

# THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE EARLY LOSS OF A MOTHER ON THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF DAUGHTERS

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The aims of the study were to give a voice to adult daughters who had been maternally bereaved between the age of birth and eleven years old and to explore how the loss had impacted on their lives. Twenty-six participants aged between 25 and 77 (mean age was 32) were interviewed: Nineteen from the North of Ireland and 7 from the Republic of Ireland. The recruitment of participants was carried out in two phases: initially three were recruited through University of Ulster e-mailing network and snowballing for a small Pilot Study. Approximately nine months later, a further twenty-three interviewees were recruited through requests for participants that were disseminated through newspapers and radio interviews. The semi-structured interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed in line with the procedures of Grounded Theory. Verification of the findings was achieved through written feedback and focus group. The core concept identified, 'Perpetual Loss and Pervasive Grief', encapsulated the profound and deeply felt repercussions of the early loss of a mother. Daughters' experiences were influenced by family relationships and the circumstances within which they were reared. Loss and grief permeated their lives and impacted on many aspects of their psychological health and well-being as they grappled with life events and transitions. A variety of coping mechanisms helped daughters to deal with the loss as their lives unfolded. Given that, until the present, early childhood loss has received little attention in Ireland, the insights gained could help to inform and enlighten those with a personal history of early loss, families, communities, educationalists and employers and the medical and therapeutic professions who offer help and support to those bereaved early in life. Ethical considerations are paramount to research of this nature both initially in planning the study. Throughout its duration, vigilance is critical for the maintenance of ethical standards.

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