

**NEGOTIATING SEXUALITY: CHALLENGES FACING
YOUNG AFRICAN SCHOOLGIRLS IN THE
ERA OF HIV AND AIDS**

By

PINKY NTOMBIZONKE ZWANE

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Supervisor: Doctor Bronwynne Anderson, UKZN

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation “ *Negotiating sexuality: Challenges facing young African schoolgirls in the era of HIV and AIDS*” is my own work , that is has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of a complete references.

This declaration was signed by:

Date: -----

Pinky Ntombizonke Zwane

Student Number: 209539556

As a candidate supervisor I agree to the submission of this dissertation.

Signature of supervisor:

Date: -----

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my late husband Nkosinathi Emmanuel Zwane, my two sons Mfundo and Andile and my granddaughter Unathi. I know my husband would have been proud of my hard work, although he could not be with me to appreciate my achievements his efforts are appreciated. Andile, you have been my strength, your kindness and tolerance when I was too tired to care for you. My deepest gratitude goes to my family for understanding when I miss most family gatherings. May God richly bless you.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the meanings that young African schoolgirls aged 16 turning 17 from a high school in Umlazi, Durban give to their sexual identities. Using qualitative research methods in the form of semi-structured open-ended interviews and focus group discussions, their understandings of sex, sexuality and sexual risk were explored. The aim was to investigate why these young girls expose themselves to risk by engaging in unprotected sex, in spite of sex education and many interventions and campaigns related to Human Immune-Deficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) infections' awareness which these girls receive in school. Poverty, unemployment and crime plague this community and it is within this context that these girls make sense of their sexual identities. The main findings of this study are that these young girls resist being placed in a subordinate position and the patriarchal system which the society and boys attempt to impose. Furthermore, most of these girls come from broken families where grandparents have a responsibility to sustain the family. In the process, girls expose themselves to sexual risk as they become vulnerable to peer pressure. Girls' response to their challenges with regards to sexual identity is to act like boys, have multiple partners, and dump the boys who demand sexual favours. In response, this study aims to enlighten the girls regarding the dangers inherent in their behaviour and to assist them with safer ways of assuming 'girl power'. Girl power implies that girls are empowered with skills to be self confidence, be confident with themselves by protecting themselves from sexual infections and to take informed decisions as they negotiate their sexualities.

The findings reveal that girls reject the patriarchy that subordinates them and are now taking a position of girl power. I conclude that, in assuming their power over boys, these young girls want to behave like boys and have multiple partners which put them at risk.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This dissertation reports on a qualitative study of the meanings young African schoolgirls in a high school in Durban give to their sexual identities. I am an educator at this school and for the purpose of the study the pseudonym Izimbali used refers to the school from which my sample was drawn to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. The dissertation examines the challenges facing young African schoolgirls as they negotiate their sexuality in the era of HIV and AIDS. The sample of this study comprises six African schoolgirls in grades 10 and 11 aged between 16 and 17 from Umlazi, a township in Durban. The study explores what these girls regard as sexual risk.

The high prevalence of HIV and AIDS is linked to issues of heterosexuality, especially amongst young people. AIDS is a global pandemic with Africa reported to have the highest number of HIV infections (Bhana and Epstein, 2007). Despite numerous interventions by the media, government and non-government organisations (NGO's), HIV and AIDS remains a huge challenge, to young girls in particular, in Sub-Saharan Africa (Bruce, 2007). Globally, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) in 2010 reported that seven countries showed a significant decline of 25% or more in HIV prevalence by 2008 among young pregnant women attending antenatal clinics. However, this report declared that in Sub-Saharan Africa HIV and AIDS is estimated at 68%. The prevalence of HIV infections amongst young women between the ages of 15 and 24 is eight times more likely to be positive than men and boys of the same age group in Sub-Saharan Africa. This statistic is significantly higher than that of South Africa. This implies that the strides that have been made in South Africa have made difference when compared to Sub-Saharan Africa.

In South Africa, AIDS is responsible for an increased mortality rate (Department of Education, 2001) including infants and elders who indirectly succumb to the HIV infections. Sexuality amongst learners in schools has increased pressure on and responsibilities of the South African government and teachers in schools to create awareness and teach sex education assisted by Life Orientation, a learning area in the official school syllabi (Department of Education, 2001). However, this is not effective as learners still engage in

unprotected sex. This is evident in the high incidence of teenage pregnancy both in schools and in communities (Department of Education, 2001). Jewkes, Morrell and Christofides (2009) reported that in South Africa, it is estimated that in 2002 and 2006, 66,000 and 86,000 teenage schoolgirls reported pregnancy as the main reason for interruption of their schooling. Although, research reveals that the rate of pregnancy is now stable, in my opinion this statistic is still high. It shows that a large number of young women still have unprotected sex and are still vulnerable, not only to giving birth to unwanted babies but also to sexually transmitted infections.

1.2 Focus and the rationale of the study

This study focuses on a former African high school in Umlazi, South Africa, and what these young African schoolgirls regard as risky sexual behaviour. Moreover, this study explores cultural influences which fuel HIV and AIDS disease amongst young African women. According to Levine, Llyod, Green and Grown, (2008) the deprivation and discriminatory cultural norms have resulted in many poor black African girls being forced to marry at a very young age and be vulnerable to sexual violence and physical exploitation. Furthermore, Levine *et al.* (2008) assert that the community has shied away from protecting rights and meeting the needs of young African girls, and providing opportunities for them, in part because these needs touch on some of the most complex and emotionally fraught socio-cultural areas. However, emerging studies that draw attention to the agency of African girls who, within constraining contexts, assert their sexualities, show the diverse ways in which they are able to negotiate their contexts (Jewkes and Morell, 2011; Mudaly, 2012).

The rationale for conducting this study is that I am motivated to seek an in-depth understanding about explanations that these young African girls, from a black township in particular, give for their sexual behaviours, attitudes and practices. I also want to understand why these young girls expose themselves to risk by engaging in unprotected sex and subscribe to patriarchal practices that put them at risk. This risky sexual behaviour occurs in spite of so many interventions (Mudaly, 2012) which they receive through campaigns related to HIV and AIDS infections' awareness and sex education including Life Orientation, a subject taught in South African schools. Moreover, I want to find out how gender power contributes to African schoolgirls' vulnerability to sexual risk as they negotiate their sexualities. This study will provide previously silenced schoolgirls' perspectives and 'voices'

around their sexualities. It is important to understand the meanings, perceptions and practices these young women subscribe to that are often detrimental to their well-being.

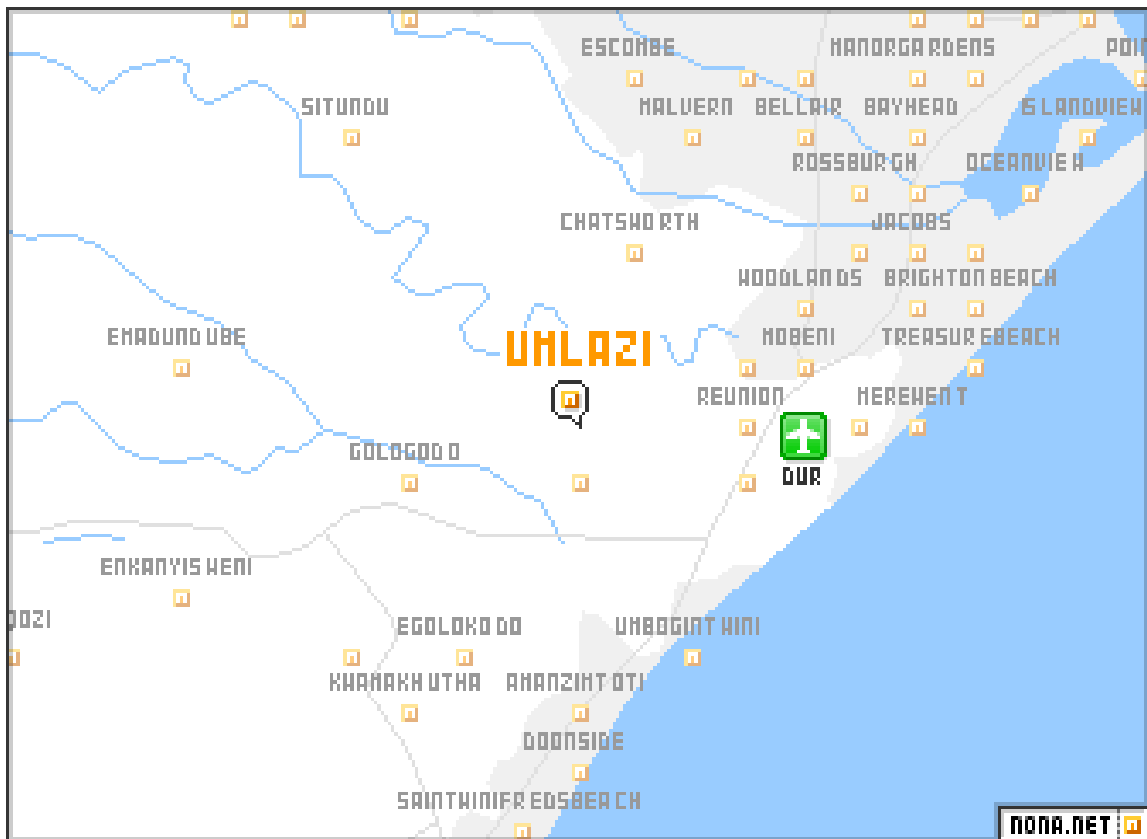
The following are the research questions that I intend to explore:

- What do these young African schoolgirls regard as risky sexual behaviour?
- Why do these young African schoolgirls engage in risky sex?
- How do these African school girls construct their sexualities?

1.3 Research site and population

This study was conducted in a high school in Umlazi a mixed class black township in the south Durban basin of KwaZulu-Natal. Durban is an urban area made up of many informal settlements, suburbs, and townships which were divided according to different races by the apartheid regime. Umlazi is still a predominantly black African township. The participants are predominantly from both working class and unemployed backgrounds. Umlazi is one of the largest townships in South Africa with a population of approximately 750 000 being recorded in 2008 (Statistics South Africa, 2007). This township is about 20 kilometers south of the city of Durban in KwaZulu-Natal province. It has a high rate of unemployment due to the shutdown of many factories in the surrounding areas like carpet, cotton and clothing factories. The semi-skilled population of Umlazi has since developed spazas (tuck shops) many of which are not flourishing since they have become targets for theft. Alcohol and drug use is rife amongst the youth of this area. As a result, there is a high rate of crime amongst the youth to sustain their alcohol and drug addiction.

Figure 1.1The Map of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, Umlazi (South Africa)



Source: Mayrhofer (Cartographer) (2012)

1.4 Background on school context

Izimbali high school was established in 1976 as a secondary co-educational school offering Grade 8-10. In 1990 it was converted into a high school offering all grades. It enrolls black African learners from around Umlazi township and the surrounding townships like Lamontville and KwaMashu. The school and community are patriarchal with high levels of gender inequality. The gender regime of the school is one that was largely male-centred with only male educators on the management team. However, over the years this state of affairs has changed as two women staff members are now included in the management of the school. As a teacher and a former learner in this school, as well as being former resident of Umlazi I also provide data obtained from the school's office by the administrator. According to the financial records, 75% of parents are unable to pay school fees of R200 per annum, indicating that this is poverty-stricken community. There is a large number of learners without school uniforms and also a large number of hungry learners. Because of the poverty in this area I started a feeding scheme once a week at school. Some of my colleagues observed a change in

attendance patterns where there was almost 100% of school attendance by learners on the Wednesdays, the day I had chosen to feed them. The extent of poverty in this area is exacerbated by the use of alcohol, drugs and substance abuse. The problem of alcohol usage has since escalated and affects young men and women as young as 12 years of age. Society and school do not exist in isolation from each other, what happens in the community impacts on the school life of the learners. According to school records, it is reported that there are learners who come to school under the influence of alcohol and drugs. As a result, the school has invited people from Alcohol Anonymous, the police service, and the departments of social development and health to create awareness and provide assistance, where possible, to the learners.

I provide a short description of the participants, using pseudonyms to protect anonymity, in order to provide a glimpse into their backgrounds.

1.5 Biographies of participants:

1. **Penny** is 16 years old. She is in grade 11 and resides with grandparents and her cousins. She states that there are 11 members including extended family members living in the four roomed home. They depend on her grandmother's social grant to sustain the family. Penny was quiet during interviews. However, she stated that she was an orphan and had one boyfriend and her grandparents did not know because they could punish her if they found out she was dating.
2. **Luenda** is 16 years old and is in Grade 11. She was not comfortable to talk about her family. However, she stated that they were eight including their extended family. They reside in a four roomed house sharing bedrooms with uncles and male cousins. They all survive on her child support government grant as her parents are unemployed.
3. **Nokukhanya** is 16 years old. She is in Grade 11 and resides with her aunt whom she addressed as mother (her mom's sister in law). Her mother passed away when she was very young. She cannot remember her and was taken in by her uncle. She states that they are many at her home - 20, including other relatives - in a four roomed house and

an outbuilding she calls '*umjondolo*'. They survive on her uncle's salary and her cousin who has a casual job on certain days. Residing with many people at home has made her very vocal. She is not shy to share information that could be regarded as personal. She shared a story about her family dinner time that it is like the survival of the fittest as the first ones to collect their meals at the tables are the ones who are able to choose the best meat. From the plates of those who are absent during dinner. She stated that food is not reserved for those who are absent during dinner. They do not have breakfast and come to school on an empty stomach. This situation is caused by the fact that parents cannot afford bread and porridge is reserved for younger siblings who are in primary school.

4. **Noziqui** is 16 years old. She is in Grade 10 and resides with four people in the four roomed house: grandmother, aunt, uncle and sister. Her parents passed away when she was very young. They are sustained by her grandmother's social grant and her orphan social grant.

5. **Bonani** is 16 years old. She is in Grade 10 and resides with her aunt, grandmother and sister and others. Altogether, there are six of them living in the informal settlement in three roomed house and the family is supported by the grandmother's grant, her social grant and her sister's child grant. She discusses all life issues with her older sister who has a child. This sister has problems with the father of her child and advises her not to engage in sexual activities with boys to protect herself from the hurt and suffering that she endured.

6. **Popi** is 17 years old. She is in Grade 11. She resides with her aunt and they are five in the four roomed house, including other extended family members. She does not know her father but her mother left them to be with another man. She often comes home but does not support them. They are sustained by her aunt who was married to her uncle who passed away and her social grant. The aunt is unemployed but she sells second hand clothes which forces her to be away from home for weeks. As a result, they are usually on their own in the house.

1.6 Structure of dissertation

Chapter 1 has outlined the rationale and focus of the study, provided the context of the research and presented the research questions.

In chapter 2, I present a literature review, including both international and local research. I pay particular attention to African literature on gender and sexuality amongst young people. I also illustrate the various statistics around the HIV and AIDS pandemic globally and in Sub-Saharan Africa. The ways in which race, class, gender, culture and sexuality intersect is an important feature of this chapter. I also discuss the literature around young people, sexual risk and forms of gender violence. I show how gender power and male domination result in the subordination of female sexualities. In the theoretical framework I pick up on gender power and power subversion theories that inform this study.

In chapter 3, I outline the research design and methodology used in this study. To explore the sexual identities of a group of young girls, it was necessary to engage qualitative research methods. Qualitative research provided the opportunity for these girls to articulate their perceptions, understandings and experiences around sexuality and their exposure to sexual risk. This chapter provides a thick description of the context which attests to the circumstances of these young schoolgirls from a black African township. I explain the sampling strategy; I describe data collection tools where I argue for the use of individual interviews and a focus group discussion. I explain the inductive analysis of data and patterns of themes that emerged from both interviews. I also explain in detail the ethical considerations, validity, trustworthiness/reliability and limitations of this study.

In chapter 4, I provide inductive analysis of data that commenced immediately after verifications of transcripts by the participants. I also present transcribed data and interrogate it through reading and re-reading the data in preparation for analysis and discussion.

In chapter 5, I conclude with the main findings of this study, discussion and recommendations that can be implemented to address the findings.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines both international and local literature on sexualities. I focus, particularly on African and South African scholars on gender and sexuality amongst young schoolgirls who inform this study. I argue that African schoolgirls are faced with numerous challenges as they negotiate their sexualities in this era of HIV and AIDS. For the purpose of this study, I am motivated to seek an in-depth understanding about the reasons or explanations that these young African girls, from a black township in particular, give for exposing themselves to risk by engaging in unprotected sex despite so much knowledge that they have about taking sexual risks. In attempting to explore the views and meanings that this group of girls attach to their sexual identities, the study refutes the notion of a homogeneous African sexuality and seeks to illustrate the diverse sexualities that exist amongst this sample of young women.

2.1.1 Sexuality: A working definition

Gender, sexualities and inequalities are interrelated concepts that promote double standards in an African culture and are usually played out in heterosexual relationships (Bhana, 2010). ‘Sexuality’ is an equally complex and contested term: ambiguous, constituted in social, moral, cultural and legal contexts, whilst potentially experienced as intrinsically personal’ (Boyce Lee, Jenkins, Mohamed, Overs, Paiva, Reid, Tan, and Aggleton, 2007:4). According to Selikow, (2004) sexuality is not easy to define as it has many facets like art, medicine, violence, pleasure and love. It also includes the number of sexual partners that a person chooses to engage with and whether he or she prefers safe sex or not although it is not limited to this. On the other hand, Selikow (2004) elaborates on the definition of sexuality that it is interlinked to gender. It occurs in transsexual and heterosexual relationships. In all these different definitions I conclude that sexuality can be defined, in part, as a social construct or sexual orientation in any community across different races that results in unsafe sex particularly for women and girls. In South African townships, the ways in which sexuality is negotiated is determined by race, gender and culture (Bhana, 2010).

2.1.2 Theoretical Framework

2.1.2.1 Gender and power

This study is informed by gender power perspectives. The use of gender power theories based on African femininity is appropriate for this study as it explores the gender power relations that plague African women and girls (Connell, 2000). The theory of gender power provides a deeper understanding of the subordinate positions that young African schoolgirls occupy, in particular those that expose them to sexual risk. It assisted me to gain insight into the challenges that these young schoolgirls face and provides explanations for their engaging in risky sexual behaviours. This gender power theory also assisted me in exploring how male power is not immutable and static but can be subverted as girls resist power since power is fluid and can change (Foucault, 1987).

The construction of femininity that exists within African cultures justifies the subordination of and discrimination against women and girls (Levine *et al.*, 2008). African women and girls are forced to conform to sexual behaviours that allow male domination and restrict their own sexual agency (Connell, 2000). The assumption that culture is not dynamic, irrespective of changing times, as in this era of HIV and AIDS, poses a challenge to many young women as they negotiate their sexuality (Wadesango *et al.*, 2011). ‘As hegemony is given power as a norm, forms of femininity that either in whole or in part emphasise compliance with this are expressed as cultural ideals of feminist, and are socially rewarded’ (Jewkes and Morrell, 2010:5). It is very important to acknowledge that issues of femininity do not exist in isolation from masculinity. Hence, this study is also informed by the impact of masculinity on women’s and girls’ sexuality.

The study conducted by Agyei, Biritwum and Hill (2000) in Ghana reveal that gender norms also create social pressure on men and boys to take risks and prove their manhood by engaging in sex with multiple partners. Furthermore, Foucault (1987) highlighted that it is impossible for power relations to exist without points of subordinate positions with different heterosexual partners. I want to understand how gender power, norms and ideas of African culture are in contradiction to, or rather in conflict with, femininity ideas which empower women and girls and how these girls negotiate their sexual identities.

2.2 Literature review

The literature will first discuss African girlhood and sexualities and outline the extent of sexual risk amongst young males and females. Secondly, it will outline HIV and AIDS statistics globally and in Sub-Saharan Africa and then conclude with that of South Africa.

Thirdly, scholarship will focus on the interconnectedness of race, class, gender and sexuality within heterosexual relationships. Fourth, it will discuss constructions of sexuality and culture. Then it will highlight the impact of poverty on girls and sexual risk. Thereafter the focus will be on cultural myths and how these myths permit male violence and domination of women. Lastly it will discuss gender violence, the lack of power to negotiate safe sex in heterosexual relationships and sex education.

2.2.1 African Girlhood and Sexualities

In most African countries girls are faced with different challenges as they negotiate their sexuality and as they try to identify themselves as girl-children and sexual beings (Khau, 2009). According to Khau (2009), in Lesotho girls are socialised at an early age to elongate their inner labia, preparing them to please their male partners when they get married. In the Zulu tradition, girls have to perform Zulu cultural practices and dance topless wearing only beaded jewellery to please the tourists (Naidu, 2009). In Naidu's (2009) study, she revealed that these girls who perform for tourists are forced to do so by circumstances such as heading their households (Naidu, 2009). Furthermore, this study reveals that the Zulu girls feel uncomfortable when tourists gaze at their 'tits' whilst dancing and prefer that male dancers should dance close to tourists (ibid. 2009). However, these girls are powerless to object to this behaviour by tourists as they need money (Naidu, 2009). Some of the girls in this study revealed that they attend reed dancing celebrations. The study by Stuart (2009) asserts that research within the realities of girlhood in the era of HIV and AIDS which put women and girls at risk seem incomplete. Stuart (2009) highlights the rejection and stigmatisation faced by women in the community when they have to care for a HIV- positive husband. Furthermore, this study by Stuart (2009) also reveals that sometimes girls start their schooling already vulnerable to relationships with unequal powers and susceptible to HIV and AIDS related infections. This vulnerability is caused by girls' poverty as they can become orphaned at an early age. However, African girlhood's vulnerability is not confined or limited to one homogeneous group, it happens to everyone across geographical boundaries and when it occurs to parents it is then re-enacted to young girls (ibid. 2009). This view is evident in the study conducted by Ntombela and Mashiya (2009) where narratives by girls from different backgrounds (rural settlement and township), were exposed to the same vulnerability. They have a responsibility to run some errands and do chores at home exposing them to dangers of sexual abusers (ibid. 2009). Furthermore, boys exercised misogynistic masculinity and physically abuse girls when they refuse their advances (Ntombela and Mashiya, 2009). The

complexities and vulnerabilities that prevail within girlhood contribute to the high rate of teenage pregnancy and high statistics of HIV and AIDS (Stuart, 2009).

2.2.2 HIV and AIDS Statistics

Globally, UNAIDS (2010) reported that seven countries showed a significant decline of 25% or more in HIV prevalence by 2008 among young pregnant women attending antenatal clinics. However, this report declared that in Sub-Saharan Africa HIV and AIDS is estimated at 68% and the prevalence of HIV infections amongst young women between the ages of 15-24 years old is eight times more likely to be positive than men and boys of the same age group. This statistic is significantly higher than that of South Africa.

Statistics South Africa (2010) reported that between 2001 and 2010, the total number of persons living with HIV in South Africa increased from an estimated 4, 10 million in 2001 to 5, 24 million by 2010. This report elaborated further that, in 2010, within the percentage of the total population of 10, 5%, 24% of 15 year olds population and above were living with HIV. The study conducted by Shisana, Rehle, Simbayi, Zuma, Jooste, Van Wyk *et al.* (2009) reported that by 2008 the prevalence for HIV was estimated at 10, 9% and one fifth of young South African women in their reproductive ages was HIV positive. The crisis is that the highest percentage of new infections occurs amongst 10-24 year olds as reported in the Department of Education manual (2001). Bhana and Pattman (2009) elaborated that 10, 2% of South Africans aged 15-24 are infected with HIV and AIDS. Most infections were in women. Youth sexualities and identities are not static, but are gradually and continuously changing. They are culturally and contextually different and yet reproduce sexual-risks and infections. However, some strides have been made as the media reports that the South African government's counselling and testing campaign HIV Counselling and Testing (HCT) launched in 2010 has successfully increased the uptake of HIV testing and treatment. According to Statistics South Africa (2010) approximately 1, 6 million people aged 15 and older and approximately 183 000 children were in need of Anti Retrovirals (ARV). Other recent statistics revealed a significant decline in the rate of mortality because of the increase in the number of people who do HIV testing and those who are on ARV programmes (Statistics South Africa, 2010).

According to UNAIDS report (2010) there was a global decline of 19% in HIV- and AIDS-related-deaths between 2004 and 2009; because of the increase in the number of infected people who are taking treatment. However, according to the report by the South African Department of Education (2007) cited in Grant and Hallman (2008), 30% of young women between the ages of 15 and 18 years that were not enrolled in schools and not matriculated, identified pregnancy as their primary reason for dropping out from school. Jewkes, Morrell and Christofides (2009) further reported that, in South Africa, it is estimated that between 2002 and 2006, 66,000 and 86,000 teenage schoolgirls reported pregnancy as the main reason for interruption of their schooling. Although research on teenage pregnancy reveals that the rate of teenagers who are pregnant is now stable, in my opinion this statistic is still too high because the rate is not decreasing and there are still new HIV infections. It also reveals that a large number of young women still have unprotected sex and are still vulnerable not only to giving birth to unwanted babies but also to infections, in African black communities in particular (Jewkes *et al.*, 2009).

2.2.3 Race, class, gender and sexuality

Although the HIV and AIDS pandemic continues to spread at a fast rate in South Africa, with young men and women showing high infection rates, some strides have been made (Bhana, 2010). Research has proven that in South Africa HIV and AIDS affects black African women and girls in particular (Department of Education, 2001). The media reports that the South African government's counselling and testing campaign (HCT) launched in 2010 has successfully increased the uptake of HIV testing and treatment (Department of Education, 2001). Bhana and Epstein (2007) suggest that epistemological studies of South Africa point conclusively to the gendered and racialised nature of the HIV and AIDS epidemic.

In South Africa, during the apartheid era, blacks were regarded as third class citizens. Race determined people's residential areas, and blacks were allocated townships that lacked facilities like youth and sports centres. Bhana (2011) provides explanation of the poor structural conditions of these black townships that expose girls to sexual risks and creates vulnerabilities to violence and HIV and AIDS. These townships lack primary health care and provide poor education services for blacks. Most black African people live in poverty and, to date, middle class South Africans still reside in these townships which make them more susceptible to all kinds of sexual risk taking. Although South Africans gained freedom and

some black Africans are educated and have acquired a middle class status, most black South Africans are fighting a new war, HIV and AIDS, infections like Sexually Transmitted Infections and Diseases (STI's) and STD's including poverty.

Leclerc-Madlala (2002) highlighted the role of socio-economic status and culture in increasing women's and girls' vulnerability to high-risk sexual behaviours whilst Marais (2000: 11) argues that AIDS is viewed as a reflection of the status quo, with the epidemic fuelled by poverty, migration, discrimination, powerlessness, and the like. Wood, Maforah and Jewkes (1998) suggest that desperate economic circumstances can pressure on girls into practising 'survival sex' with paying partners or clients who demand unprotected sex which could result in new infections. Wood *et al.* (1998) further elaborate that, in a milieu where there is a high rate of unemployment, women and girls are mostly vulnerable to sexual risk-taking because of poverty. Appalsamy (2010) argues that lower social status, poverty and gender inequalities limit chances for women to survive because they cannot afford access to primary health care if they become infected with sexual transmitted infections. This is further exacerbated by the language discourse used in townships that promotes sexual risk-taking amongst youth in the townships.

2.2.4 Constructions of sexuality and culture

In the Xhosa ethnic group, men believed, or rather made women believe, that contraceptives cause infertility, and are responsible for disabled babies and vaginal wetness (Wood *et al.*, 1998). As a result adolescents reject the use of any kind of contraceptives (*ibid.*, 1998). In African culture there is no equality between men and women and this culture refuses women and girls the opportunity of discussing issues of sexual risk-taking and protected sex in schools (Jewkes *et al.*, 2009). 'This gender-wise socio-cultural expectation in Ghana tends to leave a woman more vulnerable to infection, while men risk infection because of ideals of masculinity associated with risk-taking and sexual conquest' (Agyei *et al.*, 2000). Ormerod (2006) argues that as long as there is a 'law of the father' for subjectivity and desire at the level of culture, and empowerment is constructed along the norm of the same, the black women's desires will always have to contend with devaluation. This means that as long as the father is legitimised to have power or authority over the mother, women and girls will always be subjected to subordinate position irrespective of the amount of power they have or can access. Furthermore, Reddy and Dunne (2007) state that the love discourse within African heterosexual relationships is contradictory to the discourse of safe sex because of the power

differential that subordinates young women. According to Hoffman, O'Sullivan, Harrison, Dolezal and Monroe-wise (2005), where women had power to initiate sex, had control of space to suggest condom use, partners in these relationships were not likely to report unprotected sex. However, the idealisation of masculine values in African cultures and the disparagement of those that are feminine persist even though both genders are perceived to have equal power. According to Jewkes and Morrell (2010) ideals of femininities that are embedded in cultural processes that reward compliance by women and girls and expose them to greater vulnerability to male control and result in HIV and AIDS should be eradicated in schools. Ascencio (1999) emphasises the fact that a stereotypical model of culture ignores other social factors and changes in traditional gender roles, and women and girls conform to it. Jewkes and Morrell (2010) further elaborate that African culture, in particular, rewards women and girls when they comply with gender stereotypes that eventually discriminate and violate them. This violence is further aggravated by double standards of young men that prevail within African cultures (Jewkes *et al.*, 2001).

African cultures legitimate double standards of men and encourage the young men who practise these cultures. Jewkes and Morrell (2010) argue that Zulu culture, in particular, allows men and boys to have many partners and they are referred to as 'amasoka' (men with multiple partners). On the other hand, Zulu women face misogynistic denigration by being referred to as 'izifebe' (bitches) (Bhana and Epstein, 2007) and 'isikebereshe' (bitch) or 'umahosha' (prostitute) (Selikow, 2004) when they have multiple partners. Furthermore, Jewkes and Morrell (2010) state that Sotho and Xhosa women who have multiple partners are referred to as 'omakhwapheni' (walking with two sticks). Jewkes and Morrell (2010) suggest that subordinate position of women and conforming to culture might lead to women being tolerant of aggression by men and eventually lead to acceptance of unprotected sex which exposes them to risk.

2.2.5 Girls and sexual risk

It is vital to stress the fact that women and girls' biological susceptibility to HIV and AIDS is compounded by their limited economic and social power, particularly in relation to sexual relationships with males (Department of Education, 2001). Maman, Campbell, Sweat, and Gielden (2000) provide an understanding of the high rate of risk amongst women that it is exacerbated by social and biological risk factors. Poverty silences women to negotiate

protected sex and their biological sexual organs receive infected semen while men pour their secretions into women (Maman *et al.*, 2000).

In Umlazi township, as well as in other surrounding townships, young men create their own language that encourages masculinity and sexual risk-taking, with negative consequences to their health. The study conducted by Selikow (2004) provides a clear understanding of the role of language in promoting sexual risk-taking among young men, thus exposing girls to sexual risk-taking in the township. This language regards males with multiple partners, who wear fashionable clothes and are involved in crime as 'ingagara' or 'real man' because they engage in coercive sexual relations (Selikow, 2004) whilst, those young men who involved themselves in education and had one girlfriend, who refused to engage themselves in harmful culture were defined as 'isithipha'. Young women are attracted to 'ingagara' because of peer pressure and poverty (Wood *et al.*, 1998) whilst unwittingly exposing themselves to sexual risk. In the study conducted by Mudaly (2012: 233) boys with multiple partners were referred as 'playa' which she describes as 'a discourse that is peculiar to youthful sexuality'. Jewkes and Morrell (2010) elaborate on the double standards of men in African culture that it is acceptable for men to have multiple partners, usually with young women, and still expect their wives to conform to their sexual advances because they believe they have conjugal rights. In this milieu, women are perceived as sex objects that are made to please men and boys and this exposes women and girls to infections and HIV and AIDS in the townships (Jewkes and Morrell, 2010). On the other hand, the study by Macphail and Campbell (2001) revealed that Khutsong, a small township whose inhabitants have close relationships with each other; adults prefer to educate young people about abstinence instead of protected sex. Hence, young people who engaged in sexual relationships were punished through beatings.

Because schools do not exist in isolation, behaviours and practices pervasive to society are reproduced and perpetuated in schools and manifest amongst learners as they negotiate their sexuality (Wadesango *et al.*, 2011). Girls tolerate aggressive behaviour of boys as they are socialised to and consequently suffer exposure to HIV and AIDS. Mahala (2007) reflects on how gender power results in the collapse of family structures and ultimately the rape of close relatives, which changes a young schoolgirl's personality exposing her to dangerous sexual behaviour. Coombe (2001) argues that attitudes that condone multiple sex partners as a sign of masculinity heighten the risk of rape and HIV infection for girls as the HIV incidence rate increases and encourages male sexual prowess that ignores the fact that this is the era of

AIDS. This increases the rate of vulnerability to HIV related infections that are further transmitted to women and girls. Furthermore, Selikow (2004) argues that sexuality amongst township youth is determined by non-condom use, engaging in 'transactional sex' and having multiple sexual partners.

2.2.7 Cultural myths, virginity testing and harmful practices

The issue of HIV and AIDS and the high rate of teenage pregnancy (Mudaly, 2012) have raised much concern about moral depreciation and the need for regeneration of tradition and culture. Contrarily, Mudaly (2012) asserts that virginity testing (the reed dance), a Zulu custom, as moral regeneration perpetuates a patriarchy that subordinates girls and calls for 'retraditionalisation'. Wadesango, Rembe and Chabaya (2011) assert that virginity testing is a harmful tradition and culture as it exerts pressure to girls to expose themselves to health risks as they insert toothpaste and fresh meat because virginity testers look for 'white veil' (the hymen). This is done to avoid bringing 'shame' to their families because they have lost their virginity. Furthermore, Wadesango *et al.* (2011) elaborated on virginity testing that it constitutes psychological and sexual abuse as virginity testers insert fingers in the girl's vagina, which they refer as 'digital penetration'. Mudaly (2012:227) describes virginity testing as, 'a physical inspection of a girl's hymen to verify her chastity and purity which is associated with her virginity'. Furthermore, Mudaly (2012) argues that during virginity testing the hyper visible images of these girls are captured by South African media and referred to as 'African identity'. These images are posted on all kinds of media, both on digital networks and newspapers. These pictures expose girls to sexual violence as some HIV positive men believe having sex with a virgin can cure AIDS. This concurs with Leclerc-Madlala (2003) when asserting that some African men believe and exercise this myth which further exacerbates sexual risk to virgins which are mostly children.

2.2.8 Gender violence and lack of female power to negotiate safe sex

Literature on gender studies has since revealed that there is a strong connection between gender violence and condom use, especially in the context where girls are exposed to poverty in heterosexual relationships. Wood, Mafora and Jewkes (1998) elaborate on the perception that Xhosa adolescent girls do not refer to forced sex with their partners as rape. The findings of this study reveal that these raped women believed that rape occurs when there is no

relationship and not within couples. Furthermore, girls who were raped by their relatives in this study had to keep it a secret because it would have brought 'shame' to their families. Wood *et al.* (1998) argue that in violent relationships where girls are assaulted and gang raped by other men as punishment for terminating relationships, girls are likely to persevere in that harmful relation and conform to sexual risk-taking because of fear. Xhosa adolescents were quite aware of power inequalities and double standards in the constructions of sexual intercourse and love but could not challenge it because Xhosa men were violent towards women and girls (Wood *et al.*, 1998). In Mahala (2007) the extent of inequalities, sexual prowess and gender power that resulted in the use of violence against women and young schoolgirls show the link to women and girls' vulnerability to HIV and AIDS. In this study, young women from townships experience an imbalance of gender power and violence by young men from the community and this is re-enacted at school through a hidden curriculum transmitted by the teachers (Sigall, Bell, Wideroff and Gaufberg, 2010). This is confirmed by the statistics provided by the Humans Rights Watch report (2001) about the extent of violence against these schoolgirls and women in schools. Groes-Green (2009) provides a clear understanding of the role of economic and social inequalities and further discusses the cultural forms and identities that reproduce them; in terms of identity, frequency of condom usage, and social and cultural reproduction. From the discussion above, there is a reflection that all issues of gender power subordinate women and girls, and result in sexual violence in South Africa and this originates back from the history of South Africa when these townships emerged. Research has proven that girls from poverty stricken black townships are still exposed to sexual violence. This is evident in the study conducted by Bhana (2011:1) who writes that 'the legacy of apartheid and systematic structural inequalities combined with male power, political economy and AIDS provide a vital backdrop to understanding the persistence of rape and sexual violence which diminishes girl's freedom'. Moffet (2006) suggests that, in understanding sexual violence amongst South Africans, issues of patriarchy that dominates young women should be considered and rape should be viewed as an issue of gender rather than that of race. Selikow *et al.* (2011) assert that peer pressure can form part of socially derived norms about sexuality and safe sex in particular. According to a study conducted in Cape Town, Selikow *et al.* (2011) illustrate how negative peer pressure results in unhealthy norms that put youth at risk by practising unsafe sex and ostracising those who choose not to be sexually active. These young males are reported to be called names 'umqwayito' (dried fruit/meat during gang rape) and unprotected sex often occurred (ibid.2011). On the other hand, the findings of the study conducted by Reddy and Dunne (2007) revealed that young

women tolerate unsafe or unprotected sex because they fear misogynistic masculinity whereby women who suggested the use of condoms were labelled as ‘cheap’ or ‘loose’. Misogynistic masculinity is the cause of less condom usage amongst African young women as they fear to be labelled as ‘cheap’ or ‘loose’ (Wood *et al.*, 1998).

According to Chadwick (2010), there is evidence of gendered ideologies of diary writing where young men are perceived as initiators of heterosexual relationships, referred as proposing love, while young women become vulnerable to coercion and violence if they turn down the proposal. Foucault (1987) asserts that power relations bring the use of violence into gender play. However, Chadwick (2010) discovered that, in Gauteng schools, young women experience gender-based violence and sexual harassment in the form of name calling, threats (misogyny), rape and unwanted sexual touching. Gay, Hardee, Croce-Galise, Kowalski, Gutari, Wingfield, Rovin, Berzins (2010) assert that male and female condoms, treatment of STI’s and reduction of multiple partners could prevent transmission of HIV. Moreover, this study revealed that male circumcision reduces HIV acquisition for men by 60% and may reduce HIV transmission to women and girls. However, the low extent of knowledge about HIV and AIDS and STDs, the low perception of personal risk and negative perceptions about condoms amongst young people in South Africa is a serious problem (Coombe, 2001) because it creates confusion and encourages myths about sexualities and infections in young people. However, the high prevalence of HIV and AIDS is linked to confusion about issues around sexuality especially amongst young people. Kelly (2000b) provides clarity about gender violence in heterosexual relationships when suggesting that our society condones forced sex and this might be exacerbated by different kinds of violence operating in townships. Wood (2005) suggested that, in the apartheid era, township young men felt tensions in relation to the poverty in which they were living as money and power are central to the fulfilment of masculine duty. In this kind of milieu, where men and boys feel emasculated by poverty, they tend to illustrate aggressive masculinity to reclaim their power embedded in hegemonic masculinity (Anderson, 2009). However, Anderson (2009) elaborates that some boys from the same milieu where poverty is rife are able to negotiate peaceful masculinity. Types of masculinity developed during the apartheid era in the black townships included jack rolling (gangsters who took girls by force to rape them) and car hijacking (Wood, 2005). This type of masculinity was also harmful to women and girls and increased vulnerability to HIV and AIDS because there was often a lack of condom usage.

2.2.9 Empowering girls through education:

According to the study conducted in Ghana by Baiden and Rajulton (2011) there was low condom use among heterosexual relationships, with urban areas having 15% of women reported having used condoms during their last intercourse; whereas in the rural areas the proportion was even lower than 10%. Selikow (2004) elaborates on the explanations provided by young men about the use of condoms that they (condoms) are perceived as 'eating sweets with its paper' and 'taking shower with rain coat'. This way of thinking promotes unprotected sex amongst young men and women and puts them at risk. On the other hand, the study conducted in Khutsong township by Macphail and Campbell (2001) reveals that, where there is a lack of communication about sex and sexuality between young women and adults, condoms are not used. The question is how do they measure those limits of forced sex because this behaviour is harmful to women and girls and could lead to HIV and AIDS as communication about protected sex or condoms is limited or do not prevail in violent situations. Furthermore, 'research indicates that even those gender norms which supposedly protect girls, such as those that expect girls to remain virgins until marriage, can put them at risk by restricting their access to full information about condom use and other reproductive health services' (Agyei *et al.*, 2000).

It is important to empower girls by educating them about sexual risk. Cooper (2011) argues that gender is viewed as a social construction and is concerned with changing social relations and distributing power, and this change can only be attained through education. Education has its role to play in empowering young women. Moreover, sexuality amongst learners in schools has increased pressure on, and the responsibility of, the South African government and teachers in schools to create awareness and teach sex education assisted by Life Orientation (Department of Education, 2001). According to Cooper (2011:4) in a study conducted in 'KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, only the first two years of secondary education positively impact on black females' labour market participation'. Furthermore, Cooper (2011) elaborates on the role of education that 'education empowers women and improves gender equality through increasing their knowledge, decision-making power, improving their social and economic status and physical autonomy'.

Kabeer (2005) elaborates on the role of education when stating that education contributes to gender equality through strengthening a girl's dignity, self confidence and knowledge, increasing her ability to deal with the outside world and to challenge the existing roles, relations and structure which retain their subordinate position to men. On the other hand, Selkow, Ahmed, Flisher, Mathews and Mukoma (2009) argue that peer sex education might

be successful in challenging peer culture that promotes high sexual risk taking. Peer sex education might assist in educating young girls about gender violence and condom usage. The success of peer sex education is evident in the study conducted in the rural area by Jewkes, Wood and Duvvury (2010) where Loyiso, a 17 year old from Mthatha, started to advise friends on how to use condoms to protect themselves against HIV and pregnancy. However, the high rate of infections amongst young women might be caused by fear of gender violence by men which makes it impossible for women to negotiate condom use.

CONCLUSION

Literature in this study reveals that sexuality is abstract, complex and cannot be defined in a simple way as it includes many aspects like sexual orientation, language, safe sex or unsafe sex. Sexuality depends on different individuals in all nations across all races. However, those individuals who are black residing in townships are most vulnerable due to unemployment and poverty. This poverty includes the middle class community where there is a lack of primary health care and other services that might assist women and girls as they negotiate their sexualities. Statistics show that there is a decline in new infections and death due to education about HIV and treatment. However, there is still more to be done because this statistic is still high and infections are higher in young men with women having the highest. Interventions should include peer education and empower young women to resist aggressive and hegemonic masculinity that gives power to men and subordinates them, and consequently leads to sexual risk-taking. Young women should be empowered to identify and reject violence and coercive sex as soon as it starts rather than conforming because culture should be dynamic as life is dynamic since this is a new era of HIV and AIDS. Sexuality and violence should not be characterised as only issues of race and culture but rather be viewed as gender issues. Young men should also be educated about sexual risk-taking. Constructions of sexuality and culture are mainly defined by the society. Societal expectations position girls in subordinate conditions and boys are empowered to exercise patriarchy. Culture further exposes girls to sexual risks with the dance celebrations that expose girls' bodies and put them at risk. However, education empowers girls to take informed decisions with regards to their sexual identities and practice of safe sex.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I outline the research design and methodology used in this study. To explore the sexual identities of a group of young girls, it was necessary to engage qualitative research methods. Qualitative research provided the opportunity for these girls to articulate their perceptions, understandings and experiences around sexuality and the exposure to sexual risk. This chapter provides a brief description of the context which attests to the circumstances of these young schoolgirls from a black African township. I explain the sampling strategy; describe data collection tools where I argue for the use of individual interviews and focus group discussion. I explain inductive analysis of data and patterns of themes that emerged from both interviews. Finally, I also explain, in detail, the ethical considerations, validity, trustworthiness/reliability and limitations of this study.

3.2 Research design and methodology

This research is qualitative and provides an in-depth understanding of the experiences, explanations and challenges facing African young schoolgirls with regard to their sexualities.

The qualitative approach was chosen because it was appropriate for this study and, as Cohen *et al.* (2011) assert, qualitative research seeks to explore a particular group and not to generalise it over the whole population. This approach also provided me, as a researcher, with detailed data that provides a glimpse into the social realities of these young girls. Furthermore, Mays and Pope (2000) describe qualitative research as an approach used to find an in-depth description of people's attitudes, beliefs and experiences. The qualitative approach is most suitable for this study as it is able to elicit the attitudes, beliefs and experiences of this group of African schoolgirls as they speak about their sexual selves.

3.2.1 Interpretivist Paradigm

This study is located within the interpretivist paradigm. The interpretivist paradigm provides an understanding of how these girls make sense of their sexual identities. In interpretivism, the epistemology rests upon moral and pragmatic concerns which are located in a particular context and time and are open to dialectic and mutualistic conversations (Bryman, 2004). In this study, young African schoolgirls interacted with the researcher and with each other, discussing their perceptions, views and experiences. The participants are young schoolgirls, who discuss the meanings they attach to their sexualities in the era of HIV and AIDS. It is critical that ethical considerations are addressed during the data collection between the

researcher and the participants. Multiple experiences of these young schoolgirls determined the multiple realities which is the ontology of this study as reality in the interpretivist paradigm is negotiated with participants (Schwandt, 2000). This study is determined by multiple truths that emerged from each case. According to Schwandt (2000) multiple truths exist in an interpretivist paradigm.

An interpretivist paradigm was used in this study because interpretivists attempt to understand people's social behaviour from the view point of the participants and is context-dependent (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). Moreover, Cohen, Browne and Leung (2007) support the use of interpretivism in this setting when they claim that in an interpretivist paradigm, lessons of experience and cultural ideology co-create each other. The African setting for these young schoolgirls provided me with an in-depth understanding of the African cultural norms and beliefs of these young schoolgirls that impact on their engagement in risky sexual behaviours. However, it also provided me with insight into the ways these young schoolgirls both accommodate and resist a patriarchal gender order.

3.2.2 Research Site

This study was conducted in Umlazi a mixed class black township in the south Durban basin of KwaZulu-Natal (a detailed description is provided in chapter 1). These participants are predominantly from working class and unemployed backgrounds.

3.2.3 Sampling

I used purposive sampling by choosing six black girls participants aged 16 turning 17 in my school who were willing to be interviewed. Cohen *et al.* (2000) state that, in purposive sampling, the researcher makes specific choices about participants and that it is usually convenient to the researcher. Purposive sampling focuses on the uniqueness of a particular group (Teddlie and Yu, 2007), and provides greater depth to the study than other forms of sampling. I chose these participants specifically because they are African schoolgirls who are aged between 16 and 17 and I have a relationship with them through facilitation of a school youth club called Girls Education Movement (GEM). I chose African girls because it would be cost effective and convenient because I work in this school. I chose this number of participants because a focus group comprises between six to eight participants. This is an exploratory study and does not intend to generalise these findings to all African girls in this

school or the wider community. The study refutes any notion of a homogeneous African sexuality but rather seeks to understand the diverse sexualities within this sample.

3.3 Data collection

Interviews

After permission was granted, the principal allowed me to conduct both individual interviews and focus group discussions with girls. Cohen *et al.* (2000) described three purposes of interviews which qualify the interviews to be a good data collection tool that made them suitable for my study. It is used to gain knowledge and information about the participants and also used to discover values and preferences of participants. It is used to explore attitudes and beliefs of participants. I chose grade 11 girls who were 16 turning 17 whom I had relationship with through a girls' club, Girls Education Movement (GEM). The challenge I faced at this stage of the research was that two of the girls' guardians did not sign consent letters and the girls did not arrive for the interviews. I had to re-schedule the interviews. After these girls did not arrive for the rescheduled interview, I replaced them with another two Grade 10 girls who were also 16 turning 17 and willing to be interviewed. They joined the focus group discussion after I gained permission from their parents. First, I conducted the individual interview with the two girls who joined after others so that they could relax a little and gain confidence to participate in the focus group discussion, of which there were two.

3.3.1 Individual interviews

Data was used from two hour-long individual interviews conducted with the two Grade 10 participants who joined later to replace the two Grade 11 participants who did not attend the first focus group discussion. Individual interview refers to the face to face interaction between the interviewer and the respondent (Strange, Forest and Oakley, 2003). Fowler (2009) elaborated further that sensitive questions can sometimes be handled better in private face to face interviews than in the group. Issues of sexualities might create shyness in participants when responding to personal issues. As a result, it was important to conduct individual interviews in a place that provided privacy. However, individual interviews were not conducted with the four Grade 11 participants as these girls were friends for a long time and have since gained trust from their friendship and were confident to speak openly in the presence of each other. The potential for trust, rapport and cooperation between the

researcher and the participants is strong in face to face encounters (Opdenakker, 2006). Opdenakker (2006) further states that in individual interview, the direct reaction between the participant and the researcher is spontaneous without extended reflection. During the individual interviews, one of the girls was reserved at first and I had to probe and remind them that I was not their teacher at the time and I had to reassure them that all said in the interview was confidential. After I re-affirmed each girl, they were a bit more responsive and the two individual interviews yielded much data that was appropriate and valuable for the study.

I conducted one semi-structured open-ended individual interview with each participant and two focus group discussions to generate data. Open-ended questions provided me with lots of opportunity that I used to clarify questions through probing; as participants are English second language speakers. An interview schedule was used for both the focus group and the interview. These sessions were audio-taped to ensure that all data was recorded accurately and that I could take notes of non-verbal gestures and actions of the participants. Opdenakker (2006) elaborates on audio-tape recording of interviews as advantageous in that note taking is not accurate as interaction is rapid and some important data can be left out like hesitancy to answer or coughing can be recorded in a tape. In this study, there was an interaction between participants where they shared their life stories, with some similarities and differences. Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) argue that conducting individual interviews is time consuming because of distance taken travelling to the venue and preparation of the venue, to make it comfortable for the participant. Both the individual interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in the school staffroom during school holidays where there was privacy and no interruption. The interviews were kept informal to encourage a relaxed and conducive atmosphere.

3.3.2 Focus group discussion

For the purpose of this study, two focus group discussions of one hour each were conducted. Cohen *et al.* (2011) provide a deeper understanding about focus group discussions by stating that focus groups are economical on time and generate a large quantity of data. In this study participants were given the opportunity to interact with each other and dispute each other's assertions. The first focus group discussion consisted of only four of my participants. This interaction provided data from the four Grade 11 participants in particular, as they often disputed each others' responses during discussion. Cohen *et al.* (2011) elaborate on focus

group discussion as a form of group interview, though not in the sense of backwards and forwards between interviewer and group. In a focus group interview, the participants interact with each other rather than with the interviewer, with the result that data should emerge from the interaction of the group members (Cohen *et al.*, 2000).

From the data obtained it is evident that the second focus group discussion generated more data, with participants seeming more spontaneous in response to questions than in the first discussion. The reason for this may be that the participants were feeling more comfortable and also because we had developed a more comfortable relationship after the first discussion. I also conducted the second focus group discussion so as to include the other two participants as well as to look for contradictions or similarities or consistencies in their explanations. Leung, Wu, Leu and Tang (2004) provide a deeper understanding about focus groups, that differences and similarities are observed within the same cultural group which can limit generalisation to a wider population. I introduced the topics to be discussed by the focus group participants, and I tried to manage the discussions so that no one dominated the discussion and to keep the girls focused on the topic. A second focus group discussion was conducted in order to get even more in-depth data and address group dynamics as there was one of the group members who dominated the previous focus group. Also some of the focus group members were uncomfortable discussing some issues which were extremely personal and I thought a second opportunity might yield more useful data.

3.5 Ethical considerations

The use of interviews and focus group discussion as collection tools involves obtaining ethical clearance. Interviews concern interpersonal interaction and produce information that involves invasion of human private space and thus results in revelation of human conditions (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). Ethical considerations are important in the interpretivist paradigm because they assist the participants with clear information about their rights to participate (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). Angen (2000) states that moral considerations are important when evaluating interpretivist research and that the research should be carried out in a respectful manner. In this study, participants were given adequate respect as they were given time to respond and were not judged for their personal opinions and their experiences.

Clearance was sought from the ethics committee from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I explained details of the study in the consent letters with a reply slip space for the signatures of the principal, parents and the participants. I also explained that participation was voluntary as the participants were free to withdraw any time they felt uncomfortable, as mentioned earlier. I also explained that participants would benefit from reading their own transcripts because as they read the transcripts there was potential for them to obtain knowledge about sexual risks. I assured all participants that whatever they spoke about would not be revealed to other teachers and learners. This ensured confidentiality and anonymity. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants. However, I could not directly deal with extremely personal information because I am not a psychologist; I informed the girls that if it was necessary to intervene if any disturbing revelations were made, I would have to request a professional official to assist her. I requested permission from the girl, the parent and the principal to refer one of the girls to the departmental psychologist as the school lacks a counsellor. The traumatic circumstance of this girl was harmful and was putting her at risk. I had to intervene to avoid exposing the participant to dangers like committing suicide because she missed her parents and to stop further abuse from her boyfriend.

3.4 Data analysis

The aim of data analysis is to make sense of data from participants' perspectives (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Inductive analysis of data commenced immediately after verifications of transcripts were done by the participants and other researchers. I transcribed data verbatim and interrogated the data through reading and re-reading it to become familiar with it in preparation for discussion. I compared data from the first interview with that of the second interview to check for consistency in responses. Data was arranged in categories and themes that emerge from data collated. Maree (2007) elaborates on the analysis that 'analysis means a close or systematic study or separation of a whole unit parts for study'. After coding and re-coding of data, analysis commenced. The gender power theoretical framework was used as a lens through which I analysed data. Once the analysis had taken place, the findings of the research were grounded against the context. This entailed a rich description and comparison of findings of other research, as outlined in the literature review.

3.6 Validity and trustworthiness/reliability

In a qualitative approach, research lacks procedure that guarantees validity and reliability and the study cannot be generalised (Slonim-Nevo and Nevo, 2009). However in this study some measures were taken to enhance validity and reliability. The transcripts were returned to participants to review data captured and the synthesis to ensure that the meanings communicated were correctly captured as well as communicated in a correct manner. Assumptions are that when participants read their transcripts, they might reflect on their sexual practices and their risky sexual taking. Angen (2000) elaborates on validity when suggesting that researchers need to explore if the research will be helpful to the target population. Trustworthiness was regarded as an important measure in this research, participants were requested to elaborate and provide clarity on some of the responses during their checks of the transcripts.

3.7 Limitations

It is important to consider the power differentials in the research process. Participants were from my school and as a teacher and adult and researcher I had to bear in mind that I was in control of the research process. To overcome this I tried as best as I could to allow the participants to take control of the focus group discussions as I had to consider that participants may be uncomfortable to talk about sensitive issues, in particular during probing as they might think I would inform their parents or judge them. This I addressed by assuring them my main concern of being a researcher and the need to give them a ‘voice’ for their benefit. On the other hand, I am researching a site that I am familiar with as an educator and also as an African woman. This might create subjectivity on my part because I realised that I come with pre-conceived ideas. However, this I tried to minimise through re-reading the purpose and the focus of the study so I could not deviate from the study into my pre-conceived ideas and my opinions. I also remained true to the data that was generated during the data collection sessions.

I thought the venue would pose a problem as using teacher’s staffroom might instil fear in the participants as this is the venue that they respect because it is reserved for teachers. However, I reassured them and reaffirmed the participants of the confidentiality of the study and that their teachers would not know what transpired during the sessions and also that teachers were on holiday so we had utmost privacy and that there was no chance of teachers

knowing what transpired. This reduced their fear and settled them and was conducive to conducting the interview.

Conducting an interview during school holidays posed a problem as parents expect participants to be at home at a certain time to assist with domestic chores. Time was also a problem for me as a full time educator who supervises and teaches during school holidays. As a result the first focus group discussion and individual interviews were scheduled to be conducted during school holidays on days and at times that were conducive to each participant. I also sent reminders to parents a day before the interview, to allow parents to deal with chores for participants and to provide them with knowledge of their whereabouts. However, I had some difficulties in assembling focus group members because some simply did not appear for the sessions. However, re-scheduled discussions added valuable data that was not captured during the first focus group discussion. This data was captured as participants shared their personal experiences and expressed their perceptions and views in the presence of the other participants.

3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined the methodology which provided an in-depth discussion of the qualitative approach process and strategies employed in this study. It has described qualitative methods using the interpretive paradigm, and focus group and individual interviews as data collection tool. A thick description of the research site was provided, which reflected the socio-economic and cultural background of the participants. This chapter also advocated the appropriateness of using inductive analysis. I have also provided details of ethical considerations where ethical clearance was sought from the ethics committee from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I also explained in detail how the study was introduced to the principal, parents and the participants. Ethical considerations also included details of how participants were informed of their rights to participate and withdraw at any time, if they felt uncomfortable. I have explained, in detail, ethical validity where transcripts were returned to participants to review data captured and the synthesis to ensure that the meanings were correctly captured as well as communicated in a correct manner. I highlighted limitations that occurred when this study was conducted.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I provide a detailed inductive analysis of data after verifications of transcripts were done. I present an in-depth analysis of transcribed verbatim data arranged in themes that emerge from data collated. The theoretical framework, which is gender power, was used as a lens through which data was analysed. The following patterns of themes have emerged:

- Risky sex: girls' perspective.
- Multiple partners, violence and sexual risk.
- 'If I am not ready for sex and he insists I dump him'.
- 'I was advised that sex is not right but it was too late'.
- Condom use and infectious diseases.
- Cultural myths and virginity testing.
- HIV and AIDS and vulnerability.
- Role of media in sexual risk.

4.2 RISKY SEX: GIRLS' PERSPECTIVES

In this study, data revealed girls' understanding of risky sexual practice. When asked about their understanding of risky sex, they responded:

Luenda:

Unprotected sex.

Nokukhanya:

Ukwenza izinto ezingalungile (Doing wrong things) Ukuhamba ulala kaningi (sleep around more often).

Noziqu:

Ukulala nawowonke umuntu (sleep/ have sex with everyone).

Penny:

It is prostitution. Ukuhamba namadoda amaningi uthole imali (Have sex with many men for money).

This data implies that girls have an understanding of the risky behaviours, they believed that unprotected sex with multiple partners and prostitution is sexual risk -taking. According to the study conducted by Kaufman and Stavrou (2002) in Durban, South Africa, gifts provided by African males had different meanings attached to them by girlfriends, ‘minister of transport’ who drives the girl anywhere she wanted to go, ‘minister of education’ who pays for all education fees for a girlfriend and many others. However, this study also reveals that the gifts were all provided in exchange for sex and other sexual activities which put girls at risk. Kaufman and Stavrou (2002: 15) assert that, in their study, African girls believed that ‘monetary gifts are berated and demeaning as prostitution and other gifts were means to the same end’. Girls in this study also believed in using sex in exchange for money although they refer to this exchange as ‘prostitution’.

4.3 Multiple partners, violence and sexual risk.

The research site from which these participants emerge is patriarchal and it results in women and girls being vulnerable and powerless sexual beings (Bhana *et al.*, 2007). As the data below illustrates and resonates with Mudaly (2012), these girls do not comply with male sexual dominance and resist men who have sex with multiple partners in attempts to demonstrate their sexual prowess. The data shows that girls in this study disrupt the notion of men only having multiple partners even though boys assaulted and insulted them for cheating. They question misogynistic masculinity and double standard by boys. Boys are

socially constructed to have multiple partners as they gain a certain status; whilst girls are derogated and often labelled as ‘cheap’ or ‘loose’ when they have multiple partners (Reddy and Dunne, 2007). Selikow *et al.* (2002) attest to the view that boys receive a certain status when they date multiple partners like being called ‘ingagara’ whilst those who do not conform to the idea were called ‘isithipha’ (a boy who love one girl). However, the same study reveals that girls also have multiple partners; they have ‘real boyfriends’ and ‘chickens’ who are used for their money irrespective of misogyny by boys. The ‘chicken’ relationship is not publicised to avoid beatings by their boyfriends (Selikow *et al.*, 2002). In this way, girls deconstruct sex as a male preserve and resist social construction by boys whilst putting themselves at sexual risk. When asked how many boyfriends they have, girls answered

Nokukhanya:

Four, I want to enjoy life like boys but boys insult us calling us ‘siyizifebe’ (bitches) when they find that we are cheating but call themselves ‘amasoka’ (playboys) when they are cheating.

Noziqu:

Five, just for fun but boys beat us when they find that we are cheating on them when they think they are playboys when they have many girlfriends.

This data demonstrates the ways in which girls’ sexualities are policed and regulated by male violence. Girls who venture outside of the gender norms are met with violence. The double standards that prevail are stark – accepted standards that permit boys to have multiple partners while simultaneously negatively labelling girls who do. These girls positioned themselves equal to boys because they view dating multiple partners as ‘fun’ and ‘enjoyment’ like boys and do not view this practice as exposing themselves to sexual risk. These girls view sex as pleasurable and enjoyable rather than viewing sex as designed to please boys (Wood *et. al.*, 1998). They challenge the notion of sex being a male preserve and that women and girls are there to provide pleasure to men and boys. This gender play implies that boys assume and exercise gender power (patriarchy) on girls, with patriarchal power subordinating women and girls (Connell, 1996) and the threat of male violence

when girls do not comply or conform to the gender norms is ever-present. Girls' sexualities are regulated and policed by boys who view girls as bad if they have multiple partners. Studies reveal that young girls are exposed to misogyny when they 'behave like boys' and this is evident in the study by Bhana and Epstein (2007) when they suggested that Zulu women face misogyny, being referred to as 'izifebe' (bitches) and 'isikebereshe' (bitch) when they have multiple partners. According to Jewkes and Morrell (2010) Zulu culture in particular allows men and boys to have many partners and they are referred to as 'amasoka' (playboys). Coombe (2001) concurs with Jewkes and Morrell (2010) when he argues that attitudes that condone multiple sex partners as a sign of masculinity heighten the risk of rape and HIV infection for girls as the HIV incidence rate increases. This section has demonstrated the prevalence of dating multiple partners, and in this instance amongst both boys and girls and the potential for increasing vulnerability to HIV-related infections.

Bonani:

Eh...two, the first one akangiphathanga kahle (did not treat me right) and I decided to get another one so I can forget about the first one.

This data revealed that girls use one boy to forget about another. This illustrates how girls exercise their agency but also the casualness with which relationships are conducted. When a girl is not treated right in a relationship she replaces him with another boyfriend without informing the other. This is a demonstration of the subversion of power (Foucault, 1987) by girls.

When the girls were asked about their multiple relationships, they responded:

Nokukhanya:

But mam we are showing them (boys) that we can behave like them but bona (boys) bayasishayaumasibabhanqa (they punish us if we cheat).

This data implies that girls are aware of double standards by the boys and they have multiple partners and show their resistance to being treated differently. According to Jewkes and Morrell (2010) Sotho and Xhosa women have multiple partners, 'omakhwapheni' which is referred to as 'walking with two sticks', implying married women had boyfriends because

their husbands had multiple partners. Dating multiple partners ‘omakhwapheni’ reflects resistance to gender power by women and girls whilst exposing themselves to risk.

4.4 ‘If I am not ready for sex and he insists, I dump him’

These school girls revealed that they dated more than one boyfriend and even though they have many boyfriends it does not mean that they engage in sex. Girls suggested that it is not right to engage in sex if they are young, not ready for sex and still at school. However, some girls reflected feminine power by dumping boyfriends who insisted on engaging in sex with them. Girls are transforming the established social order of patriarchal power and hierarchy where boys used to dump girls and here power is subverted. Foucault (1987) asserts that power is rooted deep in the social nexus and networks but the society’s historical formation and source of their strength or fragility are necessary to transform some and abolish others. On the other hand, negative familial experiences can also deter or delay sex. Bonani delayed sex because of her sister’s negative experiences with the father of her child. This situation, in particular, assisted Bonani to resist gender power by her boyfriend despite her emotional state. However, a girl with five boyfriends in this study is resisting this power differential and refutes the subordinate position by dumping boys who insist on demanding sex from her. When young women were asked about engaging in sex with their boyfriends, they answered:

Penny:

I am still young.

Luenda:

It is not right.

Noziqu:

I am not ready for sex.

Bonani:

I thought about having sex with my first boyfriend who treated me badly but I could not do it because of my sister’s situation with the father of her child.

Popi:

It is not right to have sex when you are still at school.

Noziqu:

I tell them I am not ready...if he insists ngiyamgabha (I dump him).

The many reasons for girls not engaging in sex, from being too young to not being ready, reflects 'girl power': that they make independent decisions with regards to sex within their relationships. Also, familial experiences about dangers of engaging in unprotected sex, whereby Bonani learnt from her sister's negative experience in a relationship with the father of her child, prevent her from engaging in sex with her boyfriend. This data also implies that girls are not emotionally committed to their boyfriends since it is easy to dump those boyfriends who insisted on engaging in sex with them. The dumping of boys also reveals that girls in this study do not conform to boys' demands for sex. However, dumping of boys might also reflect on the degradation of moral values within girls; whereby these girls would be assumed to be rude or to lack discipline. Girls demonstrate much resistance, both by resisting sex as well as by dumping boys who demand sex. These girls show determination to delay sex for as long as they are able to unlike in Mudaly (2012) where girls demonstrate hyper-sexuality as they subvert hetero-patriarchal cultural contexts that subordinate them.

Whilst five of the girls said that they did not engage in sex, one of the girls had engaged in sex and this was influenced by the love making story by one of their friends. This friend described in detail to these girls her sex life with her boyfriend which made her curious and thus encouraged her to experiment. This is how she responded on the question about peer pressure and sex:

Nokukhanya:

It just happened; I did not plan to have sex.

This data also reveals that girls do not plan to engage in sex but it happened in the heat of a moment with their boyfriends. This occurrence reduces chances of communication about safe

sex and the use of condoms. When girls were asked about some cultures that sanction multiple partners for young men if it put young women at risk, the response was:

Nokukhanya:

No, it is bad because they spread disease.

The data implied a discourse of love and sex is prevalent amongst the heterosexual girls in this study. This view coincides with Reddy and Dunne (2007) when stating that love discourse within African heterosexual relationships is contradictory to the discourse of safe sex because of power differentials that subordinate young women. Whilst five of the girls did not engage in sex, one of the girls had engaged in sex and this was influenced by the love making story by one of their friends. This friend described in detail to these girls her sex life with her boyfriend which made her curious and thus encouraged her to experience. This is how she responded on the question about peer pressure and sex:

Nokukhanya:

Umngane wethu uyasixoxela ukuthi balwenza kanjani ucansi nendoda yakhe ekhomeni lombede, manje usemithi kodwa umithiswe enye indoda hayi lena abesixoxela ngayo kodwa uhlala nayo ngoba kubo bamxosha manje iyamshaya yingakho eseyeke isikole. (Our friend who left school told us how they make love with her boyfriend on the corner of the bed. Now she has a baby with another man not the one she was staying with after she was chased from home. He is now beating her that is the reason why she left school. I was motivated to experience what she was talking about.)

According to Campbell (2005: 473) “peer influence is often an important determinant of sexual behaviour, and peer education seeks to provide a context for the collective renegotiation of peer sexual norms”. Contrarily, some girls in this study communicate with other peers who influence them negatively as they try to experiment instead of learning from other girls’ experiences.

4.5 *'I was advised that sex is not right but they were too late'*

The data reveals that there is little or no communication between parents and girls. By the time parents begin to communicate, it is too late for the girl as the data shows that girls state that by then they have already engaged in sexual activities. When asked whether girls discuss sex issues with their parents or anyone else, the girls responded:

Penny and Popi:

We do not discuss sex with anyone but sometimes we do with our friends.

Bonani:

I discuss it with my sister, who has a child and her boyfriend is not supporting the child. She advises me to abstinence and learns from her mistakes.

Nokukhanya:

Mina mam, ekhaya bangitshelange sex ukuthi ayilungile (at home I was advised that sex is not right) because we are many at home and if I get pregnant the child will destruct my studies but they were too late because I had already had sex with my boyfriend.

In this case peer sex education is successful as the girl took her sister's advice of abstaining from sex. Selikow *et al.* (2009) asserts that peer sex education might be successful in challenging peer culture that promotes risky sexual practices. However, girls reflect that they fear becoming pregnant and highlight the negative consequences of teenage pregnancy - it could disrupt their studies. They also reveal the issue of poverty; that pregnancy could also exacerbate the poverty of girl's lives. Girls in this study assert that there is a lack of communication about issues of sex between parents and girls at home. Those parents who try to educate them about sex education, often discuss it very late when girls are already active. The fear of discussing sex with girls by African parents emerges from cultural practices whereby these issues were discussed within girls and "amaqhikiza"(older girls who teaches

girls about sexuality from when they receive their periods, which to adulthood) (Mudaly, 2012; Jewkes and Morrell, 2010). Discussing sex with young people is considered taboo in many African communities (Jewkes and Morrell, 2010).

When girls were asked if their views about young African schoolgirls engaging in sexual relationships differ from those of their parents, they responded:

Nokukhanya:

Yes, my views are different, my mother wants me to wait until I get married and that is wrong. How can I marry someone I do not know? Kungcono sazane isikhathi eside (get to know each other for a long period of time) before we get married. But I agree with them that it is wrong to have sex with someone before marriage because now there are many diseases.

Popi:

Parents want us to wait until we get married before we can engage in sex but thina sinamawala (we are fast) boyfriends want sex first.

The data implies that there is a sense of ambivalence on the part of the girls. The confusion indicates conflicting ideas about the ideal time for sex. There is a tension between having sex and knowing the person before marriage and the dangers of disease due to risky sexual practices. Parents expect girls to wait before they have sex until they get married. However, one of the girls partially agrees with parents when suggesting that waiting until marriage was right because it would protect them from diseases. However, this is not working as girls stated that parents do not educate them about sex and girls feared to ask questions about sex or to discuss their relationships with them. This state of parenthood points to the importance of parents discussing sexual issues with their daughters so as to give them proper guidance when they are confused.

When asked if parents knew about their boyfriends, girls replied:

Luenda:

No, if they can know, they will never trust me again.

Penny and Popi:

No, if my parents can find out they can punish me.

Nokukhanya:

My mother knows that I have a boyfriend, she talked to me about the dangers of having sex at my age but it was too late because I had already done it.

Noziqu:

No, they do not know, they can punish me and refuse to buy me anything bathi sengiqomile (will say I have a boyfriend).

Bonani:

No, parents can chase me out of the house because they will think I have sex with him.

The various negative consequences of having a boyfriend are evident in this study. The lack of communication about sex between parents and girls forced the girls to keep their relationships secret from their parents. Girls feared to lose trust, withholding of necessities like clothes and food and assumptions by parents that girls are already engaging in sex which might lead to girls being chased out of the house. According to Macphail and Campbell (2001), young people who engaged in sexual relationships were punished through beatings by parents.

The emphasis was on poverty within the home and the shortage of shelter at home if she fell pregnant rather than teaching about protective measures and sexual infections. In one case, there were 20 sharing a four roomed house. Although research reflects a decrease in teenage pregnancy, this is still a problem that affects these young girls' attendance at school as well as their economic independence. Economic status exposes these girls to sexual risk as they needed money to take care, not only of themselves, but also of their children as they assumed that money was a sign of love (Wood, Maforah and Jewkes, 1998). Furthermore, they are

exposed to peer pressure as they need money to buy label clothing and expensive cell phones. This motivates the young girls to have relationships with older men.

During focus group discussions one of the girls who dated an older man, responded on the reasons why she dated an older man that:

Nokukhanya:

My old boyfriend supply me with (izinto zonke engizifunayo) everything I need, you just jealous that your boyfriend cannot afford to buy you my cellphone (showing off her cellphone).

According to Mitchell (2011) young girls at university are under a lot of peer pressure because 'visual' success is measured according to 'label' clothes, hairdos, latest cell phones, eating expensive takeaways and receiving lifts in expensive cars. This is evident in the morning and after school when these girls are dropped and collected by men who drive posh cars. This study further reveals that the high cost of living causes these young girls to date sugar daddies so as to be viewed as 'visible' and 'flashy' in schools (Mitchell, 2011). Moreover, Mitchell (2011) asserts that the uneven gender power balance existing within these sugar daddy relationships may hinder girls' ability to negotiate safe sex because of financial resources and materials involved. On the other hand, girls also have multiple partners because of lack of love at home due to broken families and a high rate of mortality to parents. It might also be caused by the absence of father figures at home as most fathers neglect their families. Some boys demand sexual favours and ignore girls or expose them to misogyny when they refuse.

Bhana (2011) provides explanations on the poor structural conditions of the black townships that expose girls to sexual risk and creates vulnerabilities to violence and HIV and AIDS. The study conducted in Khutsong township by Macphail and Campbell (2001) asserted that adults prefer to educate young people about abstinence instead of protected sex. Furthermore, Macphail and Campbell (2001) reveal that where there is a lack of communication about sex and sexuality between young women and adults, condoms are not used.

4.6 CONDOM USE AND INFECTIOUS DISEASES

According to Mudaly (2012) there is politics around issues of girlhood and culture, where girls are allowed to have 'thigh sex' (ukusoma) to prevent penetration. Mudaly (2012) asserts that regeneration of this cultural practice renders girls vulnerable and this culture is in contradiction with the Abstain, Be faithful, Condomise (ABC) and condom use campaigns that create awareness.

Data implies that girls have a clear understanding of safe sex and infectious disease. However, they still expose themselves and render themselves vulnerable to unsafe sex practices. As a result they remain susceptible to STD's and HIV. When they were asked what they can use for protection, they replied,

Condom...

Popi:

Use contraceptives.

Bonani:

Contraceptives cannot protect you from diseases but can only protect you from pregnant.

Nokukhanya:

But a condom is not 100% safe but I did have sex once without it.

This data suggests that peer education (between girls) can assist in teaching about sex education or clarify misconceptions regarding sexual issues. When a girl asserted that contraceptives can protect girls from diseases, one girl provided clarity that contraceptives can only protect girls from getting pregnant. Girls had understanding that condoms are not totally safe and that the transmission of sexually related diseases is still a possibility. However, girls still chose to engage in sex without protection. According to Kaufman and Stavrou (2002), African girls based their condom use on the knowledge of the partner in that a girl would only ask for condom if she did not know her partner. This knowledge is perceived by girls to protect them from sexually transmitted disease including HIV and AIDS.

4.7 CULTURAL MYTH AND VIRGINITY TESTING

Most parents from this community still believe in culture and traditions that continue to subordinate women and girls and encourage patriarchy. They believe it is right to keep girls at home to take care of their young siblings when parents have to be away from home or to take care of them when they are sick whilst the boys are expected by parents and society to attend school at all times. This is evident in the high rate of girls' absenteeism in this school revealed in the letters by parents as excuses for girls' absence from school. Sometimes these girls stay away from school for a long period of time to perform rituals like 'umhlonyana' (ritual that marks maturity when a girl receives her menstruation for the first time) and 'umemulo' (ritual that marks maturity in girls when they turn 21 and can get married) (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003) and these rituals keep them in a room for a week or more before the day of celebration. Moreover, there is one ritual that is conducted at the Zulu king's kraal called 'umhlanga' (reed dance/virginity testing) (Mudaly, 2012). Virginity testing was celebrated in honour of Nomkhubulwano, the goddess who protects virgin girls and brings fortune, health and rain (Kendall, 1998 cited in Mudaly, 2012). During celebrations for rituals, 'umhlonyana', and 'umemulo', girls wearing traditional clothes with breasts showing and short skirts would go into the nearest sport ground/school ground and dance until people put money on their heads. This dance is done whilst singing songs that imply that a girl is ready to have a man and some of these songs might be misogynistic or insulting to girls who are sensitive and people who are non-believers in this tradition. Mudaly (2012) and Leclerc-Madlala (2003) elaborate on 'umhlonyana' that girls demonstrate hypervisibility and sing songs that encourage a traditional moral stance, procreation and sex. She further highlighted that 'ukusoma' (thigh sex) is encouraged after a girl has found her suitor. However, girls in the township assume that this tradition is intended to make them eligible for penetrative sex. This is further exacerbated by the lack of 'amaqhikiza' (older dating girls). They (girls) do not have people to educate them about their sexuality and how to behave after these rituals (Jewkes and Morrell, 2010). In rural areas, 'amaqhikiza' educate girls about their sexuality during and after these rituals, for instance when a girl wants to accept love proposed by a boy, she discusses it with 'iqhikiza' who becomes an intermediary between the two lovers. This reduces the rate of risky sexual behaviours in rural areas. This concurs with Mudaly (2012) that 'amaqhikiza' were older girls who counselled girls about courtship and sex. In the townships 'amaqhikiza' are replaced by friends and older sisters who counsel these girls who have reached puberty according to their own experiences rather than their culture.

On the other hand, virginity testing (Reed Dance) which is rooted in a moral regeneration movement and motivated by a high rate of teenage pregnancy (Mudaly, 2012) has its flaws according to girls in this study. This Zulu culture celebration is supposed to restore girls' pride and bargain for a high 'lobola' prize (Wadesango, Rembe and Chabaya, 2011). However, it promotes patriarchy and harmful traditions (Wadesango *et al.*, 2011). When asked about the role of the reed celebrations in assisting them to keep their virginity, girls responded;

Nokukhanya:

No, it did not help me, not all of us are tested during virginity testing and those who are tested are 'worse'. They are not virgins. They pay those who do tests.

According to this data, virginity testers are 'corrupt'. They allude to the commercialisation of this cultural practice where the results can be manipulated. The girls allude to the tests not being a true reflection of virginity testing. Money is central to this practice and thus it loses the cultural meaning that it is supposed to possess. Some girls in this study revealed that they attend virginity testing although it does not assist them or prevent them from having sex. However, they also revealed that not all of the girls who attend reed celebration are tested during the ceremony. Girls in this study assert that virginity testing is a cultural myth because the reed cannot detect whether girls are virgins or not. When asked about processes of virgin testing, girls responded:

Noziqu:

No testing is done to all girls. Once umhlanga (reed) fell they (virginity testers) then assumes that you are not a virgin.

They revealed that it is believed that if the reed breaks or falls, that is a sign that a girl is no longer a virgin. Wadesango *et al.* (2011) assert that girls subscribe to this harmful culture to avoid bringing shame to their families as virginity brings pride. On the contrary, girls who are not virgins might attend the reed dance as a way of mocking and rejecting culture as they are aware of the reed myth and that they will not be tested as they know that not all girls are tested. However, pressure that is exerted on these girls not to bring shame to families (Wadesango *et al.*, 2011) by keeping their virginity has exposed girls to health dangers. Other girls use tactics that will make them be declared 'virgins' or rather make them to be perceived

as virgins by virginity testers when they have lost their virginity. They assert that girls insert toothpaste and meat in their vagina to reveal a hymen and that they are still virgins. Parents are ignorant of the fact that, due to lack of communication about sexual issues at home and exerting pressure on girls to keep their virginity, girls have developed these harmful tactics.

Nokukhanya:

No, abanye bashutheka izinto ngaphansi njengesibindi kubesengathi kunehlo umasekuthestwa (Some girls insert liver in their vagina so it looked like an eye during testing)

This data resonates with the findings by other researchers about the tactics used by girls to be perceived as virgins.

4.8 HIV AND AIDS AND SEXUAL RISK

HIV and AIDS is linked to sexual risk. When girls were asked about their understanding of HIV and AIDS, their responses were:

Penny, Luenda, Noziqu and Bonakele:

It kills.

Nokukhanya

It is incurable.

Popi:

Futhi ayilapheki (and is incurable).

The data shows that the girls understood that AIDS kills and is incurable. When girls were asked who they think is protected or safe from becoming infected with HIV and AIDS, they nodded their heads and responded;

All:

No, nobody is protected.

Nokukhanya:

Because HIV (ithathelana ngezindlela eziningi) is transmitted in many different ways like cuts, wounds and having unprotected sex.

Luenda:

Also caring for sick people without using gloves and accidents.

Girls express their understanding of the ways in which HIV is spread and that everyone (young and old across all races and socio-economic status) is susceptible to HIV and AIDS. This virus can be transmitted in many different ways including caring for the sick without wearing protective gloves and also assisting people who are involved in accidents.

When girls were asked about the belief of some people that having sex with a virgin would cure AIDS, they all responded:

No

Nokukhanya: No, what if the virgin (izalwe isisulelekile ngegcwane umawakhe) was born infected with HIV by her mother.

This data reveals that campaigns to provide awareness and information about HIV and AIDS have been successful. Girls had knowledge that having sex with a virgin cannot cure AIDS because some children i.e. virgins are born with the virus. Mother to child transmission was referred to - that a child might have been infected during birth or lactation. However, girls could not account for how the myth developed - virgins do not secrete or produce any substance that can kill viruses or cure AIDS even when they are HIV negative. Wadesango *et al.*, (2011) assert that in countries like Lesotho, Swaziland and South Africa, the myth that engaging in sex with a virgin can cure AIDS has resulted in psychological devastation of rape of young girls.

When girls were asked whether they use Tenofivir, the AIDS gel that is used to reduce HIV infections in women, and if their boyfriend approve if they use it and how can it put people at risk, they responded:

Nokukhanya:

No, he will think that I have HIV and AIDS. Uzothi ubani ongitshele ukuthi unegculazi (who told me he has HIV).

This data illustrates that boyfriends will assume that girls have HIV and AIDS or rather asked them who told them that boys have HIV and AIDS if they apply Tenofivir rather than regard Tenofivir as a measure to reduce transmission of infections like HIV and AIDS amongst heterosexual couples. This illustrates ignorance about prevention measures and increases susceptibility to sexual infections and HIV. These girls opt to expose themselves to sexual risk rather than use preventative measures because they do not want their boyfriends to think that they are infected with HIV.

4.9 ROLE OF MEDIA IN SEXUAL RISK

Young people are exposed to new technology which also plays a role in introducing them to all kinds of sexual identities and pornography. According to Selikow, Flisher, Mathews and Ketye (2006: 65) although media plays a productive role in creating awareness about sexualities, ‘media also expose young people to negative representations of sexualities like pornography and objectification of women’. When asked if they believe that media and technology (mixit, facebook, twitter, etc) expose young people to too much sex and leads them to engaging to sex for experiencing, girls responded:

Nokukhanya and Noziqu:

No, media is resourceful.

Bonani:

Sometimes media teach us about things that we should not do and those that we should do.

Popi:

Yes, we mms pornographic photos to each other through acebook and talk about sex.

This data reveals that girls have different views about the role of media and technology in exposing young people to sex. Some girls view media as resourceful since it educates them about sex, but it sometimes gives them too much information at an early age. Girls might be curious and want to experiment what they watch and read about in the media before they are mature enough to deal with the consequences. This could be exacerbated by the lack of interaction between young people and those people who send pornography and information to the media. The lack of this interaction limits chances for these young people to ask questions of consent that might bring clarity to them as they negotiate their sexuality. On the contrary, Popi said that the pornographic pictures on facebook encourage sex discussion amongst young people who send them to each other. Photos of half naked girls taken during celebrations are published in newspapers (Mudaly, 2012) and facebook which encourage young men and boys to search for these girls and befriend them so as to rape them. Sometimes, boys can overpower girls they date on facebook and Mixit and use them as sex slaves or prostitutes and in other cases for pornography. Sometimes boys post pornographic videos of their rape of girls. In this way social networks also encourage gender discrimination and subordination of girls. For these reasons, it is vital for girls to avoid friends, boys in particular, who discuss details of their sex experiments, and to stop watching videos and pornography on the media because that could pose more danger to girls as they negotiate their sexualities.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This study sought to understand what young African schoolgirls age 16 turning 17 from Umlazi township regard as sexual risk. It also sought an in-depth understanding about explanations that these young African girls, from a black township in particular, give for their sexual behaviours, attitudes and practices. In addition, it sought to provide understanding why these young girls expose themselves to risk by engaging in unprotected sex and how they construct their sexualities. This risky behaviour continues in spite of interventions and awareness. In addressing my concerns, I provided the research site and briefly outlined the biographies of the participants. I also provided both a review of international and South African literature on sexualities and HIV and AIDS statistics as this study takes place in the era of HIV and AIDS. This study is informed by gender power theories and, as a result, this includes a review of gender power and power subversion literature. I employed qualitative research design to articulate girl's perceptions, understanding and contexts that attest to the circumstances of these young girls. I described purposive sampling strategy, individual interviews and focus group discussion to provide an insight of young girls' understanding of sexual risk and provide a platform for the girls to interact with each other and come to one understanding as they share their individual experiences. Moreover, I also provided details of validity, trustworthiness and ethical considerations where I involved parents, the principal of the researched school, participants and the educational psychologists since the school lacks a school counsellor. I also described a detailed inductive analysis, themes that emerged and presented transcribed data. I then concluded with main findings of the study and discussions. I also made recommendations that can be implemented to address the findings of the study.

5.1.1 Family structures

Family structures play a fundamental role in the lives of young people as they negotiate their sexuality. Parents would assist to clarify questions that these girls might have rather than asking their friends and other family members. Whilst patriarchy, played within African culture, subordinates young girls, in this study girls seemed to subvert the power that subordinated them and put them at risk. Contrarily, the ways that these girls used to refute gender power put them at sexual risk as they have multiple partners.

5.1.2 Multiple partners

Girls have multiple partners to resist or counter gender power. Although they are aware of infectious disease, they still engage in sex. Girls revealed that they do not decide or plan to have sex, which means that they engage in unprotected sex. Engaging in unprotected sex does not only expose them to sexual risk but also to pregnancy. Girls might have multiple partners to replace a void space in their hearts for the love of parents that they never had. Sex education was provided by the learning area, Life Orientation, and clubs in schools were implemented to create awareness about sexual issues and empower learners. However, in this study, sex education taught in Life Orientation and between peers through Girls' Education Movement (GEM) is not preventing these young women from engaging in unprotected sex but rather encouraging them to have multiple partners. This is further perpetuated by the fact that some guardians in this study are not aware that the participants were already sexually active because issues of sex and relationships with the opposite sex are not discussed in these African families.

5.1.3 Communication

The dying out of 'amaqhikiza' in the townships, the older girls who traditionally advised younger ones, impacts negatively on the lives of these girls as they receive wrong advice from their friends. Friends who already had had sex discussed details of their sex lives which inspired girls to want to experiment.

In this study, young women could not discuss sexual issues with adults because they feared they would be punished and beaten. However, the study conducted by Jewkes *et al.* (2010) revealed that girls were not allowed to discuss boyfriend issues with parents as they were perceived by their parents as 'too young' to have boyfriends. Moreover, this study asserted that after intervention by 'stepping stones' (a programme that empowered girls to be self confident and teaches about life skills), which equipped parents and learners with communication skills, parents started to be actively involved in discussions during parents' meetings. Some parents and guardians from this study were open to discussion of issues of HIV and AIDS with these girls (Jewkes *et al.*, 2010) whilst some girls depended on school

Life Orientation, taught as part of the curriculum. As in the study conducted by Wood *et al.* (1998) violence, a male need to demonstrate sexual prowess and coercion present in adolescent sexual relationships is responsible for high sexual risk-taking amongst these young women. Instead of challenging this behaviour, some of the young women from black township conform to and comply with oppressive sexual practices that put them at risk (Jewkes *et al.*, 2010); whilst some refused to conform and assumed girl power by dumping boys who demanded sex.

5.1.4 Virginitly testing

Some girls in this study attend cultural Reed dancing '*umkhosi womhlanga*', but unfortunately these celebrations are not assisting girls to keep their virginitly. Girls revealed that few girls are tested and also that they pay virginitly testers to declare them 'virgins'. That the reed will break if one is not a virgin is a myth, the girls understand. It is this understanding that encourages girls to attend these celebrations whilst engaging in sex because it is ineffective. It also does not protect girls from exposing themselves to sexual risk.

The government, schools, societies and family structures have a vital role in educating young girls about their sexual identities. Girls in this study are from broken families and most of them are orphaned. They depend on social grants for their daily sustenance. Poverty in townships becomes a determinant for sexual risk. Because of a 'fast' life style, girls need to have material possessions. However, deeper understanding of the sexual practices and identities of both young girls and boys is required for adequate assistance in addressing their sexual risk. This view is supported by Mitchell (2011) when highlighting that more research is needed to explore modern sexual practices and cultures of young people.

Culture is diverse and dynamic, as is seen by the ways that these African girls negotiate their sexualities. The dynamism of culture empowers girls to be independent and to think critically with regards to sexual issues like determining sex and condom usage. Girls in this study subvert cultural myths that are designed to protect and educate them about the issues of sexualities. Girls also reject the system of patriarchy that subordinates women and girls. They choose to behave like boys by dating multiple partners rather than finding ways to deal with their social environments. As a result, African girls in the townships, in particular, are faced with many challenges that put them at risk. Peer influence also encourages girls to

experiment with sex and this might negate the good effects of peer education. Media, too, has binary roles; that of educating about sexual issues like sexual risk and protective sex as well as exposing girls to too much pornography.

African schoolgirls should be guided in schools through sex education and peer education on how to deal with peer pressure in this era of HIV. All stakeholders should arrange seminars that will provide a platform for both boys and girls to discuss issues that affect them today particularly issues around sexualities. Seminars would provide an insight from these young minds for the government and traditional leaders to know how to assist these girls, rather than focusing on the past cultural practices that are ineffective and put girls at risk.

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5 May 2011

Ms. PN Zwane (209539556)
School of Education Studies

Dear Ms. Zwane

PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/0088/08Q
PROJECT TITLE: Negotiating Sexuality: Challenges facing young African schoolgirls in the era of HIV and AIDS.

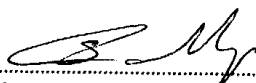
NEED FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL WAIVED

I wish to inform you that the need for ethical review has been waived because this protocol forms part of a broader research protocol which has already received ethical clearance (HSS/0088/08).

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully



.....
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

cc. Supervisor – Prof. D Bhana
cc. Ms. T Mnisi/Mr. M Memela

University of KwaZulu-Natal
Faculty of Education

Private Bag X03

Ashwood

3605

Dear participants

I am a Masters degree student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. It is the requirement of the faculty of Education to undertake a research study. I would like to invite you to participate in this study that I am undertaking as part of my degree.

A brief description of the study follows:

Title: Negotiating sexuality: Challenges facing young African schoolgirls in the era of HIV and AIDS.

In this study I will seek to get an understanding on what influence young schoolgirls to continue engaging in unprotected sex irrespective of the risky consequences. The interview will be audio-taped. I will be careful to use the information that you supply in a manner that will ensure your anonymity. In order to protect your identity I will use pseudonyms in my transcripts and my research. If you are uncomfortable at any time you are at liberty to stop the interview and withdraw from the study.

Universal principles such as honesty and respect will direct my research. I hope that this research will make a positive contribution to our youth regarding sexual risk and gender inequality.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours faithfully

Student

Informed Consent

Declaration

I _____ (full name of participant)
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this research and I consent to my participating in the research. I understand that I am liberty to withdraw from the research at any time should I feel uncomfortable with participating in this study.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

University of KwaZulu-Natal
Faculty of Education
Private Bag X03
Ashwood, 3605
KwaZulu-Natal South Africa

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Consent for learners to participate in research study

I am currently studying for a Masters degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. It is the requirement of the faculty of Education to undertake a research study. I wish to ask for permission to undertake research. This will entail interviewing six girls aged 16 turning 17. The details of the research are outlined below:

TITLE: Negotiating Sexuality: Changes facing young African schoolgirls in the era of HIV and AIDS.

In this study I will seek to get an understanding on what influence young schoolgirls to continue engaging in unprotected sex irrespective of the risky consequences. Universal principles such as honesty, justice and respect will direct my research. I hope that this research will make a positive contribution to our youth regarding sexual risk and gender inequality. Participants will be treated with fairness and honesty and I will ensure confidentiality and anonymity by using pseudonyms. Participants are free to withdraw from the research at any stage without negative or undesirable consequences to themselves.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours faithfully

Student

Informed Consent

Declaration

I _____ (full name of principal) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this research and I consent to my school participating in the research. I understand that I am liberty to withdraw from the research at any time should I feel uncomfortable with participating in this study.

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL

DATE

University of KwaZulu-Natal
Faculty of Education
Private Bag X03
Ashwood, 3605
Kwazulu-Natal South Africa

The Principal
Department of Education
Dear Sir/Madam

Request to conduct research at Izimbali high school.

I am a Masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa.

My research title is **Negotiating sexuality: Challenges faces young African schoolgirls in the era of HIV and AIDS.**

I humbly request your permission to conduct research within the above school. The research will be carried by me, Mrs Zwane. I will engage in semi-structured open-ended focus group interviews and individual interviews.

In this study I will seek to get an understanding on what influence young schoolgirls to continue engaging in unprotected sex irrespective of the risky consequences.

Yours faithful

Zwane Pinky N.

University of KwaZulu-Natal
Faculty of Education
Private Bag X03
Ashwood
3605

Dear Parent/Guardian

Re: Consent for learners to participate in Research study.

My name is Mrs Zwane. I am currently studying for a Masters degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. It is the requirement of the faculty of Education to undertake a research study. I wish to ask for permission to undertake research. This will entail interviewing high school girls aged 16 turning 17. The details of the research are outlined below:

Title: Negotiating sexuality: Challenges facing young African schoolgirls in the era of HIV and AIDS.

In this study I will seek to get an understanding on what influence young schoolgirls to continue engaging in unprotected sex irrespective of the risky consequences. Universal principles such as honesty, justice and respect will direct my research. I hope that this research will make a positive contribution to our youth regarding sexual risk and gender inequality. Participants will be treated with fairness and honesty and I will ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Participants are free to withdraw from the research at any stage without negative or undesirable consequences to themselves.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours faithfully

Student

Informed Consent

Declaration

I _____ (full name of parent/guardian) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this research and I consent to my school participating in the research.

I understand that I am liberty to withdraw from the research at any time should I desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN

DATE

