

Multiple Losses and Gains: Tshivenda-Speaking Widows' Accounts in the Context of the Death of a Husband

Makondelele Radzilani-Makatu

University of Venda, Thohoyandou, Limpopo Province, South Africa, 0950

KEYWORDS Experiences. Construction. Grief. Life. Pain. Partnership

ABSTRACT This paper examined the widows' accounts of the multiple losses and gains in the context of the death of a husband. Both, purposive and snowball sampling were used to identify and select the 24 widows who participated in six focus group discussions. Thematic analysis of the data yielded several accounts in relation to the death of a husband. Besides the loss of a husband as a physical being, widows lost the husband's roles and meanings, purpose of life, companionship, attachment and emotional support, sexual gratification, status and position in the society. For some of the participants, the loss of a husband added to their existing responsibilities and to others, it was associated with transitional gain from dependence to the independence and freedom that they missed when the husband was still alive. The paper concluded that death of a husband is not always negative but depends on the perspective widows perceive it in.