powers extracted vast amounts of natural resources from African nations, processed them in their home countries, and then sold the finished products back to Africa at inflated prices. This exploitative relationship perpetuated economic inequality and shaped the narrative that the Western lifestyle was superior, encouraging developing nations to emulate the West, often at the expense of their own development (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021; Rodney, 2022; Akinyoade & Uche, 2023).

Despite being more than three decades into a democratic system of governance, South Africa continues to grapple with the enduring consequences of apartheid. One of the inheritances from apartheid that still contributes greatly to inequality in South Africa is land ownership. According to Wilson (2011), due to Natives Land Act 1913, Black South Africans were removed from their land, and it was given to White people, while the former occupants were moved to segregated areas. Black people were further prohibited from land ownership which prevented them from participating in economic activities such as agriculture, owning homes and other properties. In support of this, Moyo (2014, citing UNCTAD, 2012) states that the personal income inequalities experienced now are a consequence of fundamental inequalities in wealth, maintained by skewed ownership of real assets such as land, housing stock, and other forms of productive capital, as well as financial assets, given the different streams of income that arise from assets.

The structural inequities established during apartheid remain deeply embedded in the South African socioeconomic structure. Most of the population is still residing in predominantly rural or semi-urban areas. In contrast, wealth remains concentrated on the hands of the minority. This unequal distribution of wealth impedes the majority from accessing the economic

freedoms necessary to secure necessities, perpetuating cycles of poverty, and social exclusion (Francis & Webster, 2019).

Furthermore, corruption is a crisis in South Africa. It has further excluded impoverished people from participating significantly in the economic processes. Sebake (2020) states that corruption is mismanagement and misadministration of government resources by politicians and public servants. These individuals have lost their sense of honesty when faced with ethical dilemmas. Even policies like the BEE were affected by corruption, in which only those with the financial means to provide a "hand-shake" or a bribe could be granted tenders. Resultantly, an insignificant number of Black people`s lives have not had a positive impact from these policies.

In addition, corruption affects service delivery in South Africa through misallocation of resources. Funds meant to improve people's lives are misused for personal gains. As a result, essential services such as building or improving health care facilities, schools, and infrastructure development in rural or semi-rural areas do not reach the intended beneficiaries (Sebake, 2020).

The education system in South Africa further perpetuates inequality, particularly through the divide between private and public schooling (Mohamed, 2020). Private schools, which are often expensive, provide students with a higher standard of education, smaller class sizes, as well as access to resources and support. The networks and social capital gained in private institutions provide students with significant advantages in their future careers, further entrenching inequality in society. In contrast, most young Black South Africans, upon completing their secondary education, are unable to pursue further education due to financial constraints. NSFAS is one of the strategies to bridge the gap, however because those who have used it are unable to pay back the funding received, then it can no longer cater for the upcoming generation (DHET, 2023; Madondo & Masehela, 2022; Mngomezulu, 2021).

Faced with the harsh realities of poverty, families are often forced to choose between meeting their basic nutritional needs and funding their children's education. Resultantly, young men, particularly in disadvantaged communities, are unable to acquire the technical skills and qualifications necessary to compete in the modern job market. Thus, exacerbating existing inequalities and hindering their socioeconomic mobility.

The persistence of these systemic inequalities, rooted in historical injustices, continues to shape the lived experiences of many South Africans. Addressing these disparities requires tackling the socioeconomic challenges faced by marginalised groups and dismantling the structural barriers that perpetuate inequality across multiple spheres of life.

## 3.3. Unemployment

A more comprehensive definition of unemployment, provided by Du Toit et al. (2015), citing the International Labour Organization [ILO] (2008), outlines the criteria for an individual to be considered unemployed. These criteria include being of working age, being available for work, and actively seeking employment. "Seeking" in this context refers to various proactive efforts to find a job, such as seeking help from friends and family, visiting work sites, applying directly to employers, searching for financial resources to establish one's own business, or registering with public or private employment agencies. This distinction is crucial, as it differentiates between individuals who are unemployed but actively seeking work and those who are not pursuing any job opportunities. Du Toit et al. (2015) refers to the latter group as "discouraged workers."

A broader definition of unemployment, as presented by Alenda-Demoutiez and Mügge (2019), citing the CSS (1996) is: "The percentage of individuals within the economically active population who are not engaged in paid employment or self-employment at a specific time, yet are available for work or other income-generating activities, and actively seek employment or self-employment opportunities."

While the above definition of unemployment is rarely used in South Africa, it may be more applicable in the context of South African townships. In these communities, the ability to actively seek employment is hindered by various challenges, such as a lack of financial resources and access to information. For example, seeking work physically at job sites requires access to transportation, which many in these communities cannot afford. Furthermore, access to technology, such as free Wi-Fi or community resources like libraries for job searches or Curriculum Vitae (CV) printing, is often limited. Thus, in many cases individuals are forced to prioritise basic needs such as food and electricity over the pursuit of job opportunities. As such, when choosing between job searching and fulfilling essential needs, the latter often prevails.

Additionally, as Royce (2022) observes, finding a job is not just about qualifications or skills, but mostly social connections. In townships, social circles are often composed of individuals who are unemployed or underemployed. As a result, there are limited opportunities for networking or receiving job referrals, worsening the challenges faced by individuals in these communities.

Unemployment is often classified as either voluntary or involuntary. According to Özdemior (2022), voluntary unemployment occurs when an individual deliberately chooses not to work. This may be due to an unwillingness to accept low-paying jobs, or the satisfaction of receiving government benefits when unemployed. Hence, individuals in this category are not considered unemployed by the standard definitions since they are not actively seeking employment. In contrast, involuntary unemployment occurs when individuals are unable to secure work, although they are willing to accept lower wages or unfavourable working conditions compared to their employed counterparts (Shackleton, 1985, cited in Baah-Boateng, 2015). Involuntary unemployment can manifest in four distinct types: structural, frictional, institutional, and cyclical.

Cyclical unemployment, as defined by Amadeo (2024), occurs during the contraction phase of the business cycle, when demand for goods and services declines. As a result, employers are compelled to lay off workers due to reduced demand. A pertinent example of cyclical unemployment is the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to widespread lockdowns. Many businesses faced reduced operating hours and customer numbers, leading to mass layoffs.

However, when demand for goods and services rises again, cyclical unemployment often decreases. In South Africa, most jobs lost during the COVID-19 pandemic have not been recovered, leaving the majority of people unemployed (Altman, 2022). This is exacerbated by that most companies had to adapt to more technologically advanced ways of conducting business, and such changes have remained post-pandemic.

Frictional unemployment arises when individuals temporarily leave their jobs and are seeking new prospects, or when recent graduates are looking for their first job (Amadeo, 2024). This type of unemployment is often considered a natural part of the labour market as individuals transition between jobs. With the poor state of the economy, many individuals in the informal

economy are unable to move from one employment to another, as work is not readily available. Although they may be unsatisfied with certain aspects of their job, they are forced to stay, which leads to burning out.

According to Amadeo (2024), structural unemployment occurs when the skills that workers possess do not match those required by employers. One prominent example of structural unemployment in South Africa is the shift towards the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), where many industries have transitioned from manual labour to technology-based. Resultantly, many workers who were previously employed in traditional industries, such as manufacturing, found themselves unemployed (BusinessTech, 2024). This structural shift has caused long-term unemployment, as unemployed poor individuals lack the financial resources or educational qualifications to reskill or adapt to the changing demands of the job market. This is considered one of the most significant causes of unemployment in South Africa today.

One of the lead contributors of unemployment in South Africa is corruption. Krsteski (2017) defines corruption as an abuse of a public position involving direct or indirect personal benefits and violations of policies, regulations, and ethics. Corruption distorts economic growth by favouring politically connected individuals or businesses, leading to inefficiency and lack of competition in key sectors. This can hinder job creation and exacerbate unemployment, particularly among the poor and marginalised populations. Corruption in the allocation of government contracts and tenders also leads to the enrichment of few individuals, while contributing to the stagnation of economic development in disadvantaged areas.

In South Africa, unemployment is a complex phenomenon, influenced by various socioeconomic and structural factors. The challenges faced by individuals in economically disadvantaged communities, particularly in townships, are compounded by limited access to resources, technology, and social networks. Therefore, understanding various types of unemployment is crucial for developing effective policy responses that can address both the immediate and long-term unemployment challenges within the country.

## 3.4. Poverty

Poverty, as defined by the United Nations and cited in Baikady et al. (2017), is characterised by the inability to access choices and opportunities. It is also viewed as a violation of human

dignity. This condition has remained a significant global challenge, particularly within the "third world" or developing countries. The first Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) advocates for the creation of a world free from poverty, recognising that eradicating poverty is a critical pathway towards ensuring dignity and wellbeing for all.

Royce (2022), in his analysis of poverty in the United States of America (USA), critiques the individualistic perspective often applied in the understanding of poverty. Royce (2022) argues that this view is fundamentally flawed, as it neglects the broader structural factors within society that contribute to poverty. Royce (2022) advocates for a structural approach to poverty, which considers the interconnectedness of various societal elements such as cultural, social, political, and economic systems, that collectively shape the conditions of poverty. These systems are often constructed in ways that empower certain individuals or groups, granting them disproportionate influence and control over societal mechanisms. Such power dynamics enable the development of policies, ideologies, and institutional practices that perpetuate inequality. These power dynamics ensure that the wealthier remain affluent while the poor are marginalised and disenfranchised.

While poverty is a challenging condition for all who experience it, there are notable differences in how it manifests across various regions of the world. Individuals in developed countries categorised as "poor" often experience a comparatively more manageable form of poverty, due to the existence of social safety nets, welfare systems, and higher living standards. In contrast, those in developing countries face absolute poverty. Todaro and Smith (2012) define absolute poverty as a condition where individuals are unable to meet the basic subsistence needs of food, clothing, and shelter. The stark contrast between these two experiences of poverty highlights the disparities that exist globally, with those in the developing world facing extreme and life-threatening forms of deprivation.

Inequality within individual nations further complicates the experience of poverty, with certain countries exhibiting extreme levels of disparity. South Africa, for instance, is renowned for having some of the highest levels of inequality globally, a condition that persists despite the country's transition to democracy. According to Finn (2015) cited in Francis and Webster (2019), in 2015 only 4.1% of White South Africans were categorised as poor, compared to 20.5% of Asian/Indians, 56.8% of Coloureds, and 70.75% of Black South Africans. Within

South Africa, Black men, particularly those residing in townships, often find themselves at a significant disadvantage, facing compounded forms of inequality rooted in historical, social, and economic factors. These individuals frequently lack the necessary socioeconomic or political power to influence the trajectory of their own lives. Their circumstances are shaped by systemic barriers, reinforced by policies and societal structures that continue to favour the few privileged while leaving the majority in an ongoing deprivation.

The capitalist system in contemporary South Africa continues to reproduce inequality across all areas of socioeconomic life, despite the demise of apartheid. Inequality in South Africa remains high and is maintained predominantly through wages (Francis & Webster, 2019).

Without ownership of land, Black South Africans were often relegated to low-wage, unskilled labor in cities, or forced to live in overcrowded townships, which worsened poverty and limited opportunities for economic advancement. The spatial organisation of South African townships further worsens these inequalities, due to how these areas are designed. The spatial and socioeconomic conditions in these townships are often deliberately structured to maintain the marginalisation of Black communities, limiting access to quality education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Consequently, Black men in these communities experience a cycle of disadvantages, with few prospects for upward mobility and little opportunity to challenge or alter the systems that perpetuate their poverty. Thus, poverty in South African townships is not due to individual misfortune, but a direct outcome of historical and contemporary social, political, as well as economic inequalities entrenched over time.

## 3.5. Global Black male unemployment

According to UN's (2024) world population prospects, there are more males than females in the world, with males making up 50.28% of the population compared to 49.72% females. In 2023, there were 189 million people who were unemployed. The number of unemployed people increased to 245 million, if the definition of unemployed was expanded to include those categorised as discouraged workers (ILO, 2024). Globally, the rate of male unemployment varies due to numerous factors.

In developed economies, digitalisation and automation led to job losses in traditional industries. Male unemployment is also attributed to labour market policies, globally. The transition from

manufacturing to service and technology-driven sectors has contributed to male unemployment, particularly in industries that were previously male-dominated (ILO, 2022). Ferguson (2012), with a focus on Black men`s unemployment in the USA, states that it is problematic to view unemployment primarily as a socioeconomic issue and not focusing on its other aspects. Further to that, Ferguson (2012) states that although psychological, sociological, historical, and cultural aspects of our lives are interdependent in determining feelings and actions, those associated with work are no different. Furthermore, individual, social, political, and economic factors contribute to male unemployment.

In developing economies, the causes of unemployment are reportedly structural issues, economic instability and the informal sector (World Bank, 2021). According to the African Development Bank (2020), Africa struggles with high unemployment rates, with young men being particularly affected. Some of the contributing factors include economic challenges, rapid population growth, and limited job creation. Many African economies rely heavily on the informal sector, with low job security, and precarious labor conditions. Furthermore, the skills of job seekers often do not match the needs of employers, exacerbating unemployment (African Development Bank, 2020; Baah-Boateng & William, 2015). For example, technological advancement replaced many employees with its tools. The multi-dimensional effects of unemployment in Africa contribute to harsher experiences compared to first-world countries.

## 3.6. Historical inequality

South Africa has been focusing on the reduction of poverty since the onset of its democracy in 1994. Fransman and Yu (2018) assert that reducing poverty has been a primary objective for the South African democratic government, with several large-scale economic policies and programmes being implemented. The first policy to be implemented was the RDP. The RDP represented the democratic government`s aspirations for growth, development, redistribution, and reconstruction (Adelzadeh, 1996). According to Adelzadeh (1996), RDP proposed growth and development, through reconstruction and redistribution.

The RDP's aim was to position the government as a central and guiding force in leading the mixed economy through reconstruction and development. It advocated for a living wage as essential for achieving the necessary economic growth. Socially, the historically disadvantaged majority supported the RDP, as it promised to create a democratic society that would unlock

the country's economic potential, job creation, a more equitable distribution of income and wealth, and the provision of basic needs for all South Africans.

The RDP aimed to extend benefits reserved for the minority group to the underprivileged, including equitable income wealth and basic services. Through the RDP, Black people were provided with benefits including houses, basic education, and free primary healthcare. However, the reach of the RDP was limited, as South Africans shifted its focus under the presidency of Thabo Mbeki. This policy was replaced in 1996 with the neo-liberal Growth, Employment, and Redistribution policy (GEAR).

According to Adelzadeh (1996) GEAR failed to address or transform the inequalities created by the apartheid regime. The gap between the rich and the poor in South Africa and between minority White people and the Black majority has consistently been increasing. Although Black people obtained political freedom in 1994, there was little to no change in the economic sphere. The apartheid government legalised laws that offered White people opportunities for growth while intentionally excluding Black people. Even the educational system trained Black people to be servants of White people.

## 3.7. Low socio-economic townships

A context is important when examining the state of an economy. As stated by Du Toit et al. (2018), a context is crucial when studying unemployment and poverty. It matters to the meanings associated with unemployment as well as the personal and social consequences. Cited in Du Toit (2018), De Souza (2014) defines a context as a micro-scaled version of society. Furthermore, a person's environment can either restrict or enable them (Du Toit, 2021).

Black men in South African townships assert that their context is not conducive for economic growth. In addition, townships are considered places related to poverty, unemployment, and dependence on the government's welfare benefits. Furthermore, townships are described as standstill places where unemployed people desperately wait for change (Du Toit, 2021). Jurgens et al. (2013) refer to townships as non-White neighbourhoods with rudimentary infrastructure, typically situated on city peripheries and intentionally separated from European city Centres by artificial or natural border zones.

The causes and experiences of unemployment differ depending on the resources available to assist with job seeking and for the unemployed to do whilst waiting for employment. Delgado et al. (2023) in their study on unemployment and health among Black men, noted that they reside in racially segregated areas that separate the affluent from the less privileged, further reducing employment opportunities. It is crucial to understand the political history of South African townships and its masculinities as a product of a particular system, emerging from a certain context (Langa, 2020).

Townships, often characterised by economic deprivation and limited resources, play a significant role in shaping the experiences of their residents. A peri-urban township is defined by Lopez and Mathews (2021) as a form of settlement located on the outskirts of an urban area, where the characteristics of both urban and rural environments are intertwined. These townships are situated in the transition zone between densely populated urban areas and rural regions, often featuring a mix of urban infrastructure and rural land. They typically experience rapid population growth and urban sprawl, leading to a diverse socioeconomic environment, encompassing residential, commercial, and agricultural activities.

Research highlights that socioeconomic status influences access to education, employment, and social mobility (Gilroy, 2020; Tunstall, 2018). Low socioeconomic areas are often marked by high unemployment rates and limited resources, which perpetuate cycles of poverty. The South African economy was developed around urban cities with minerals. Hence, Black men were moved from their rural homes to the city to work in companies.

Due to the Natives Land Act of 1913, Black people could not own land in cities but were demarcated to areas around them so that they could travel short distances to work. Although South Africa obtained democratic governance in 1994, there has been little change on the structural divide and inequality regarding land occupation.

Black people still stay in overpopulated peri-urban areas with low access to financial, social, health, and education facilities. Due to shifting from RDP to GEAR and corruption in the allocation of RDP houses, most peri-urban townships do not have proper housing structures. Individuals, nuclear, and extended families live in one or two-roomed tin houses referred to as shacks. These offer minimal security or privacy that contributes to the dignity of families. According to Macagnano (2002), townships and hostels were designed only for housing Black

migrants who worked in the central business districts (CBD) in the five major metropolitan areas of South Africa such as: Durban, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Gqeberha, and East London.

South African townships, characterised by economic hardships and limited infrastructure, are critical in understanding the experiences of their inhabitants. Additionally, a study by Motshegwa and Mothibi (2021) demonstrates that townships are often marked by high levels of poverty and unemployment. Thus, the systemic economic inequalities that prevail in these areas contribute significantly to the persistent socioeconomic challenges faced by residents.

The current study focuses on a township around the city of Johannesburg. When the democratic government took over in 1994, legally, apartheid laws were abolished. This gave legal access to Black South Africans to enter cities without the previously required permit, and allowed migrants to enter the country, increasing the competition for jobs. To address some of the social ills of the past, South Africa introduced affirmative action through the Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998), which mandated that previously disadvantaged groups should access the same employment opportunities as those favoured by the previous regime. This led to most women joining the formal workspace and to what was termed "50/50", that is equality between men and women in the work environment.

With structural changes, men have experienced role confusion and mental health challenges, resulting in high rates of suicide (Good & Wood, 1995). According to Mousteri et al. (2018) unemployment has an adverse effect on psychological wellbeing, which may lead to poor mental health and reduced life satisfaction. Furthermore, it has negative social consequences including social deprivation. Being unemployed leads to substantial declines in psychological wellbeing and these effects may persist for years after the initial occurrence of the spell.

## 3.8. Black men and masculinity

South Africa is entrenched in patriarchal laws and traditions even post-apartheid. Patriarchal laws play an important role in the construction of identities of masculinities for Black males (Mpunzana & Mofokeng, 2023). One of the most dominant traits of masculinity is being a breadwinner (Connell, 2005). Although there is inequality among Black men based on their

educational level, family backgrounds, and geographical areas, the societal expectations placed on them are equal.

The society expects Black men to meet certain criteria and be able to provide certain things for them to be seen as ‘indoda madodeni,’ regardless of where they come from. Research paid significant attention to the concepts of masculinity and manhood. Masculinity refers to social expectations of being a man. The term 'masculinity' refers to the roles, behaviors, and attributes considered appropriate for boys and men within a given society. Masculinity is constructed and defined socially, historically, and politically, rather than being biologically driven (Nayak, 2023). Connell and Messerschimdt (2005, cited in Alhuzail & Segev, 2023) identify three types of masculinity, namely: first, hegemonic masculinity which refers to the dominant type in a society or group. It is typically defined using characteristics like dominance, strength, competitiveness, and emotional restraint. It is also often associated with power and authority.

The second type of masculinity described by Connel and Messerschimdt (2005) is complicit masculinity, which involves accepting as well as internalising the norms and values linked to hegemonic masculinity, even if one does not fully embody them. Individuals with complicit masculinity play a role in upholding gender norms and may support hegemonic masculinity without fully adopting it. According to Alhuzal and Segev (2023), the third masculinity, which is hybrid masculinity blends traditional and non-traditional masculine traits to create new forms of masculinity. It integrates elements from various cultural, social, or gendered sources, offering a more flexible and diverse expression of masculine identity that surpasses the rigid expectations associated with hegemonic masculinity.

More work has gone into changing the views of men as violent and misogynist. In his book, Becoming Man, Langa (2020) discusses how South African young men raised in townships are most likely to drop out of school than girls. This is due to them repeating grades more than their counterparts. Langa further states that these young men, in negotiating their masculinity, and to be seen as more masculine, tend to display behaviour they believe will gain them social approval. Furthermore, Langa (2020) states that in expressing their masculinity, boys often have a casual regard for schoolwork, defiance towards adult authority, and missing classes.

South Africa is mainly a patriarchal country and most people, especially in Black communities, still believe in and practice traditional gender roles. Different authors found that one critical

factor that defines masculinity is the ability to financially provide for their loved ones. Alhuzail and Segev (2024) assert that in a patriarchal structure, young men are responsible for women in their families. Hence, failure to fulfil this role may harm others' perception of their masculinity. Golalons-Pons and Gany (2021) highlight that attachment to norms about men as providers remains strong despite growing economic insecurity such as unemployment. Men have long been stereotyped in economically driven roles, where masculinity, male identity, and performance are centred on their work (Page,1999).

Langa (2020) found that one of the masculinities young men wrestle with is economic power, stating that economic power is a key component of successful masculinity and those without wealth feel emasculated as they are unable to fulfil the ideals of what is deemed a real man. Heterogenic masculinity appears to be closely associated with access to wealth and resources (Langa, 2020). With such emphasis on masculinity being strongly associated with employment and ability to provide, unemployment has consequences that can be detrimental to men. Thus, Black men are faced with several challenges that can make them question what it means to be a man.

The changes to the 4IR led to job losses as Black men from poor environments such as townships in South Africa do not have the necessary skills to be competitive, in light of technological advancement. Furthermore, with the emergence of policies and campaigns that advocate for the empowerment of women and the rising phenomenon of independent women, gender roles are constantly changing. More women become financially independent and even breadwinners of families. Therefore, masculinity is constantly being defended and protected, breaking, and recreated (Langa, 2020).

Since men are compelled to depend more on women in their lives for their financial upkeep, social roles change. Men lose the position of power and financial authority in an intimate relationship. In some instances, men take on more "domestic roles" that were historically seen as feminine. Page (1999) asserts that unemployed man may experience a sense of placelessness, as he no longer finds his identity through employment and often feels disconnected within the private sphere of his home.

The consequences of unemployment for men move from the economic impact to affecting more areas in their lives. Men were seen as responsible for the financial wellbeing of their families.

Besides being financially deprived, the consequences of unemployment on men include effects on mental health, and social identity, as impacted by the inability to exercise personal agency and loss of being a financial provider. The current study aimed to understand how men use the new non-violent masculinity that accommodates the roles they find themselves in when unemployed, and do not have economic power associated with some traits of hegemonic masculinity.

Even in modern times, manhood is strongly associated with financial power in South Africa as witnessed through the phenomena such as "amablesser." Musasiri and Moyer (2021) cite a man in their study who said that he should look after his family even in tough times, to avoid being considered a boy. Being referred to as a boy is a sign of condescension and disrespect in many African cultures. Thus, adding pressure on men to go above and beyond their means to prove manhood. In this instance, men are expected to explore ways to meet the financial needs and sometimes wants of their loved ones.

In many cultures, masculinity is associated with economic success. Even among men, more respect is afforded to those with more financial muscle. This is also evident in social circles in South Africa. There is a concept of Ice boys, which refers to men with little or no money who are sent on errands by richer men, in exchange, they are allowed to drive their cars and share their drinks, Evason (2019). When men are not financially independent, they are often perceived as less 'manly.' In Black families, the increase in poverty levels and sharing scarce resources created a new norm where practices of solidarity are being eroded by adverse social and economic conditions (Mosoetsa, 2011). The situation is worsening in townships such as Soweto where they must share limited space. Resentment starts to build up among family members to the extent of fighting for family homes, that were culturally reserved for the last-born male of the household.

South Africa also has a growing substance abuse challenge, with men reported as the most users. The use of substances is one of the sources of conflict within households, and in some cases, it leads men to homelessness. Men are faced with challenges that stem from unemployment, including changes in what has been historically accepted as standard gender roles. In most instances, they are still perceived as the head of the households and are expected to be the financial providers of households. A successful man has always been perceived as one

who is able to bear the financial responsibility of the household. They are viewed as pillars based on their ability to provide. However, failing to provide is accompanied by the erosion of power.

## 3.9. Psychological impact of unemployment

Financial independence is an important aspect of adulthood and mental wellbeing in adults (Peprah, 2024). This is because the majority of aspects needed to be considered a successful adult require money, such as having a house, cars, money for children's education, and affording access to good healthcare. For Black men, even having a wife requires money in form of lobola. One needs to prove to the family they intend to marry from that they can care for their children. Therefore, this can be done through paying the bride price or ilobola (Hunter, 2013).

Thus, one can conclude that being unemployed leads to an inability to access some of the resources that promote wellbeing. Crowe et al. (2016) states that financial strain can robustly and independently be associated with depression. Crowe et al. (2016) further assert that one of the psychological impacts of unemployment at an individual level is a feeling of loss of control. Additionally, such feelings can lead to depression or lack of hope. Pavlov (2021) found that long-term unemployment has a negative impact on workers' social, economic and mental health.

According to Crowe et al. (2016), unemployment leads to a low sense of mastery which contributes to being unemployed in the first place, decreasing the chances of getting employed. In their study on the effects of unemployment on mental health and well-being, Gagne et al. (2021) found that the effects of unemployment are experienced mostly by men with a blue-collar background, staying in countries with unequal income distribution and poor employment protection. The men who participated in the study fit this description as they were from poor households, living in South Africa which is characterised by an extremely unequal economy, and they were unemployed.

The men in the current study had been affected by the land ownership policy that prevented Black people from owning land, especially in the metropolitan area (Walker, 2021). Moreover, they shared a single home with multiple generations of their family. Although South Africa is

well known for trade unions and worker protection, these benefits are for employees in permanent positions. The increase in outsourcing workers led to less security for those working as cleaners and security, jobs most available for men with the educational and skill level of the Black men in townships (Satgar, 2023; Department of Labour, 2022).

Research on the construction of masculinity tend to focus on men and violence. It focuses on men employed in certain work environments and those spreading diseases. The researcher found little academic or journalistic writing on how men manage unemployment and how they construct their identity whilst being unemployed. Furthermore, existing literature predominantly focuses on the quantitative assessment of psychosocial outcomes, often overlooking the nuanced and context-dependent nature of men's experiences. Thus, there is need for qualitative research to delve deeper into the subjective experiences of unemployed men, providing rich narratives, and insights into the complex interplay of factors influencing their psychosocial wellbeing.

Overall, addressing the issues faced by unemployed Black men in South African townships requires targeted policy interventions. A study by Patel and Tshabalala (2023) underscores the importance of policies designed to improve access to education, vocational training, and employment opportunities. Effective policy must address both the immediate needs of the unemployed and the structural barriers contributing to persistent economic inequalities. Furthermore, programmes focused on skills development, entrepreneurship, and anti-discrimination measures are essential for improving employment outcomes, as suggested by the South African Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC,2021). Although social support has been identified as a critical factor in mitigating the negative impacts of unemployment, little is known about the specific types and sources of support men seek and receive during unemployment. Understanding the role of social support networks in buffering the psychosocial consequences of unemployment for men is essential for informing targeted interventions and support systems.

## 3.10. Summary

This chapter reviewed literature on inequality, poverty, and unemployment. The chapter laid a foundation for the current study by discussing existing literature on Black male unemployment. Additionally, the chapter discussed Black male unemployment from a global perspective,

differentiating causes of unemployment between those in developed and those in developing countries, like South Africa. Advancements in technology and the closing of industrial shops were found to be some of the causes of unemployment in developing countries. The chapter concludes that to address Black men unemployment, there are programmes needed to focus on skills development and entrepreneurship. The following chapter details the research methodology employed in this study.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 4.1. Introduction

The research methodology chapter, grounded in the constructivist paradigm, outlines the process employed by the researcher to collect and analyse data. This paradigm assumes that reality is socially constructed and subjective, which aligns with the study's qualitative approach. The chapter includes a detailed discussion of the research design, methods of data collection, and data analysis. It also explores ethical considerations, addresses the trustworthiness of the study, and outlines its limitations and delimitations

## 4.2. Research approach

The study adopted a qualitative approach, which involves systematic utilisation of predefined procedures to seek answers to research inquiries, gather evidence, and generate findings with broader applicability (Mack et al., 2005). I employed the generic qualitative approach. This approach is well-suited for the current study, as its aim is to explore the perspectives of unemployed men on how they experience being unemployed and living in poverty, while they are still expected to be the main financial providers for their households (Korstere & Korstere, 2022).

Qualitative research approach is used to investigate participants' experiences, opinions, and beliefs, simultaneously allowing the researcher to obtain more explanations that cannot be achieved when using the quantitative approach (Gani et al., 2020). Furthermore, a qualitative study is conducted in a natural setting to enable the researcher to understand the participants in the context of their real-life experiences. As highlighted by Korstere and Korstere (2022), employing a qualitative research approach facilitates a deeper understanding of human experiences and how individuals ascribe meaning to themselves, others, social situations, and global events. In the current study, I gained insight into the experiences of unemployed men, and how unemployment impacts their social as well as mental wellbeing.

The study was conducted with participants in their township, which is their natural environment. Thus, I used qualitative research approaches to understand how participants interact with their natural environment. For data collection, in-depth interviews were

conducted. Noteworthy, the qualitative research approach was invaluable for studying the lived experiences of Black men from peri-urban, low socioeconomic townships in South Africa as it provides in-depth, context, and a platform for participants' voices to be heard. This method offers a nuanced understanding of how structural inequalities intersect with personal agency and resilience in shaping individual as well as collective experiences of poverty and marginalisation.

## 4.3. Research design

The study employed narrative research design. According to Tomaszewski et al. (2020), narrative research focuses on stories individuals tell and the meanings they attach to a lived experience. Bickman and Rod (1998) assert that narrative design refers to any study that uses or analyses narrative materials. Additionally, the data in a narrative research design can be collected as a life story provided in an interview or a literary work. For the current study, I took field notes in addition to the recorded interviews. These notes assisted me in exploring observations after the interviews had been conducted for richer findings. Narrative research design assisted me to meet the study's aim, which is to understand the lived experiences of Black men from Motsoaledi township.

I utilised interviews and participant observations, which according to Tomaszewski (2020) are methods of data collection used in a narrative research design. Creswell and Porth (2018) argue that narrative studies are employed in the construction of identity. Hence, I applied the narrative design to explore how unemployed Black men in Motsoaledi constructed their identities in the context of unemployment and poverty, while still facing societal expectations of masculinity. The research design supported the researcher in gaining insights to address the research questions.

## 4.4. Population, sample, and sampling

According to Strydom (2005, cited in Vanga & Monyai, 2021), the target population is the totality of people, sampling units, or elements with which a particular research problem was concerned. In addition, a sample is a small representative portion of the target population. The sample size of the current study consisted of 15 men, recruited through an NPO called Soweto Men Manners Forum (SMMF), which operates within the area. The "sampling procedure is the

process by which a researcher carefully selects, through probabilistic and non-probabilistic methods, a number of individual items from a large population of interest for closer study" (Mweshi, 2020:1).

Moreover, Mweshi (2020) asserts the need for a sampling methodology to establish explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria, thereby delineating the parameters governing the selection process from the designated population. The inclusion criteria for the current study were unemployed Black South African men aged 18-60 years residing in Motsoaledi township. This study employed the snowball sampling method. Snowball relied on participants' ability to recommend other eligible participants; an approach particularly effective when direct access was constrained.

The study was conducted in Motsoaledi township, an extension of Diepkloof in the Johannesburg Municipality. Motsoaledi was established in 1993 as an informal settlement with only shacks as shelter for families. Although the municipality has since built houses, the shacks remain the most form of shelter. It is a predominantly Black community occupied by South Africans and foreign nationals, most of whom are in the country illegally. In his study on Motsoaledi Township, Sitei (2005) found that most residents moved to the peri-urban area from the rural areas around the country and neighbouring countries, in search of employment to improve their socioeconomic status. Most residents depend on the informal economy, and those with South African IDs are recipients of social grants, including the SRD.

## 4.5. Research instrument and pre-testing of the research instrument.

The study employed an interview guide as the primary instrument for data collection. As defined by Kvale and Brinkmann (2015), an interview guide consists of a structured set of predetermined questions designed to direct the interview, ensuring that relevant topics are covered while allowing for flexibility in exploring in-depth responses. This approach is particularly useful in qualitative research, with the aim to gather rich, detailed, and contextually meaningful data that can provide insights into the participants' experiences and perspectives. By adhering to a well-constructed interview guide, the researcher is better positioned to collect comprehensive data that aligns with the research objectives (Gani et al., 2020).

To ensure the effectiveness and relevance of the interview guide, a pretest was conducted with one participant who was not included in the actual study sample. This initial testing phase was crucial in verifying that the questions were clear, relevant, and likely to obtain the responses needed to address the study's aim. Moreover, the pretest was conducted in Motsoaledi, the same setting where the primary data collection took place. This enabled me to evaluate the appropriateness of the study environment. This also facilitated the identification of any contextual factors that could influence the interview process, such as local dynamics or environmental conditions.

The pretest and the subsequent interviews lasted between 20 to 30 minutes, depending on the level of engagement and the depth of responses. Given that the interview guide was semi-structured, it allowed flexibility in exploring themes in more detail. This adaptability is a key feature of qualitative research, as it enables the interviewer to probe responses further, thereby capturing nuanced insights that may not have been anticipated earlier. The flexibility is inherent in a semi-structured interview guide. Thus, it facilitates a more in-depth exploration of the participants' experiences, ultimately contributing to a more robust understanding of the research topic. The pre-test conducted provided the researcher with the opportunity to assess if the research questions are clear and easily understood by the participants and all went well. Therefore, there was no need to revise the research questions.

## 4.6. Methods of data collection

The study used in-depth semi-structured interviews to gather rich, detailed insights into the lived experiences, perceptions, and coping strategies of unemployed men. According to Oakley (1998) cited in Jamshed (2014), a qualitative interview is a framework where the practices and standards are recorded, achieved, challenged, and reinforced. Jamshed (2014) further states that to avoid interviews leaning more towards the researcher’s opinion, they need to be structured. In the current study, this method of data collection allowed participants to share their perspectives, feelings, and thoughts on relevant topics such as unemployment, identity, relationships, and coping mechanisms. Interviews helped to explain, better understand, and explore the participants' opinions, behavior, and experiences. Interview questions were open-ended, to enable the collection of in-depth information. Open-ended questions encourage rich narratives and probe deeper into specific themes or issues. The interviews were conducted one-

on-one to allow participants the freedom to express themselves without fear of judgement. Furthermore, each participant was fully engaged in the session as certain group dynamics like the dominant member were avoided.

## 4.7. Methods of data analysis

The collected data was analysed using the narrative data analysis method. According to Riessman (2008), narrative design analysis is a qualitative research method that focuses on understanding and interpreting the stories told by individuals or groups about their experiences. Tomaszewski et al. (2020), citing Liamputtong (2009), outline steps of narrative data analysis. By employing these steps, the researcher first transcribed the collected data, engaged in reading and understanding the transcripts.

Additionally, I noted key events, and the emotions attached to them, as well as initial impressions of participants. I undertook this process to familiarise myself with the data. I then wrote short summaries of the data collected, identifying units of analysis in the participants' stories. This step was undertaken to generate codes. Dalahunt (2017) states that the process of coding reduces data into smaller chunks of meaning in a systematic manner.

After the coding stage, I identified key elements in the stories or data, highlighted parts of the narratives relevant to the research questions and developed themes. I then identified common themes across different participants' narratives. She then coherently defined each theme. Data was then interpreted, synthesised, and reported upon, following guidelines for report writing. Braun and Clarke (2012) assert that themes should be presented in a manner they connect logically and meaningfully, and where possible, build on the previous one. This allows for a coherent story to be told.

## 4.8. Ethical considerations

In most studies, human beings are used as subjects of study or participants. Therefore, they should be protected from harm or exploitation by researchers (Leavy 2017). For the current study, I sought and received ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical) of the University of the Witwatersrand. The ethics clearance certificate number for this study is **SW24/08/03**.

### *4.8.1. Informed consent*

Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits before giving consent to participate in the study. Consent forms outlined their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. The consent forms were written in clear, understandable language and included contact information for the researcher and ethics committee.

### *4.8.2. Confidentiality and anonymity*

Participants' identities and personal information were kept confidential. No names were used in all reports and publications to protect their anonymity. Due to the nature of the sampling procedure, anonymity could not be guaranteed since the participants belong to an NPO in the community. The reason for the study was well established when I was being introduced to the community. Participants were informed prior to data collection that although their identities cannot be hidden from the community members who are part of the NPO, their personal identifying particulars will be kept from any publications. Collected data has been stored securely, with access restricted to me. Digital files will be encrypted, and physical documents will be kept in a locked cabinet.

### *4.8.3. Voluntary participation and Privacy*

I informed the participants prior to data collection that their participation in the study is entirely voluntary, and they had the freedom to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any point without any negative consequencesIn this study, adherence to ethical principles is essential to ensure the protection and wellbeing of all participants. Privacy is a fundamental ethical requirement, particularly when dealing with sensitive or personal information. To ensure privacy during data collection, the interviews were conducted in a private room in an organisation the community. The interviews could not be held in the participants`s homes as they are mostly one roomed shack and other occupants were present during the day, offering little privacy. The organisation facilities are used by the SMMF for their meetings. All data collected has been anonymized and stored securely to prevent unauthorized access and ensure participants' identities remain confidential (Resnik, 2020). Participants were informed about

how their data will be used, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

### 4.8.4 *Psychosocial support services*

In addition to privacy, the provision of psychosocial support is a critical ethical responsibility, especially if the research explores emotionally distressing topics. The Participant information sheet includes details of a counselor who is eassily accessible to the participants that the researsher has made arragenement with to offer free support services to participants who may experience discomfort, emotional distress, or trauma during or after the interviews. This was also highlighted to each participant during the interview. Ethical research must not only minimize harm but also promote the dignity and mental wellbeing of participants (Du Toit & Van Staden, 2021). Ensuring access to psychosocial support aligns with the principle of beneficence and supports ethical standards outlined by research ethics committees and professional codes of conduct (Strydom, 2021; Moodley & Singh, 2023). To further avoid harm, I approached the participants with cultural sensetivity. Adressing them in a manner that is culturally appropriate. Their language was used to enure that they are able to express themsevles fully.

## 4.9. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a measure taken to ensure the study findings are worth considering (Leavy, 2017). The measures followed in the current study are discussed below.

### *4.9.1. Credibility*

Refers to the veracity of findings as assessed by participants and other scholars within the relevant field (Leavy, 2017). To uphold credibility, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews. During the interviews, I probed and sought clarification from participants to ensure the information was understood as they meant it. Furthermore, credibility was increased through consultations with the supervisor to determine the accuracy of the data analysis. Since I used audio recording in the process of interviewing the participant, that assisted a lot in ensuring that the information shared by the participant is captured correctly. To further ensure the study's credibility, I engaged in reflexivity, acknowledging and examining the potential impact of my personal biases.

### *4.9.2. Transferability*

Transferability is defined as the extent to which outcomes from qualitative study could be extrapolated or applied to different contexts or environments (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In the current study, I provided ample data to enable comparisons across diverse contexts or settings. Ensuring transferability involves not only delineating participant behaviors and experiences but also contextualising these aspects to offer comprehensible insights to external observers. Additionally, the I provided a detailed description of the socioeconomic conditions of Motsoaledi to enable comparisons with similar townships.

### *4.9.3. Dependability*

Dependability refers to the stability and consistency of findings over time (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Furman et al. (2010) define dependability as a research process that is logical, traceable, and well-documented. To ensure dependability in the current study, I maintained detailed records of interviews and data analysis procedures.

### *4.9.4. Confirmability*

Confirmability concerns quantifying the extent to which research findings can be corroborated by other researchers, thereby affirming the authenticity of data and interpretations (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). For this purpose, I kept all recordings, including the transcriptions of the collected data, to allow for scrutinisation upon request. I also kept field notes as evidence of the research process' integrity.

### *4.9.5. Reflexivity*

Reflexivity is defined as the active acknowledgement by the researcher that their actions will inevitably affect the context and meaning of the experience under investigation (Royse et al., 2019). For the current study, I was aware of the biases I brings to the research process and ensured it did not influence the research findings, by remaining objective throughout the process. This was achieved through reflexivity.

### *4.9.6. Peer debriefing*

I engaged in the process of peer debriefing through discussing the research with my supervisor, who constantly gave feedback. This process is done to minimise research bias (Furman et al., 2010)

### *4.9.7. Thick descriptions*

Creswell (2016) states that it is crucial for researchers to add thick descriptions as it offers other readers insight into the events described in the report. I accomplished this through the definition and description of relevant concepts to the study, giving a clear definition of the research methodology, by outlining, and discussing findings in detail.

## 4.10. Limitations and delimitations

The scope and limitation of the study is the extent to which it should go against limited resources in the face of unlimited research issues and interest. It is the scope of what issues would/could not be covered by the study, the reasons, and what future researchers should do (Akanle et al., 2020). The limitations of a study are circumstances beyond the researcher's control, even though they are controllable.

The current study is qualitative in nature, with 15 participants residing in Motsoaledi Township. It focuses on the lived experiences of these men in their geographic location; thus, it may not necessarily be applicable to those in different circumstances. I collected data until saturation was reached. However, due to a lack of resources, the study was confined to Motsoaledi township.

Delimitation is the scope or the boundaries of the study. According to Akanle et al. (2020), the scope of a study refers to the parameters under which the study will be focused. This means specifying the domain of the research and clearly stating what the researcher is studying, including the factors within the accepted range of the study. I studied unemployed Black men living in Motsoaledi township.

## 4.11. Summary

The research methodology chapter outlined the process undertaken by the researcher to gather and analyse data. This includes research design, data collection methods, and data analysis.

This chapter also addressed issues of ethical consideration, trustworthiness of the study, as well as the study's limitations and delimitations.

# CHAPTER FIVE

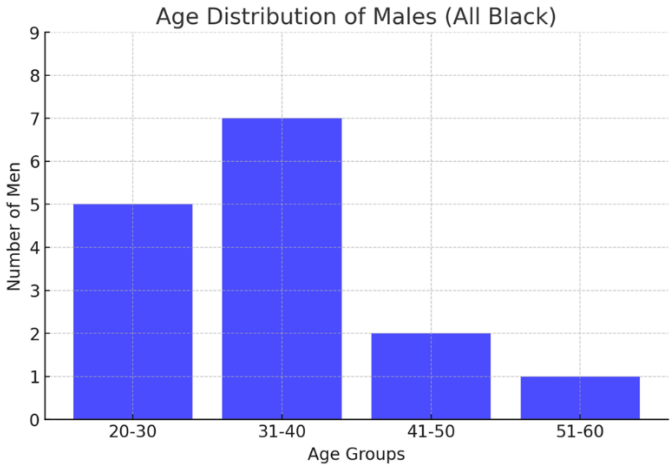
# PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

## 5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the study's findings, offering a detailed analysis of the data collected. The findings are displayed through various graphical representations, such as charts, tables, and figures, to facilitate a clear and concise understanding of the key patterns as well as trends identified during the study. These visual presentations assist in highlighting the main findings in an accessible manner, enabling a more intuitive interpretation of the data.

Following the graphical representations, the findings are organised and discussed under specific themes and subthemes that emerged from the data. These themes categorise and analyse the key issues, experiences, and insights shared by participants, providing a more nuanced and structured understanding of the research topic. Each theme is examined in detail, drawing on both the quantitative data to explore the depth and complexity of the findings. Through this approach, the chapter offers a comprehensive presentation of the study's findings, ensuring that the analysis remains clear, coherent, and aligned with the research objectives.

## 5.2. Demographic information




### *5.2.1. Age distribution*

The study findings illustrate that most unemployed men are youth, which confirms the youth unemployment in South Africa. StatsSA (2024) illustrates that youth unemployment in South

Africa is at 45.5%, which is higher compared to 2014 when it was 36.8%. According to Habiyaremye et al. (2022), one contributing factor to high rates of youth unemployment in South Africa is a persistent vertical skills mismatch. Although efforts have been made to equip youth with skills through learnerships and skills development hubs, there is still a slow uptake of the labour force (StatsSA, 2024).

### *5.2.2. Family composition*

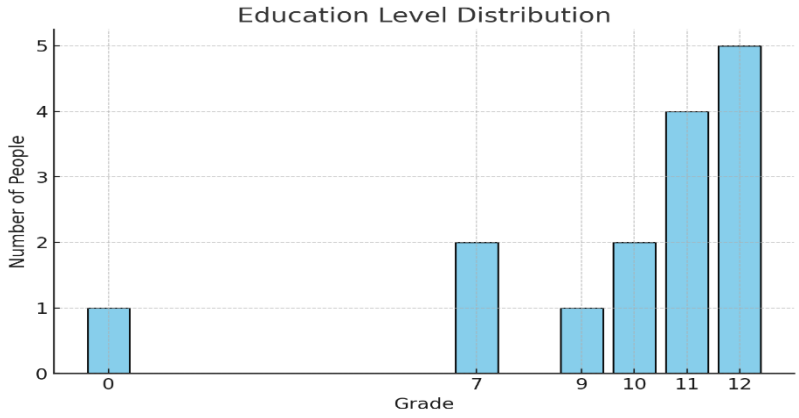
**Table 1**

*Family composition of participants*

| Participant group | Number of participants |
|---|---|
| Married | 3 |
| Unmarried | 12 |
| Total | 15 |

Only three participants had nuclear families of their own, with a wife and children. Two of these participants resided in the same household with their families, while the other one only stays with his wife. The other 12 participants said they were unmarried. However, three of those 12 had intimate partners. This aligns with the findings by Hunter (2013) that unemployed men encounter challenges when trying to start a family.

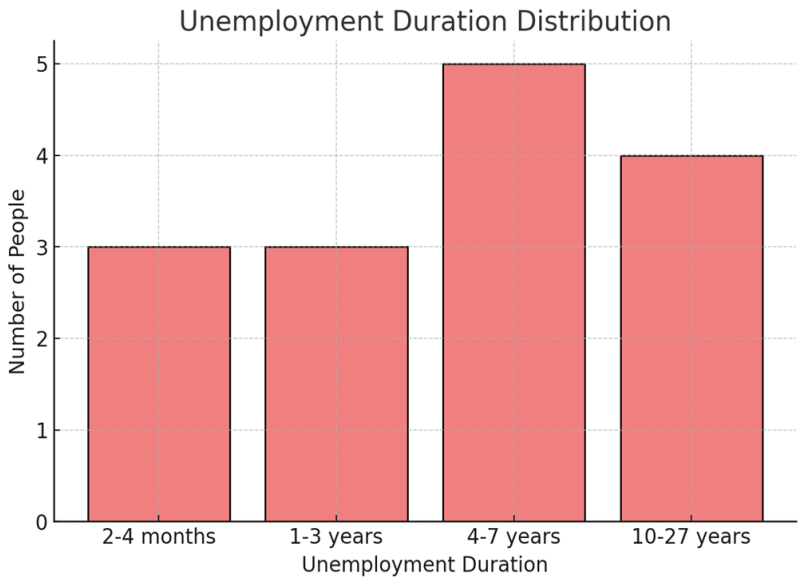
### *5.2.3 Level of Education*



According to StatsSA (2024) and Quarterly Labour Force Survey Report [QLFS] (2022), there are better prospects for employment for graduates than for individuals whose highest educational attainment is a matric certificate. Additionally, the QLFS (2024) reports that limited educational attainment, and socioeconomic disadvantages are the primary factors contributing to high unemployment rates and a large proportion of youth in South Africa who are not engaged in employment, education, or training (NEET).

In the current study, the highest educational qualification among participants was matric. Others mentioned attending skills development programmes, either hosted by the government or paid for by themselves. However, this has not assisted them in acquiring employment. From the participants' educational profile, QLFS, and StasSA findings, one can conclude that work prospects for Black men in townships, and the current opportunities for work are minimal. Using the Education indicator of the Multi-dimensional Poverty Index, participants met the criteria to be considered educationally poor. However, as stated, their level of education was below the one required for employment in the present technological era. Therefore, their education did not guarantee employment. Thus, the researcher concludes that they were negatively impacted by the education dimension of poverty.

### *5.2.4 Duration of unemployment*



According to Nonyana and Njuho (2018), for an individual to be considered in long term unemployment in South Africa, they must have been unemployed for over a year. However, those unemployed for a period less than a year are in short term unemployment. In the current study, the duration of unemployment was from two months to 27 years, with most participants being in long-term unemployment. The study findings show that the youth had shorter periods of unemployment, and their periods became longer as they got older. Based on the findings by Nonyana and Njuho (2018), unemployed people are less likely to be employed if they remain with no work for more than six months thus, the prospects for unemployed Black men in the low socioeconomic township seem even dimmer.

Most of the participants had been unemployed for about 4 to 7 years, with only one, who was the oldest, having been unemployed for the longest period. The most common reason for people losing their jobs is being laid off either due to company downsizing or closing as companies adapted more technology in the running of their businesses. This confirms the findings by Amadeo (2024) that one of the reasons for unemployment in South Africa is the movement from industrialisation to technology. Others reported that they were retrenched due to COVID-19.

## 5.3. Themes and subthemes

| THEME | SUBTHEME |
|---|---|
| i. Family circumstances of unemployed black men living in Motsoaledi Township | Separation from families<br><br>Inability to start own families |
| ii. Financial circumstances of unemployed Black men living in Motsoaledi Township | Quality of life<br>The cost of living<br>SRD not enough<br>Compromises need to be made |
| iii. Coping strategies employed by unemployed Black men living in Motsoaledi Township | The impact on mental health<br>Coping strategies |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| iv. | To ascertain the unemployed men's perspectives of societal views about unemployed men in their community | A supportive community<br>An awareness of corruption |

### 5.3.1 Theme 1. Family circumstances of unemployed black men living in Motsoaledi Township

Men in this study found it challenging to sustain healthy family lives when they were unemployed. Multiple researchers discussed the impact of unemployment on men`s relationships with their spouses (Esche, 2020), Peprah (2024), with children (Morell & Ritcher, 2013), and with extended families (Mosoetsa, 2011). When unemployed Black men are unable to fulfil the social and economic roles assigned to them, conflict tends to arise in their relationships. This theme has both aspects of social and cultural dimensions of poverty. Jo (2018) argues that unemployment makes people lose their voices in society, and even in families. The findings reveal that unemployed men feel that they cannot have a say in family decisions or in the upbringing of their children (Eddy et al., 2013) because they did not have the financial means to give them power in a society.

#### *5.3.1.1Separation from families.*

The findings demonstrate little change in the lives of Black men with no formal training. Morrel and Ritcher (2013) indicate the changes brought on by colonialism. Black men moved from their homes to urban areas to work on mines and only return to their families during the festive season (Morrel & Ritcher, 2013). The same was found with the current study participants, as all of them were from different provinces around South Africa and had moved to Gauteng province to seek better employment opportunities.

Moreover, the current study's findings illustrate that the situation has worsened for men, as none of the participants had the financial means to travel home for the festive season, with the few who did relied on family for support. The study was conducted during the festive season, a time when most people typically prepare to visit their homes of origin to spend time with their families. One of the main challenges brought to participants by unemployment was a lack of certainty, if they would be able to travel home or not. All participants expressed a desire to go home, refresh, and see family and friends from their communities.

However, the participants raised concerns about being unable to travel as they did not have the financial means to do so independently. Two participants emphasised that they were waiting on supportive family members to inform them if they were traveling home, and if they would be able to go with them. Twelve participants highlighted that they were not going home as they lacked financial resources. Only one participant was certain that he was travelling home with someone from his family.

All participants stated that there was pressure to 'bring something' home when they travelled there since they would have been away working in Johannesburg. They stated that family members expected that upon their return they would provide food and clothing for their families as they were away working. They also reported that there was a certain level of resentment among their kin when they had to dish up an extra plate of food for a man who had been away 'working.' Mosoetsa (2011) refers to this tension that builds up in families when they must share limited resources. She states that family bonds become strained as families must "eat from the same pot." In her study, the focus was on families relying on the Older Persons grant. It highlights the strong sense of Ubuntu, that families will still assist each other in difficult times. However, the elements of resentment are still noted.

Findings in this theme confirm that unemployment, at times, separates men from their loved ones as fear of being stigmatised and judged prevents them from traveling home to spend time with loved ones. The findings also emphasise what participants expressed, in that everything in life needs money. The following quotations are an expression of the challenges these men are experiencing with relating to their families:

> "Even at home within the family, your voice doesn't count, people look down on you like something is wrong with you. Anything you say, is looked down on." (Participant 1, personal communication, 19 December 2024).

> I can't say that they treat me differently, because I don't stay too long with them. I just go there and check on them and then I come back and be by myself, if my mother has got something she shares with me so that I can eat. (Participant 3, personal communication, 19 December 2024).

#### *5.3.1.2Inability to start own families*

More studies have been conducted in South Africa on Black men and fatherhood. The recent studies reported that it was hard to have a family of their own as women love money. Some of the participants reported having lost relationships due to unemployment. These findings are aligned with Hunter's (2013) suggestions that chronic poverty has changed the patterns of relationships. Hunter (2013) further notes that relationships now involve provision of monetary gifts to women by men. Two participants emphasized this, stating that:

> The problem is that they [women] keep on asking for things and they know that I am currently unemployed, these are the things that makes us fight and I tell her to delete my number, and I end up changing my number also. (Participant 1, personal communication, 19 December 2024).

> You know it is hard to maintain a relationship with a woman when you are unemployed. Women have expectations. They want things from you and as for you, the little R200 that you get you must spend on yourself. You can't share it because you still have to rent and buy yourself groceries to sustain yourself here. There is nothing left to send to her, and she does not understand that she thinks I am useless, so we separated. Because if you don't beg me, I also won't beg you. (Participant 2, personal communication, 19 December 2024).

In the current study, some participants expressed feelings of resentment towards women with whom they shared children. The women were reported to demand money from the men knowing their employment status. They reported that due to such pressures, they made decisions to temporarily terminate their contact with their children. The phenomenon of absent fathers is common in South Africa. According to the State of South Africa Father report (SOSAF, 2021), fathers with high income often reside with their children compared to those with low income. According to the SOSAF's (2021) report, father absence is defined as fathers, including biological ones who are physically, economically, and psychosocially absent from their children. The men in the current study expressed a belief that their children were going to seek for them, and they would be reunited, without having to deal with the pressure applied to them now.

The frustrations men experience when trying to raise their children while unemployed is echoed in the SOSAF (2021) report. The link between material provision and both physical and emotional presence is important. It has been posited that most men experience an intolerable sense of failure when they are unable to fulfil the role of primary provider. In turn, it may lead to the neglect of other vital aspects of childcare, such as emotional support and caregiving. This issue is particularly pertinent in environments characterised by high levels of unemployment and poverty, where the challenges of securing employment as well as fulfilling the provider's role are exacerbated. The frustration that arises from the inability to meet societal expectations of fatherhood, such as establishing a stable home and financially supporting children, can severely diminish these men's sense of self-worth (SOSAF, 2021).

Even the participants who reported having supportive partners and ex-partners with whom they share children, expressed difficulties in starting families as in the African culture, that also requires money. For a man to marry, he needs to pay a bride price or ilobolo to the bride's family (Hunter, 2013). Furthermore, according to most Black cultures in South Africa, for a man to play an active role in their children`s lives, fathers need to pay what is known as inhlawulo. Inhlawulo traditionally involves payment in the form of cattle, which represented the costs caused to the head of household and to the woman's broader household (SOSAF, 2021)

Home ownership has been identified as one of the key determinants of whether an adult is economically well-off or not. Hunter (2013) highlights the importance of building and owning a home, uku wakha umuzi, as one of the expectations placed on Black men. In the current study, men did not have proper housing to shelter their families as they stayed in one roomed shack that did not offer any form of privacy. This made it difficult to start a family and grow while staying in the same household, as more privacy would be required when children grew olde

### 5.3.2 Theme 2. Financial circumstances of unemployed Black men living in Motsoaledi Township

The study findings show that men find life experiences hard when they are unemployed. This was expressed by the participants when asked how they were experiencing unemployment. Their feedback included words such as hard, challenging, not easy, and difficult. This aligns with findings made by Langa (2020) that men struggle with the masculinity associated with

economic power when they are unemployed, and do not possess this economic power. The language used by participants also demonstrates the practical challenges of unemployment. The words "hard" and "difficult" were used by participants to refer to financial pressures such as struggling to meet daily needs, paying bills, or supporting their dependents.

Similarly, Alhuzal and Segev (2024) conclude that men are expected to take care of their families' needs. Hence, when they are unable to do so, due to unemployment, they experience feelings of inadequacy. In the current study, men reported that being unemployed resulted in economic instability. Resultantly, feelings of frustration were experienced as they felt that they were unable to fulfill their roles as providers.

#### *5.3.2.1Quality of life*

The findings highlight that unemployment had a profound and pervasive impact on the participants' lives, affecting their overall wellbeing and sense of stability. Whitely (2021) also argues that unemployment reduces the quality of life, especially for men. When participants reflected on their lives, they conveyed a sense of loss and dissatisfaction, particularly in comparison to their experiences when they were employed. These findings support Peprah's (2024) argument, stating that employment is not only a source of income but an important aspect of self-worth and identity. The inability to enjoy life as they once did demonstrate the psychological toll unemployment has, stripping away the benefits that come from financial stability and social participation.

A significant aspect of the participants' experiences was that, even when employed, their jobs failed to provide financial security for long-term investments, such as building homes or savings for the future. This indicates that their employment was either low-paying or unstable, limiting their ability to accumulate wealth or plan for financial stability. This further dispute the claims by the cultural theory of unemployment as discussed by Royce (2022), that anyone can escape the holds of poverty if they prepare themselves.

The IGT can also be used to dispute the above claim, as it states that people who grew up in poor backgrounds are likely, even biologically bound to be poor. To assist such individuals to escape poverty, societies need to employ integrated approaches that support their educational, economic, and psychological well-being. Yu (2019) advocates for decent work using multiple

dimensions, including earning a decent salary. This is also the Basic Employment Act's aim and the setting of minimum wage. For participants who have been unemployed for less than six months, it could be concluded that they did not earn enough to save for such periods. This lack of financial security, even during their working years, highlights the structural issues within the labour market, where many workers, despite being employed, are still vulnerable to economic hardship and unable to build a safety net for themselves. Owing to unemployment participants found themselves living "hand to mouth", with little or inability to save for the future. This situation left them in a constant state of uncertainty, where daily survival took precedence over long-term goals or financial aspirations. The inability to secure a stable income prevented them from enjoying the peace that comes with financial security, an essential component of psychological wellbeing (Peprah, 2024). Without this security, they experience stress, anxiety, and lack of control over their future. This finding alludes to the transgenerational transmission of poverty and indicates that participants. Particularly, older participants were at risk of continuing to leave behind a legacy of poverty for their children.

According to the standard of living indicator in MPI, the quality of housing and access to clean running water and sanitation are some of the indicators of poverty (Espinoza-Delgado & Klasen, 2018). In the current study, participants lived in houses made of zinc that do not offer comfort from harsh weather conditions. Furthermore, the area had sewage water running through the streets, placing the health of community members at risk. The area had clean water pipes for communal use, but they did not have water in their own yards, which are small and shared by many families. Therefore, the participants lived in conditions that, according to the MPI, meet the criteria for them to be considered poor in terms of standard of living. The following quote expresses the hardship unemployed Black men experience:

> It's hard when you can't even have a piece job, where you can get small amount of money. It's really hard when you go a whole month without getting a day or two of work, then you can end up doing wrong things and when there is no income you can end up doing very bad things because food is essential. (Participant 1, personal communication, 19 December 2024)

#### *5.3.2.2 The cost of living is high*

The study findings highlight the severe challenges faced by participants in accessing basic needs such as food. Many participants often wake up without knowing where their next meal would come from. This situation reflects the profound level of poverty and insecurity they were experiencing. In addition, this uncertainty contributes to heightened stress and desperation, which may exacerbate mental health struggles, creating a constant state of anxiety and helplessness for the participants. This is in line with the economic dimension of poverty.

Moreover, some community members had turned to illegal means of survival in response to their dire circumstances. One of the practices observed by the researcher and reported by a participant, was the use of illegal electrical connections. This practice is common in South African townships. It involves residents tapping into electricity supplies without proper authorisation, often meeting essential energy needs.

In the standard of living dimension, how people prepare their food is an indicator of poverty or wellbeing (Alkire et al., 2015). Some participants, in the current study, resorted to illegal means to prepare their food, indicating their inability to afford these means. Although access to illegally connected electricity may offer a temporary solution, it poses significant risks of electrical fires, injury, and death. The prevalence of such practices demonstrates the desperation faced by residents and the lengths they went to meet their basic needs, even if it meant breaking the law and putting themselves at risk.

Furthermore, one participant revealed that, to support his family, he resorted to selling alcohol without the required license. This reflects another example of how unemployment and poverty lead individuals into illegal activities as a survival strategy. The sale of alcohol without a permit is not only a violation of the law but also contributes to potential social and legal consequences. It highlights the complex; often dangerous choices individuals make when faced with extreme financial strain. The lack of access to basic needs forces people to resort to illegal and unsafe practices. Although providing short-term relief, they carry long-term risks both for personal safety and legal ramifications.

#### 5.3.2.3 Social Relief of Distress is not enough

South Africa has a commendable social protection system targeted at addressing inequalities, reducing poverty and narrowing financial disparities within the general population. The system coupled with a notable reduction in the availability of wage-based employment opportunities have led to an increase in reliance on social cash transfers for the sustenance of many South African households. This shift can be attributed to the escalating income inequality across various socioeconomic strata, which has left a substantial portion of the population with limited access to stable, well-paying jobs. In turn, these economic pressures have heightened the dependency on state-sponsored financial assistance programmes, which now play a pivotal role in supporting household income. Such transfers are increasingly vital in safeguarding the basic livelihoods of vulnerable groups, as they provide a crucial buffer against the economic hardships exacerbated by insufficient job opportunities. This phenomenon highlights the need for comprehensive policy responses to address the root causes of income inequality and the structural challenges faced by the South African labour market. (Winchester et al., 2021).

In 2020, the government, through the President introduced the SRD grant valued at R350 payable to individuals of working age who are unemployed or engaged in informal employment and were not recipients of social protection benefits (Patel et al., 2023). According to Patel et al. (2023), the introduction of this grant saw an additional 10 million beneficiaries of social assistance. Most males also became beneficiaries of SRD, whereas previously men benefitted mostly from disability and Older Persons grant.

The study found that only seven of the participants were recipients of the SRD grant. Those who did not receive the grant, it was due to various reasons, including not meeting the means test due to funds deposited into their accounts, UIF, and missing documents. Those who received the SRD reported that, although it contributed towards them getting basics like toiletries and food, it was not enough to make a significant contribution towards a sustainable livelihood. One participant expressed this, stating:

> It is very little and it does nothing. It really does nothing. I live on that R350 because I don’t have a choice, there is no work and it is the way of life these days, but it does nothing this R350. (Participant 10, personal communication, 20 December 2024)

#### 5.3.2.4 Compromises need to be made

The study findings reveal the difficult decisions participants were forced to make due to the financial constraints they face. Participants reported that both job hunting and securing food required financial resources, creating a situation where they needed to often choose between meeting one need over another. This compromise highlights the profound economic hardships unemployed individuals experience, where the basics of survival, such as food and searching for employment, are in direct competition for limited resources.

Shah and Sturzenegger (2024) found that the cost of transport in South Africa is very high and discourages people from seeking employment. Shah and Sturzenegger (2024) further state that the reason for the high cost of transport can be attributed to spatial dispersion inherited from apartheid. Due to these laws, Black people were forced to stay far from their workplaces. Resultantly, they endure long hours of traveling and high costs of transport. Furthermore, high paying jobs are reserved for tertiary educated individuals, resulting in most Black people earning a minimal wage.

Therefore, it is difficult to justify taking a low paying job that is also far from the residential area. Despite these challenges, some participants noted that due to their dire circumstances, they would walk long distances, sometimes several kilometers, in search of job opportunities. This effort was driven by the desire to save money which could then be redirected toward buying food. However, this strategy comes at a physical cost, as participants often found the long walks physically exhausting, especially when they were already weakened by poor nutrition or the strain of ongoing financial stress.

Findings further reveal the broader systemic challenges encountered by unemployed men in poverty, where the struggle for basic survival becomes a series of difficult trade-offs. The need for food and to secure employment were fundamental to improving their lives. However, the lack of resources forced them to make compromises, which could further erode their physical and mental wellbeing. The physical strain of walking long distances for job hunt further emphasises the exhausting and taxing nature of the job search process without the resources to efficiently do so. This potentially limited their chances of securing stable employment and breaking the cycle of poverty.

Entrepreneurship is often promoted as a viable solution to unemployment. However, for many, capital and sustaining a business is prohibitive. This is especially true for individuals with limited access to credit, savings, or financial support networks. As a result, the idea of starting a small business, a potential means of generating income, and improving their situation, becomes a distant dream rather than an achievable goal. Two study participants highlighted that they had businesses they managed on the side while employed, better known as 'side hustle'. Participants argued that they had to give up their side hustle when they lost their jobs as they no longer had money for restocking. This testament proves that difficulties in accessing capital limits participants' ability to start their own businesses and restricts their options for economic mobility.

The above finding underscores the broader issue of economic inequality, where individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds face additional barriers to accessing the resources and opportunities needed to improve their financial situation. Furthermore, the finding disputes the hypothesis by Blanchflower and Meyer (1994, cited in Musa & Simasinghe, 2013) that an increase in unemployment will lead to a rise in start-up entrepreneurial activity as the opportunity costs have decreased. Musa and Simasinghe (2013) found that the increase in unemployment has not led to a rise in start-ups, primarily because the unemployed often lack the necessary skills and talents required for entrepreneurship. However, in the current study, the reason for non-correlation is that the unemployed lack the financial capital to do so (As indicated in the quotation below). Although South Africa has several policies for funding small businesses within the country, especially among the youth, participants did not see this as viable option due to corruption in government:

> "Ey, all these things in life need money. Even to start a business like these spaza shops you see here take money, so there is a lot I would have loved to have but all of it needs money." (Participant 10, personal communication, 20 December 2024

A similar finding on lack of resources inhibiting economic progress was in relation to education. Findings suggest that without financial resources, participants are left with fewer opportunities to pursue other avenues that could enhance their financial independence. For instance, they might be unable to invest in skills development, education, or training that could open doors for better job opportunities or increase their ability to generate income through self-

employment. Two participants highlighted that they had to drop out of school due to lack of funds. One participant emphasised that he had received a bursary from National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NFSAS). However, he failed one module, although he had been saving some pocket money from the scheme with his mother, he discovered that she had spent it when he asked for it to pay for his module.

The second participant to drop out of school highlighted that he had been sponsored by his family in the first year. However, the family could not afford to fund him and his sister who joined university in his second year. Hence, they chose to financially support the sister, stating that men are most likely to drop out of school. Langa (2020) found the same belief in Alexandra, that boys are more likely to drop out of school than girls. For this participant, the decision caused a permanent rift in his family, and he is no longer in contact with them.

The final finding for the compromises Black men make due to unemployment is that of child maintenance. It was found that these compromises lead to absent fathers. They use the little money they have to meet their basic needs, and are left with none for supporting their children

### 5.3.3 Theme 3. Coping strategies employed by unemployed Black men living in Motsoaledi Township

Poverty and unemployment also affect the psychological well-being of Black men. Findings from Artazcoz et al. (2002) illustrate that unemployment has more negative impact on men`s mental health than for women. The current study's findings suggest that this is associated with cultural expectations on Black men and their historical roles within families.

#### *5.3.3.1 Impact on mental health*

The current study's findings reveal that one of the most significant emotional burdens for unemployed Black men is their sense of responsibility, particularly toward their children. This aligns with the findings by Eddy et al. (2013). Moreover, Breslin and Mustard (2003) state that unemployment can have negative physical and mental effects on individuals. The current study found that those who felt more responsible for providing for their children, either married or single, reported a greater impact on their mental health. This sense of duty to care for their family can heighten feelings of stress, inadequacy, and failure. Artazcoz et al. (2002) explains

this, stating that the effects of economic and non-economic losses from unemployment may not be directly linked to mental health. However, their effects are mediated by individual social contexts, which are mostly determined by family roles and social class.

The men in the current study, although all Black, came from different ethnic backgrounds. Nevertheless, the findings reveal that the desire to provide for one's children is deeply ingrained in all Black cultures and can serve as key aspects of a man's identity and self-worth. When this responsibility is compromised due to unemployment, it acts as a direct threat to one's role as a provider and protector. This psychological strain leads to frustration, guilt, and sadness, contributing to higher rates of mental health issues among those who carry this burden. In contrast, those who reported feeling less responsibility for others displayed less impact on their mental health. This group experience different forms of emotional strain, such as loneliness or feelings of purposelessness, but the weight of financial responsibility may be less pronounced. This suggests that familial ties and the pressure to provide are major contributing factors to the severity of mental health challenges for unemployed men. The following quotation exemplifies how unemployed Black men feel isolated and incomplete:

> I feel like I am not a complete man, I feel like I am incomplete, at times I think that I am depressed and also lonely when I do not have money. I also feel like I am unbale to relate to my peers and the people that I used to hang out with (Participant 14, personal communication, 20 December 2024).

#### *5.3.3.2 Coping strategies*

The current study's findings shed light on the coping strategies that were adopted by participants to cope with their lived experiences of unemployment. These coping strategies varied depending on the aspects of their unemployment. From financial, social to mental/emotional, the participants found different, and at times creative ways to manage the impacts of unemployment.

Odia (2023, p.5) states that "faith can serve as an important tool to assist people going through hardships". Below is an assertion by one of the participants:

"You know when life is throwing hardships on you, stay faithful and pray even more" (Participant 8, personal communication, 19 December2024).

Most participants reported using faith as a buffer to manage the mental strains associated with male unemployment. These participants reported having either brief or prolonged moments of anxiety and feeling stressed over their unemployment. Findings demonstrate that participants' faith provided them with a sense of hope and purpose, crucial for managing feelings of despair. Their belief system acted as an emotional anchor, helping them to endure periods of hardship. Faith often served as a source of strength, enabling them to resist temptation to engage in harmful behaviors such as self-harm or despair. This coping strategy reflects the important role that spirituality can play in mental health. It provides individuals with a framework for understanding their situation, helping to reduce feelings of helplessness. The belief that their circumstances may improve or that they are supported by a higher power can significantly alleviate the emotional burden of unemployment.

Another prominent coping mechanism was leaning on family members, both financially and emotionally. Families provided the essential support for daily living expenses and a source of emotional stability. This suggests that the family unit plays a central role in helping men cope with the social and financial pressures of unemployment. The findings are in line with those made by Mayer et al. (2022), who report that social support serves as an important factor in the promotion of mental health during unemployment. Emotional support from loved ones can reduce feelings of isolation, provide encouragement, and offer a sense of security, even without financial assistance. The shared responsibility within a family can also lessen the burden on any individual. Although families offered substantial support to unemployed men, they also reported experiencing inner conflict over having to rely on their sisters or mothers, as they had expected that they would be the ones to offer support. Two of the participants reported experiencing feelings of guilt relying on other men in their families. However, this was because the other men were struggling with their financial responsibilities.

> **"**My family serves as a support structure either for financial or emotional support because they are the basis of my existence" (Participant 10, personal communication, 20 December 2024).

A more problematic coping strategy reported by some participants (as indicated by the quotation below), was the use of alcohol to manage the emotional pain of unemployment. Alcohol can serve as a temporary escape, numbing feelings of stress, frustration, and anxiety.

For some, this may have offered a brief reprieve from the daily pressures of their situation. However, alcohol use as a coping strategy introduces significant challenges. Alcohol itself has a cost, which means that relying on it takes away from the already limited financial resources. Participants acknowledged that spending money on alcohol could compromise their ability to meet other essential needs, such as food or transportation.

> "There is no other way but to drink, although it is only a temporary solution and even though alcohol needs money to be purchased, I drink to forget my stress." (Participant 11, personal communication, 20 December 2024).

Beyond the more common coping strategies mentioned above, some participants employed creative approaches to manage their unemployment, including betting, which has become a widespread phenomenon among unemployed men in South Africa. In two cases, participants reframed unemployment as an opportunity for personal growth. These participants reported that they had applied to and been accepted into institutions for higher learning with plans to begin their studies the following year.

### 5.3.4 Theme 4. Men `s perspective about societal views about unemployed men

The findings from Motsoaledi township present a nuanced picture. There is a dual experience with the majority benefiting from social cohesion and community support. Moustakas (2023) defines social cohesion as collective attributes and behaviours with social relations, sense of belonging and working towards a common goal in society. On the other hand, almost a quarter of participants expressed concerns about corruption among community leaders and criticism from other community members. This division in the findings reflects the complexity of social dynamics that exist in communities. The subthemes are as follows:

#### *5.3.4.1A supportive community*

The findings on how Black unemployed men experience or perceive treatment from their community members reveal a positive outlook, Most of the participants expressed a strong sense of belonging and safety within the community. They described this security not only in physical terms but also through the emotional support they received from others. One participant, for instance, emphasized that Motsoaledi stands out as one of the safest townships in Gauteng, reinforcing the perception of the area as a secure and supportive environment.The

findings also reveal that there is a culture of solidarity and mutual support among community members. One participant gave a possible explanation for the non-judgmental attitude found to be prevalent towards unemployed Black men, stating that unemployment is common in the area and has become a norm.

The above findings are comparable to those of UNICEF (2022), which found that social networks are part of the items socially perceived as necessary, and most people reported as having strong social networks at each item indicator. These indicators include having someone to take you to hospital when sick, and to support you. Further findings on community support highlight the importance of Ubuntu as a shield for Black men experiencing unemployment. Another participant stated that he never slept on an empty stomach because people within the community were always willing to assist. If he did not know such people, being unemployed was going to be more challenging.

Another participant asserted that community members did not treat him as an unemployed man but relate to him based on their good relationship. Metz and Gaie (2010) attribute such relationships within communities to the African concept of Botho. According to Metz and Gaie (2010), among Africans, it is believed that 'I am because you are' or umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu. This is also known as social networks, where community or family members become resources for survival.

The current study's findings also demonstrate that despite not having any facilities like libraries and employment hubs, the community built its own social networks and mentorship programmes through mentoring of unemployed men by those who are employed. Participants highlighted being informed by other community members about employment opportunities and had received guidance on how best to secure employment. Metz and Gaie (2010) explain this concept of community mentorship by highlighting that, typical African discussions around community have two central themes. The first theme states that one has the moral obligation to be concerned about others, not just through emotional sympathy but by helpful behaviour towards others.

This shows that communities, even without formal structures, can serve as supportive environments that facilitate the economic development of unemployed men. In addition to being informed about work opportunities, most of the participants also highlighted that they

relied on their community for piece jobs, like fixing a broken light or moving a shack. This social network or resource capital in the community is important in an undeveloped community like Motsoaledi that is splurged with economic and social hardships. One of the participants (quoted below), highlighted the costs of printing CVs and accessing internet. Thus, it is of great assistance for unemployed men to rely on word of mouth to learn about employment opportunities:

> Here in Motsoaledi, men always put men in a position where they believe that they will find a job. If you find a person wearing uniform and he sees that you are not wearing uniform or work suits, then they will say come market at my workplace. Motsoaledi is a place where they don't choose, if they see that you have been sitting for a while, they approach. Ya. There was this guy, who approached me saying he is a supervisor from Checkers. He said if ever they need people, I am going to talk to you, and you bring your CV and stuff. So, you see it is a place where hope is built, yes, it is a place where hope is built. (Participant 7, personal communication, 19 December 2024).

This relationship within the community of mentorship and assistance is facilitated by an environment that discourages the stigmatisation of unemployed men. Men reported that they feel accepted and valued as contributing members of their society. Another participant referred to times when he was invited to family celebrations by his neighbours, and how it gave him a sense of belonging.

#### *5.3.4.2 Awareness of the state of corruption in government*

Some participants extended their reflections on community support beyond the immediate neighbourhood, linking it to the broader South African context. These individuals expressed a deep sense of disillusionment with government structures, noting a lack of trust not only in national leadership but also in local community leaders, who were perceived to have mirrored the corruption seen at higher levels of governance. They either require a bribe to place people in employment or give first preference to their associates when work opportunities are available. This finding aligns with the criticism of the BBBEE that it only empowers people closely associated with individuals who have decision-making powers (Chipkin & Meny-Gibert, 2021; Ngwenya, 2023; Mkokeli, 2024).

Furthermore, the current study's findings support those of Rose (2018, cited in Voster & Nwosu, 2024), who states that corruption or perceived corruption eradicates the publics' trust in government and contributes to public apathy. Then some of the participants stated that they had lost faith in the government, as they thought it was corrupt, and without financial incentives, you would not be able to secure a job. This confirms the findings from Rose (2018, cited in Voster & Nwosu, 2024), that corruption undermines trust in public officials.

Participants expressed that they had lost confidence in the government and that, in their experience, government officials were self-serving and did not assist the masses. The findings further show a concern for the cycle of corruption that exists. Participants expressed concern and frustration in being required to have money to secure employment, when they needed employment to secure an income. This belief in a corrupt government seems to be generally accepted as the norm and that it can never change, as shown by these quotes:

> My sister, the government is corrupt and so is the society. Even if they were to bring things meant to help all of us, they would only be shared with those that are close to leaders. So, I have no faith in the system whatsoever. (Participant 12, personal communication, 20 December 2024).

> Yeah, you know, when you talk about the community thing some, they promise jobs. Actually, I don't believe in politics neh, reason being that sometimes when you want a job you have to know the counsellor or have a connection with people who are in charge of hiring and all those things. So sometimes they will write a list of how many people need to get employed, let's say there are posts for 20 people, but they know exactly that there are 5 people they have chosen already for some of those posts, so I don't believe that. (Participant 8, personal communication, 19 December 2024).

Overall, the findings discussed in this theme show that community cohesion is important in helping unemployed men cope with the mental challenges associated with unemployment. Men who found the community as supportive reported having fewer depressive moments, feeling less stigmatised, and experiencing less anxiety and stress. Therefore, community support is an integral part of helping unemployed men cope with their challenges.

## 5.4 Summary

This chapter presented the study's findings, offering a detailed analysis of the collected data. The findings were displayed through various graphical representations, such as charts, tables, and figures, to facilitate a clear and concise understanding of the findings together with literature supporting or against them were also highlighted in this chapter. These visual aids helped in highlighting the main findings in an accessible manner, enabling a more intuitive interpretation of the data.

Following the graphical representations, the findings were further Organised and discussed under specific subthemes that emerged from the data. These subthemes serve to categorise and analyse the key issues, experiences, and insights shared by participants, providing a more nuanced and structured understanding of the topic studied. Each subtheme is examined in detail, drawing on the qualitative data to explore the depth and complexity of the findings. Through this approach, the chapter offers a comprehensive presentation of the study's findings, ensuring that the analysis remains clear, coherent, and aligned with the research objectives.

# CHAPTER SIX

# MAIN FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter describes how the study met its objectives. The chapter then outlines the main findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future studies.

## 6.1. Identify the family circumstances of unemployed black men living in Motsoaledi township

The study revealed that the family circumstances of unemployed Black men in Motsoaledi township are shaped by intergenerational poverty, overcrowded living conditions, and reliance on informal support networks. Many participants reported residing in multigenerational households, often sharing small, poorly resourced homes with extended family members. These households were typically headed by elderly relatives or single mothers, with limited or no stable income.

Participants expressed a sense of emotional obligation and pressure to contribute financially despite their unemployed status. In several cases, men depended on the social grants received by older family members (such as pensions or child support grants), leading to tensions and feelings of inadequacy. The absence of stable employment often impacted participants' roles within the family, challenging traditional expectations of men as providers and protectors.

Additionally, participants highlighted the emotional strain of living in such conditions, including feelings of shame, helplessness, and frustration. While some found comfort in the solidarity and support of family members, others felt burdened by the lack of autonomy and persistent financial dependency. The findings also underscored how family support structures, although resilient, are increasingly stretched, with limited capacity to buffer the long-term impact of unemployment. Chapter 1 also outlines the country's historical background, stating how the legislature was used to set the path unemployed Black men find themselves in.

In addition, section 1.2 reviews previous studies that show that most Black unemployed men become alienated from their families when they are unable to fulfil the financial pressures placed on them. In Chapter 4, the findings demonstrate that most unemployed Black men in the peri-urban township where the study focused, did not live with their families. Most men

did not have long term intimate relationships and in some instances, have strained relationships with their family members due to being unemployment.

## 6.2. To understand the financial circumstances of unemployed Black men living in Motsoaledi Township

This research objective is reflected in the unemployment graph which details the employment history of the participants. All participants were employed at some point. However, the duration and nature of their previous employment varied significantly among. The length of time they had spent on paid work was influenced by factors such as age, career trajectory, and the type of employment they had engaged in. For three participants, their work experience was limited to only a few months, while others had been employed for nearly two decades.

The researcher observed that participants with longer work experience often define their employment history primarily in terms of permanent, full-time positions, excluding periods of casual or temporary work. This distinction was particularly pronounced among older participants, who viewed permanent employment as an indicator of stable and meaningful work. In contrast, younger participants, for whom casual or temporary employment had been more common, considered even short-term or informal work as valid employment experience. As a result, younger participants often report short-term unemployment, as they often counted their casual work as a form of continuous employment.

The reported periods of unemployment varied considerably among the participants, reflecting the diverse range of experiences. For example, one participant reported a relatively brief period of unemployment, stating that it had only been four months since being terminated from an insurance company. Conversely, the oldest participant reported an extensive period of unemployment, claiming to have been out of employment for 27 years. Thus, highlighting the individual's prolonged period of unemployment and the broader socioeconomic challenges that have persisted over time in South Africa. This variation in duration of unemployment underscores the participants' different life trajectories, shaped by their personal histories, age, and the evolving economic conditions within the country.

### 6.3. To understand the coping strategies employed by Black unemployed men to cope with their experiences.

This objective was met in Chapter 4. Hope and faith were identified as a key coping mechanism by all men in the study. Despite their challenging circumstances, participants expressed a belief that their current situation could improve over time, and that opportunities for a better future would arise. This sense of hope served as a psychological buffer, helping them to endure their present difficulties and maintain resilience. Mbeve (2025) suggests that understanding the participants `s strengths and ability to bounce back from challenging situations is an important aspect of providing help.

Additionally, family support emerged as a crucial source of strength for unemployed Black men in Motsoaledi township. Seven participants reported that they relied on the emotional and practical support of family members during times of adversity. This support often came from partners, who demonstrated understanding and empathy, or from other close relatives such as parents, siblings, or cousins. The presence of a supportive family network played a vital role in sustaining their mental wellbeing and providing a sense of stability during ongoing unemployment. This reliance on family underscores the importance of social ties in mitigating the psychological toll of unemployment, particularly in communities where economic opportunities are scarce (Mayer et al., 2023).

Furthermore, family connections in the current study often acted as a safety net, offering emotional support and, at times, material assistance, which helped men navigate the socioeconomic challenges they encounter. Out of all participants a few reported a lack of support from their families and were expected to stand on their own, while some reported receiving support from certain family members. However, other members exerted pressure on them to perform the societal roles expected of men despite their unemployment status. This pressure to still perform societal roles is also a key finding of Mayer et al. (2023), who writes about the dual role that families can play, one being that of being a supportive cushion for unemployed Black men but also can serve as a source of pressure for these men to play set gender roles.

## 6.4. To ascertain the unemployed men's perspectives of societal views about unemployed men in their community

Chapter 4 assisted in achieving this objective. Although some participants reported experiencing judgement and social exclusion due to their unemployment status, most participants indicated that unemployment is widespread in their community, it has fostered a culture of mutual support among residents as defined by Moustakas (2023) who find that having a common challenge can help build social cohesion. In such a context, individuals often support each other, providing a network of solidarity that mitigates the stigma typically associated with unemployment. The community members in the current study often share information regarding potential employment opportunities, informing others of job openings within their own workplaces or elsewhere, confirming the findings of Leininger et al., (2021), that social cohesion is key to sustainable development and can assist individuals navigating the challenges of crises.

The communal approach helps to alleviate the psychological burden of unemployment, as it reinforces a sense of shared experience and collective responsibility. The practice of exchanging job-related information creates a form of social capital, where individuals benefit from the collective knowledge and support of their peers. It also enhances their chances of finding employment. Thus, despite the challenges posed by high unemployment rates, the community's network of mutual aid plays a pivotal role in fostering resilience and offering hope during economic adversities. These findings in the present study contradict the suggestions of Nyathi et al, (2024) who state that in time of crisis, community members tend to fight over limited resources.

## 6.5. To identify if participants have any formal or informal source of financial support

This objective was achieved in Chapter 4. Findings revealed that most participants reported being recipients of the SRD grant, often referred to as R350. The grant was initially introduced by President Ramaphosa as a means to mitigate the economic hardships caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent national lockdown. Although the grant was beneficial in providing some relief, participants viewed it as insufficient to meet their personal needs and support their roles as financial providers. Patel et al., (2023) in their study of the impact of

social grants in recipients' lives also found that although grants play a significant role in mitigating effects of poverty, it is simply not enough to meet all the needs of individuals. All the receiving participants found that it could only fund their basic essentials, such as food and toiletries. This was particularly the case for those who did not reside with their children or other family members. They were unable to distribute the funds to support others.

The participants who did not receive the SRD grant reported various reasons for this. These included receiving the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) payments from previous employment (3 participants), technical glitches in the application system (2 participants), and issues such as the loss of required documents (2 participants), and only one participant reported never applying for it. For those without access to the SRD, no alternative formal financial support was available for them. Instead, these participants reported relying on informal sources of income, including casual labour within the community.

Additionally, some participants indicated that they turned to family members for financial or material support, highlighting the continued importance of familial ties. Despite these efforts, it was clear that the financial coping strategies were precarious and insufficient to address their long-term needs. The reliance on casual work and family support underscores the vulnerability of unemployed individuals in a context where formal financial assistance is limited and unstable.

# Main Findings, conclusions, and recommendations

## 6.6. Theme 1: Family circumstances of unemployed Black men

### *6.6.1 Separation from families*

Unemployed black men often experience a change in their relationships with their families as they are unable to fulfil cultural and societal roles associated with men. This causes tension and resentment within families. Furthermore, unemployed black men living away from their homesteads are separated from their families searching for work and are unable to visit home as often as they wish due to financial constraints.

### *6.6.2 Inability to start own families*

#### 6.6.2.1 Main findings

Unemployed Black men are often unable to start their own families due to lack of income, which is compounded by their inability to own homes or meet the financial needs required to sustain a family.

#### 6.6.2.2 Conclusion

Financial instability prevents men from fulfilling their roles as providers and partners, significantly impacting family formation and stability.

## 6.7. Theme 2: The financial circumstances of unemployed Black men living in Motsoaledi Township

### *6.7.1 Quality of Life*

#### 6.7.1.1 **Key findings**

Unemployed Black men encounter significant challenges and strain in their lived experiences. Their standard of living is highly compromised, and they experience a reduced quality of life. They are often unable to engage in socio-economic activities appropriate for their developmental stage.

#### 6.7.1.2 Conclusion

Employment is a critical factor for ensuring a sustainable livelihood. It restricts men's ability to enjoy a quality lifestyle and participate in societal functions.

#### 6.7.1.3 Recommendation

Efforts should be made to create sustainable employment opportunities that offer fair wages, to enable these individuals to fully participate in socioeconomic activities.

### *6.7.2 Cost of Living*

#### 6.7.2.1 Key finding

Participants face severe challenges in accessing basic needs, particularly food. Many often experience uncertainty regarding where their next meal will come from, highlighting the extreme poverty and insecurity they endure.

#### 6.7.2.2 Conclusion

Unemployed Black men from low socio-economic townships struggle to meet their basic needs, including nutritional food.

#### 6.7.2.3 Recommendation

Targeted interventions should address food security and mental health for individuals facing poverty, to alleviate stress and create a sense of stability.

### *6.7.3 SRD Grant is not enough*

#### 6.7.3.1 Main findings

The SRD grant provides some assistance but is insufficient to address the broader financial challenges of unemployed Black men. The funds are often quickly exhausted, leaving unemployed Black men to struggle during the month.

#### 6.7.3.2 Conclusion

The SRD grant is inadequate for individuals with no other source of income and does not offer a sustainable solution to the financial hardships they face, contributing to ongoing economic instability.

#### 6.7.3.3 Recommendation

Policymakers should consider increasing the SRD grant or complementing it with other long-term social support measures to provide financial security for unemployed individuals.

#### 6.7.3.4 Recommendation

A comprehensive support system is necessary to enable unemployed Black men to meet their basic needs and contribute to the development and well-being of their children. Government should prioritise the creation of sustainable employment opportunities that provide wages above the one required by the government.

## 6.8 Theme 3: the coping strategies employed by unemployed Black men living in Motsoaledi Township

### *6.8.1 Impact on mental health*

#### 6.8.1.1 Main findings

Unemployment causes significant mental distress for Black men, particularly due to cultural expectations that discourage emotional expression, such as the belief that "indoda ai khali" (men do not cry). Resultantly, men develop unhealthy coping mechanisms that harm their well-being.

#### 6.8.1.2 Conclusion

Unemployment exacerbates mental health issues, and cultural norms surrounding masculinity which hinder emotional expression and seeking of help.

#### 6.8.1.3 Recommendation

Men should be encouraged to join or create support groups aimed at breaking the stereotypes about men and mental well-being. Additionally, mental health resources in low socio-economic communities should be made more accessible.

### *6.8.2 Coping strategies*

Further studies and policies should explore healthier coping mechanisms and offer support programs designed to help men manage the emotional and psychological strain of unemployment.

## 6.9 Theme 4: Societal views about unemployed Black men living in Motsoaledi Township.

### *6.9.1 A supportive community*

#### 6.9.1.1 Main findings:

Despite living in low socio-economic conditions, communities maintain a strong sense of Ubuntu (community solidarity) and often provide support to unemployed Black men. This social network serves as a buffer against some of the hardships brought by unemployment.

#### 6.9.1.2 Conclusion

Communities play a crucial role in mitigating the effects of poverty and unemployment. The sense of shared responsibility and mutual support is essential for resilience in marginalised communities.

#### 6.9.1.3 Recommendation

Communities should be further supported by developing mechanisms to sustain themselves and meet the needs of their members. This could involve community-based development programs that enhance local economic activities and social cohesion.

### *6.9.2 Awareness of corruption*

#### 6.9.2.1 Main findings

Participants have lost faith in government structures, perceiving corruption as a significant barrier to employment opportunities. Many believe that only individuals with connections are hired, which discourages them from even applying for jobs.

#### 6.9.2.2 Conclusion

Corruption in both public and private sectors contributes significantly to unemployment by denying deserving candidates the opportunities and demotivating others from seeking employment.

#### 6.9.2.3 Recommendation

The government must take action to hold corrupt public officials accountable. Restoring public confidence in governance and employment processes will encourage participation in the labor market and reduce unemployment.

## 6.10 RECOMMENDATION FOR RESEARCH

**Future research can focus on the following:**

- A focused study of the interaction between unemployed men and their partners to understand how unemployed men can be assisted in starting families.
- A study focused on re-aligning government policies looking at bridging the gap of unemployment amongst young men
- A study looking at the socio-economic barriers and facilitating factors to close unemployment within youth of South Africa

## 6.11 SUMMARY

The concluding chapter of the research gave an outline of how the objectives of the research were met, detailing each objective and also stating how the researcher went about meeting each. The chapter then summarized the main findings, conclusions and recommendations for intervention and policy to address the challenges of unemployed Black men in low socioeconomic townships.

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Soweto Men Manners Forum NPC
Address: 2056 Zone 9, Meadowlands, Zone 9, 1852
Cell: (+27) 66 248 2787 | (+27) 67 386 3527 | (+27) 83 7326556 | (+27) 73 694 3314
NPO Number: 305-727

SOWETO MEN MANNERS FORUM
NPO NUMBER: 305 727
ADDRESS: 2056 ZONE 9
MEADOWNLANDS 1852

23 August 2024

To whom it may concern

I am writing to formally grant permission for Phathutshedzo Mukona to conduct research at the Soweto Men Manner Forum. We are an organization that is based in Meadowlands and operational in most Townships, including your area of interest, Motsoaledi. We appreciate your interest in exploring the Lived experiences of Black Unemployed Men from a Low socioeconomic township and are pleased to support your efforts.

Regards

Gilbert Nonyana

Contact: 066 248 2787 / 076 382 1976

Email: gilbertnonyana011@gmail.com

The Board: Emmanuel Tseleli (Chairperson) | Mpho Phalwane (Secretary) | Dikano Semenya (Treasurer)
Kagiso Hlungwani (Deputy Chairperson) | Pete Mohale (Deputy Secretary) | Stephen Makgobola (Additional Member)
Gilbert Nonyana (Founding Member) | Percy Makoe (Founding Member) | George Hlongwane (Founding Member)

## Appendix B: Information participation sheet

Title of project: The lived experiences of unemployed black men from a low socio-economic township.

Information Participation Sheet.

Good day,

My name is Phathutshedzo Mukona. I am a Master Arts student in social development at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Dr. Motlalepula Nathane-Taulela. I am conducting a research study titled the lived experiences of unemployed black men from a low socio-economic township.

I am inviting you to take part in an interview. If you decide to take part, your participation in this research study will last about one hour. The interview/research activity will take place at Motsoaledi, at a place and time convenient for you. With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview. This data will be stored in a locked cabinet and also on a hard drive for 5 years and deleted thereafter. Only the researcher will have access to the data. During the research activity, I will need to ask for some personal information about you, including age and employment status.

The interview will be confidential and anonymous. When I share the results of the research study, I will not include your name or anything else that could identify you. With your permission, other researchers may use the data collected from this research study, but your name and any personal information will not be used or passed on.

If you decide to take part in the research study, it should be because you want to volunteer. You do not have to take part. You can stop being in the study at any time. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. You will not get any direct benefits if you choose to join the research study. You will not lose any services,

benefits, or rights you would normally have if you decided not to join.

Taking part in the research study will not cost you anything. You will not be paid for being in this research study. Some of the questions asked may make you feel sad or upset. If this happens, I will stop the interview and continue another time. If you need some support or counselling services following the interview, these are available free of charge at Ethembeni Community Outreach Initiative at Funda Centre. The name of the counsellor is Mr. Hlatshwayo and the contact details are 0826790648.

This research study will be written up as a research report. The report will be available on the university library website. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,
Phathutshedzo Mukona
Researcher:
0510338n@students.wits.ac.za
0767504367

Supervisor:
Dr. Motlalepula Nathane-Taulela
Motlalepula.Nathane-Taulela@wits.ac.za

# Appendix C: Consent form

Consent Form

Title of project: The lived experiences of unemployed black men from a low socio-economic township.
Name of researcher: Phathutshedzo Mukona

I, ……., agree to participate in this research project.
I agree to the following: (Please circle the relevant options below)
The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.
**YES NO**
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study YES NO
I agree that the interview may be audio-recorded.
**YES NO**
I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used by the researcher in their research report.
**YES NO**
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name or other identifying data will not be used by the researcher in their research report.
**YES NO**
I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on
**YES NO**

…… (signature)
…… (name of participant)
…… (date)

…… (signature)
…… (name of researcher/person seeking consent)
…… (date)

# Appendix D: Interview guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Research title: The Lived Experiences of Unemployed men from Low Socio-economic Township.

**Section A – Biographical Information**

Age

Education level

Number of dependent children

Years of unemployment

Have you ever been employed?

**Section B**

1. Please tell me more about you and the challenges you have experienced in being unemployed in terms of the quality of your life?
2. What are some of the pressures you experience relating to being unemployed?
3. How do you feel about being unemployed and being seen as the provider for your family?
4. How has being unemployed impacted your relationship with your family members?
5. Would you say the treatment from your family has changed since you have been unemployed? If yes, how?
6. What are some of the views and perceptions in your community about unemployed men?
7. What are your sources of emotional support?
8. What are your sources of financial support?
9. What strategies have you engaged in your efforts to manage being unemployed and the expectations placed on you as a black man?

10. What measures do you think can be undertaken to improve the situation you find yourself in?

# Appendix E: Ethics clearance

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

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

| | |
|---|---|
| **CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE** | **PROTOCOL NUMBER: SW24/08/03** |
| **PROJECT TITLE** | The lived experiences of unemployed Black men from a Low Socio-Economic Peri-Urban Township |
| **INVESTIGATOR** | **MUKONA P** |
| **SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR** | SOCIAL WORK |
| **DATE CONSIDERED** | 16 OCTOBER 2024 |
| **DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE** | APPROVED UNCONDITIONALLY |
| **RISK LEVEL** | LOW RISK |
| **EXPIRY DATE** | 22 OCTOBER 2027 |

**ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE** 22 OCTOBER 2024 **CHAIRPERSON**
(DR L PETERSEN)

cc: Supervisor: DR M NATHANE-TAULELA

---

**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 are 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** 23, 10, 2024

**PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES**

# Appendix F: Certificate of competence



CERTIFICATE OF COMPETENCE IN RESEARCH ETHICS

Name: Phathutshedzo Mukona

Student/Staff No: 0510338N

Date of Certification: 16 August 2023- 15 August 2026 (This certificate is valid for a period of three years)

TRAINED BY:

PROF. JASPER KNIGHT

(RESEARCH ETHICS

SIGNATURE

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND JOHANNESBURG

ISSUED BY:

DR ROBIN DRENNAN

(DIRECTOR: RESEARCH OFFICE)

SIGNATURE (PP)

This certificate is confirmation of successful completion of a training course in Research Ethics for Non-Medical human research, based upon achieving a minimum level of competence in different assessment tasks.

# Appendix G: Editor's confirmation of editing

ONCE'S RESEARCH SOLUTIONS
COPY EDITING & COACHING

*The tenacity and innovation in our clients' research work keeps us humble and strongly dedicated to excellence as well as professionalism!*

28/02/2025

To Whom it May Concern

**RE: Confirmation of editing**

This letter serves to confirm that I have edited a master's dissertation authored by **Phathutshedzo Mukona**.

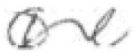
The **title of the dissertation** is: *The lived experiences of unemployed Black men from a low socioeconomic peri-urban township.* Submitted in fulfilment of the degree of Master of Social Development. Faculty of Humanities, Department of Social Work, the University of the Witwatersrand.

In this dissertation, I conducted language editing and provided necessary research advice.

**Note:** The author made further inputs after my editing.

If there are any questions, do not hesitate to contact me.

Kindest Regards
**Oncemore Mbeve**



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