

**AN EXPLORATION OF LESBIAN AND GAY STUDENTS EXPERIENCES AT A  
TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN HARRY  
GWALA DISTRICT IN KWA-ZULU NATAL**

By

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## **DECLARATION**

I affirm that the entire thesis, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my original work.



.....  
**Alfred Khayaletu Zincume**

As the candidate's supervisor/s. I have approved this thesis for submission.

.....

**Professor Ayub Sheik**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, my late father, Mr Mzokhulayo Zincume and my living parent, Mrs Beaty Nomhle Zincume (my mother) who gave me support from early childhood until now. If she was not there I could not have achieved my targets. I also dedicate to my three children, Owami, Sinazo and Siphosethu Zincume.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABBREVIATIONS	DESCRIPTION
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
DIN	Document Identification Number
ECU	European Change Unit
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
EU	European Union
AFM	Apolostic Faith Mission
RRA	Reconstructionist Rabbanical Association
CJLS	Committee on Jews Law and Standards
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
UNHRC	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

POSA	Public Order and Sexual Act
NACOSA	National Aids Convention of South Africa

## Definition of Terms

This section contains terms and concepts that exist within the conceptualization of sexual minorities. There are many ideas, concepts, and acronyms that overlap and state the same idea but in different ways. This may be confusing and may undermine the contexts and meanings of what is trying to be conveyed to the reader. The sexual minority acronym, LGBT, grew to contain lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (Healey, 2014). For the purposes of this research, I refer to lesbian and gay. My intention is not to negate or marginalize bisexual, transgender group, but to focus my research specifically on lesbians and gay. The study explore the experiences of lesbian and gay students in a rural Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Harry Gwala District in Kwa-Zulu Natal. To better understand terminology used throughout this dissertation, below is a list of terms and their definitions as they apply to this study.

**Bisexual**—“A person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to more than one sex, gender, or gender identity though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree”

**Coming out**—admitting to oneself and/or others regarding sexual orientation or gender identity. This can be done in many ways, for example: face-to-face, written, or social media. This is an on-going, life-long process (D’Augelli, 1992).

**Discrimination**—“A socially structured and sanctioned phenomenon, justified by ideology and expressed in interactions, among and between individuals and institutions, intended to maintain privileges for members of [certain] groups at the cost of deprivation of others” (Thornton, 2010).

**Gay**—Individuals who identify as having a same-sex sexual orientation. Within the sexual minority population, this can be used as an umbrella term for males and females.

**Homophobia**—this is a fear or dread of close contact with homosexuals. It is also used to encompass the hostility and discrimination experienced by non-heterosexuals (Mwanawina, 2012).

Hetero-sexism—the assumption that all people are or should be heterosexual. Hetero-sexism excludes the needs, concerns, and life experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer people while it gives advantages to heterosexual people. It is often a subtle form of oppression, which reinforces realities of silence and erasure.

Sexual minority—“Group whose sexual identity, orientation or practices differ from the majority of the surrounding society” (Mwanawina, 2012).

Sexual orientation—“An enduring pattern of or disposition to experience sexual, affection, or romantic desires for and attractions to men, women, or both sexes. An individual’s sense of personal and social identity based on those desires and attractions, behaviours expressing them, and membership in a community of others who share them” (Mullin, 2016).

Queer—Once a derogatory term, the word —queer has been embraced by the GLBT community and is used as an umbrella term for all sexual minorities.

Lesbian—A woman who has emotional, social, psychological, and physical commitments and responses to other women.

Gender Identity—the gender that a person sees themselves as. This can include refusing to label oneself with a gender.

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of lesbian and gay students at a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College in a rural town of Kwa-Zulu Natal. The aim of the study is to understand how lesbian and gay students define being gay, how they are being treated and how they navigate in those spaces of discomfort within and beyond the college. The study looks at the treatment of students at the TVET College in Uzimkhulu, a rural town, in Kwa-Zulu Natal. This is a qualitative study and narrative inquiry design was also used for the study. Nine participants were sampled for the study through snowball sampling, six girls and three boys, who identified themselves as lesbians and gays. Semi-structured, focus group and visual methodology interviews were used as a tool for data generation. During the interviews the participants were asked questions about their experiences within and outside the college. Data were sorted and classified according to categories and themes.

The study found that the participants understood what it means to be gay. The study also revealed that the majority of participants experienced difficulties when they come out to their parents, friends and community members. Some of the lesbian and gay students hide their sexual orientation because they avoid to be kicked out from their families. The study also reported that conservative nature of communities and social relations in the rural area pose an added difficult to gay and lesbian student. Patriarchy is more dominant and the community is under control of chiefs and this type of community has a strong anti-gay views and the conception that homosexuality is un-African. The study also revealed that there is an interpersonal conflict among gay groups because there are those members within the group who like to dominate like “butch”. Church also frowns upon homosexuals because church believers believe that it is contrary to the teachings of the Bible.

College can help to create a welcoming environment for students and if all stakeholders involved play their role. College should establish non-discriminatory policy that protects discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity expression. Community members and parents should give support to all people who identified themselves as lesbians and gays and staff should support students in their academic exploration of LGBT issues.

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1.1. Introduction

The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of lesbian and gay students at a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college in a rural town of Kwa-Zulu Natal. This study investigates how lesbians and gay students are being treated and how they navigate in those spaces of discomfort within and beyond the college. The focus of the study is on the problems of homophobia pertaining to lesbian and gay students in a TVET College, which historically, is more pronounced in rural areas.

Homophobia infers negative, fearful or hateful attitudes and behaviours towards gay men and lesbians (Herek, 2004). According to Hudepohl, Parrot & Zeichner (2010), the most common definition of homophobia is an attitude of hostility towards people with a homosexual orientation. The definition of homophobia tends to individualise the process of discrimination and rejection of homosexual individuals (Fraisie & Barrientos, 2016). To investigate this phenomenon, this study recruited nine participants who are students in a TVET College and who self-identified as lesbians and gays.

The study is significant because the rural areas in Kwa-Zulu Natal are overtly patriarchal in nature and political rule is still under chieftaincy. Historically, societies have certain cultural and societal taboos that tend to privilege heterosexuality, erasing, undervaluing, oppressing or discriminating against the LGBT community in the process (Francis & Msibi, 2011). In a South African context, the Bhaca-Zulu culture and societal relations are extremely prejudiced against lesbians and gays, as homosexuality is a taboo and rubs against ingrained cultural norms. Culture gives people an identity which makes them unique and different from other people of other cultures and every society has a different culture where people share a specific language, traditions, behaviours, perceptions and beliefs. The value systems of a particular culture shape their beliefs and social relations. According to Foucault (1984) individuals who do not comply with the social norms of the dominant discourse in society, are branded as abnormal in a patriarchal society.

In South Africa and in many parts of the world today, a person identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered and intersex (LGBT) means one is vulnerable to violence in various forms (Muller, 2013). This can be enacted through physical violence as we have seen in violent attacks of black lesbian women in South African townships (Kennedy & Fisher, 2010; Muholi,

2004) or the structural violence that comes from societal norms that seek to limit or condemn same sex desires (Meyer, 2008).

In response to these cases, the new democratic government in South Africa quickly adopted progressive legislation, passing laws that enshrine gender equality and freedom of expression (Munro, 2012). Despite the fact that South Africa passed a Bill of Rights in 1996 that forbids discrimination against individuals on the grounds of sexual orientation, the LGBT community still suffers homophobia, particularly in townships and rural areas (Mogotsi, Mavhandu-Mudzusi, Mthombeni & Nduna 2017). Hosken (2017), in his study, found that the approximately 50% of the respondents knew or had heard of a gay individual who has been assaulted, raped or murdered for being gay. The University of Minnesota Select Committee on Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Concerns (1993) reported that in both written testament and public hearings, undergraduate and graduate students described the humiliating and demeaning environments in which they were expected to function both in and out of the classroom. The students reported occasions when faculty made derogatory jokes, hostile and demeaning comments and even implied that violence directed against lesbians and gay men is justified (University Minnesota Select Committee on Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Concerns, 1993, Renn 2000). The findings also reported that 66% of lesbian and gay students feared harassment or discrimination and 40% feared harassment or discrimination by professors.

How the research participants survive hostility and challenges in a majority heterogeneous learning environment is certainly worrying. Issues of sexual orientation in and out of classrooms have a significant impact on the learning environment for all students but especially for those who identify as lesbians and gays (Bratica, 2018). By supporting academic inquiry into sexual orientation topics and creating a welcoming campus environment for all students, faculty contributes not only to the academic success of students but also to the development of a positive self-identity.

The study will contribute to professional knowledge by providing insight into challenges that lesbian and gay students face in the TVET College. It will also provide recommendation to make the TVET College to be an inclusive learning institution accommodating diverse sexual orientations. I begin this chapter by locating the study in the geographical context of Umzimkhulu, which is the designated research site. Then I outline the problem statement of the study, statement of purpose, research objectives, and research questions. Thereafter, I



discuss the overview of the methodology that informs this study. I also explain the rationale for the study and finally, I outline the organisation of the thesis.

## **1.2. Geographical context of Umzimkhulu**

Umzimkhulu is both an IsiXhosa and an IsiZulu name meaning a “Big Great house”. The name is taken from the Umzimkhulu River where the town is located (Human Sciences Research Council.). It is located in Harry Gwala District. About 90.8% of the population reside in rural areas while the remaining 9.2% are urban based. Umzimkhulu faces severe backlogs with respect to water, sanitation and electricity provision. The town lies 243 kilometres north-east of Mthatha and 18 kilometres south-west of Ixopo. Initially under the apartheid government, the town was then incorporated into the Transkei homeland in accordance with the Bantustan policy of the National Party. Until 1 March 2006, the town was part of an exclave of the Eastern Cape before being transferred to Kwa-Zulu Natal as part of the Twelfth Amendment of the Constitution of South Africa.

It has a population of about 193 672. The people living in the rural areas are mostly uneducated and still adhere to the patriarchal practices and values of Bhaca-Zulu culture. There is non-recognition of gay people and gender inequality is rife in these communities. Religion and the notion of God also play a vital role in suppression of gay groups and in maintaining unequal power relations between males and females. The place is also governed by various hierarchal and gendered traditional values and practices. Umzikhulu is divided into 28 administrative areas administered by chiefs and headmen.

## **1.3. Problem Statement**

The study looks at the treatment of students at the TVET College in UMzimkhulu (rural town in Kwa-Zulu Natal). It collects data and contemplates the challenges these self-identified students face in mediating their social lives amongst their families, communities, and in the micro-cosmic world of the college. The study specifically focuses on how teaching and learning impacts students who are of a homosexual orientation. This is worthy of research because sexual minority students report experiences of various form of violence ranging from physical assault, rape and murder to subtle forms such as micro-aggression (Brink, 2017). According to Brink (2017) almost 12% of students reported that they have been forced into sexual intercourse against their will. These negative behaviours have been directed at lesbian and gay students, which ultimately leaves them with little confidence that the Higher Education sector can constructively deal with their marginalisation and experiences of violence.

In fact, higher institutions are a reflection of the larger South African society and they are struggling with the same social issues and prejudice present in the campus environment. Consequently, the lesbian and gay students face homophobia, bi-phobia, trans-phobia, stigma, prejudice and violence on a daily basis at university. This caused some students to hide being identified as gay which curtails their freedom and their right to be who they are (Bratica, 2018). OUT LGBT Well-being found that over half of all LBGT students reported having experienced discrimination in schools. Intersex South Africa Issa & Iranti (2018) has used anecdotal reports on the mistreatment of intersex students to push for future educational campaigns about bodily diversity, whilst the Coalition of Lesbians have argued for an intersectional approach to sexuality-education which engages reproductive health issues for queer and gender queer students.

For college students who are gay or lesbian, normative expectations of identity exploration are more complex as they simultaneously confront the processes of gay or lesbian identity development (D'Augelli, 1992). Research suggests that gay and lesbian students are victimized at a far higher rate than others on college and university campuses with rates four times higher than the rate of victimization reported for general student population (Comstock, 1991). Comstock (1991) reveals that gay and lesbian students are often threatened or followed; have objects thrown at them; are punched, hit, kicked or beaten; are victims of vandalism or arson; are spat at; and some are assaulted with weapons.

These issues of meta-narratives, mentalities and identities still pose a major challenge among students across university campuses in South Africa. Mentality is a specific manner of thinking and feeling among a group of people, a manner of understanding, experiencing and evaluating (Sruk, 1980). Different groups in society think differently and develop different mentalities and those that are supported by the majority become dominant ones (Leskosek & Sirec, 2009). Therefore, it is rational to surmise that the perceptions of a campus social environment has an impact on academic performance of students (Kuh, 2001, 2003, 2009).

Although the college is regarded as a space in which harassment, intimidation and violence are not tolerated, this is not the case for LGBT students (Rankin & National Gay Task force, Policy Institute, 2003). Mavhandu-Mudzusi (2014) found that derogatory terms such as *isitabane*, *double adaptor*, *sis bhuti*, *Jason and Senzo*, *Adam and Steve*, *Eve and Eve*, *brother-sister* were used by heterosexual students to refer to and belittle LGBT students. In his study, Msibi (2012) further found that students did not want to be associated with queer identifying students and

further revealed an immense fear of being perceived as or becoming LGBT. Lesbian and gay students are exposed to normalised homophobia which positions same-sex attraction as abhorrent and unacceptable in higher education spaces and some students have established strategies for defending homophobic cultures, thus creating an unsafe space for LGBT students who live in such an environment (Valenshia & Thabo, 2015).

In addition, Barry (2014), conducted a study on “Hetero-sexual students’ attitudes towards gays and lesbians”, added that attitudes shape people’s behaviour and in college setting, young LGBT students are vulnerable to discrimination and thus is often a time when young people are still shaping their identities. The study found that gender, race, religiosity, religious attendance and rural or urban upbringing do influence students’ attitudes significantly. The study also found that there are fairly consistent predictors of students’ attitudes concerning lesbians and gays.

Various South African higher education researchers have also offered practical ideas to minimize the hatred of lesbian and gay students. Hames (2007) has described how the rollout of South African LGBTI policies of university campuses should include the provision of unisex toilets; gender reconstructive surgery leave; equitable access for same sex couples in student housing and provision of safe spaces for LGBTI socialization. Ngidi and Dlamini (2017) have shown the value of using film and transformative pedagogy to address homophobia and destabilising hetero-normativity at a Kwa-Zulu Natal vocational college. Msibi (2018) indicates how Black male teachers construct sexual and professional identities to both accommodate the structural dictates of educational settings, and simultaneously resist them in ways that are supportive of LGBTI students. The Department of Education identifies social transformation, human rights and equality as important principles in educational transformation (Lees, 2017). The identification of homophobia in schools and teachers’ complicity poses challenges to these principles.

#### **1.4. Statement of purpose**

The major purpose of this study is to create awareness of homophobic social relations endured by the TVET students. From gender activist perspectives, this study suggests ways in which these problems can be confronted to make an inclusive and tolerant environment both in the college and among the family and the community.

#### **1.5. Research objectives**

The objectives of the study are:

- ✓ To gain an understanding of lesbian and gay identity.
- ✓ To explore lesbian and gay students' experiences at a TVET College.

### 1.6 Research questions

The critical research questions that guide the study are as follows:

1. A) How do lesbian and gay students experience being homosexual at a TVET College?  
B) Why do they hold these views?
2. What are the risk factors arising from their sexual orientation in a TVET College, if any?
3. What strategies do they use to navigate these risk factors, if any?

### 1.7. Overview of methodology

The study uses narrative inquiry as a research design. The scholars of narrative inquiry that shape the understanding of the study are: Andrew, Squire & Tamboukou (2008), *Doing Narrative Research*; Bruner (2004), *Life as narrative*; Clandinin & Connelly, (2000), *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in Qualitative Research*; Clandinin and Murphy (2007), *Looking ahead: Conversations with Elliot Mishler, Don Polkinghorne, and Amia Lieblich*. In Clandinin, D. J. (ed.) *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology*; Gibbs (2007), *Analysing Qualitative Data*; Hooks (1997), *Wounds of passion: A writing life*; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber (1998), *Narrative research: Reading, analysis and interpretation*; Pinnegar & Daynes (2007). *Locating narrative inquiry historically*. In D. Jean Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry. Mapping a methodology*; Trahar (2009), *Beyond the story itself: Narrative inquiry and Auto ethnography in Intercultural Research in Higher Education*, [41 paragraphs]. *Forums Qualitative Sozialforschung Forum: Qualitative Research*; Sarris (1993), *Keeping slug woman alive: A holistic approach to American Indian texts*; Moore & McCabe, (2005), *Introduction to the Practice of Statistics*; Clandinin, Huber, Steeves, & Li (2011), *Becoming a narrative inquirer: Learning to attend within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space*. In Trahar, S. (Ed.), *Learning in the borderlands*.

This is qualitative empirical research. The research explores the experiences of gay students in a Technical and Vocational Education and Training College in a rural town of Harry Gwala District. The instruments for data collection are as follows: they are semi-structured interview, focus group interviews and visual methodologies derived from individual participants. I used

a snowball approach. The snowball approach is a well-known, nonprobability method of survey sample selection that is commonly used to locate hidden populations (Nissim, & Tamar, 2011). This method relies on referrals from initially sampled respondents to other persons believed to have the characteristic of interest. I focussed on how they understand and navigate in these spaces of discomfort within and outside the college. I spent many hours documenting the narratives of gay students. The thesis is an analysis of gay students' responses on the issues of how they are being treated in the TVET College and how they react to this treatment. The wider implications of homophobic relations in society are discussed from a gender activist point of view.

#### **1.7.1. Sample**

The sample is drawn from the college students in a TVET College in Umzikhulu. The participants ranged from 19 to 30 years. There were three males and six females, according to the physiology. It is noted that these students self-identified as lesbians and gays. The research instruments which were used to collect the data from these participants were: semi-structured interview, focus group and visual methodologies. Data from these instruments were coded into themes and a discussion ensued which places the study in the context of existing literature pertaining to homosexual students experience of teaching and learning. The study also discusses the implications of the data that makes recommendations to address research problems.

#### **1.8. Research assumptions**

It is significant for me to state my own bias and perspectives as this is a very controversial topic in the location of the study and in the wider South African public space. As a heterosexual male, I am principal in multi-grade school. I have a tolerant and sympathetic understanding of these students. I respect and value gender diversity. I believe that I will not be biased in interpreting the data from research participants.

#### **1.9. Rationale of the study**

Gay students endure a high level of discrimination in rural South Africa. Students who engage in same sex relationship or, who are non-gender conforming are criminalized and considered as taboo in most African countries (Goddard, 2004; Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2014).

Discrimination is a practice of treating a particular group in a society less fairly than others (Hornby, 2010). Umzimkhulu is one of the rural towns where gay students encounter a great degree of exclusion. In this place, traditional leaders and ethnic doctrine are the key drivers that are used to discourage homosexual behaviour. These beliefs have left many individuals locked in the closet with a fear to come out as they are sometimes attacked and killed. Unlike heterosexual students, the gay students have no freedom to express their sexuality and when they come out they face negative societal responses and attitudes, consequently, they feel ashamed, isolated and afraid. The society strongly enforces codes of behaviour and the gay group see themselves as not fitting in the roles expected by their friends, parents and greater society.

Furthermore, the communities practice traditional and cultural norms, customs and practices. In fact, girls are socialized in different ways in comparison to boys. They are prepared for their roles as wives, taught to respect husbands, and are encouraged to look forward to getting married. Those boys who discontinue undergoing customary education are discriminated against with words like “*Inkwenkwe or Umfana*” which means a “little boy” even if he is older than the perpetrator. Obedience and respect are tools to maintain order and peace in society and in the households. The elders in the society are the instruments by which this knowledge is communicated and these standards of behaviour are enforced.

This study is triggered by my observation in my community where lesbians and gays are oppressed by traditional laws, beliefs and customs. They do not have a place to live the way they are and where their sexual identification is accepted and respected. Since they are the males and females in terms of gender, they are expected to conform to their gender roles. Moreover, I observed in one of the TVET Colleges whereby the students who are perceived as gays or lesbians are treated differently by other students. This study is also influenced by the narratives of students who are perceived as gays in relation to their interaction with various students and officials in the college.

In the year 2017 when we, as teachers, attended the meeting which was called by the department of education in the TVET college hall, I observed that there was a fight. There was a male student, who had slapped another male student who was perceived as gay and was making derogatory comments about him. Through these actions I have realized that there is hate or homophobic attacks towards the students who are perceived to be gay or lesbian in the campus. This situation relates to my experience while I was a student in 1999 at Vista

University where I observed the students who were straight did not want to sit with the students who were perceived as gays. When the gays came to sit with them, they moved to another table. This was a painful situation and gay students felt sanctioned for their sexual orientation.

In another case, the friend of my sister (lesbian), who was doing her a final year in this TVET College, was gang raped by males outside the campus since they were renting houses which were near the institution. This traumatising story severely touched me because the male heterosexual students wanted to show her that she is not a lesbian but a “normal” girl. As Social Justice Student and as a researcher, I decided to gain a deeper understanding of the lives of the lesbian and gay students, as well as how they are treated by society.

This study is also prompted by my emotional well-being and remorse for the students who are lesbians and gays in various campuses in South Africa. I am also influenced by an understanding that gays and lesbians are also human beings. They should have similar rights as stipulated in the Constitution of South Africa and the Bill of Rights of all citizens. As the Bill of Rights indicates that there should be no discrimination of other people either in terms of sex or gender, this has led to an understanding that gays and lesbians should not be discriminated in terms of their sexual status.

My observation of the above scenarios and actions directed to gays and lesbians came to a point where I realized that most students who are perceived as gays or lesbians are hiding their sexual status, with a fear of being victimized or bullied by other students in the campus. This situation might lead to a point where the gays and lesbians performance at school could drop and students will suffer emotionally. The above observation and narratives have activated my potential to gain a deeper understanding as to why the actions or comments directed to lesbians and gays happen as they do.

As a Social Justice Student, I understand that the issues of sexuality and issues of power tend to ‘overthrow’ each other in the process. I understand the issues of power, dominance and subordination which come into play amongst the students in various campuses, using sexuality as a trigger through the issues of hate and dislike of gays and lesbians. As I learnt in the Social Justice Education, I realized that it may have a bad or disastrous impact to the society and also would descend into violence and hatred amongst students. Now I have observed that gays and lesbians are living in fear. They are subordinated to follow the ‘normal’ sexuality stream of heterosexuals who are dominants and who want to control society with their issues of dominance and belief that heterosexuality is the conventional ‘way of life’.

I have noticed that there are unmerited actions directed to students who are perceived as gays or lesbians in a TVET College, and this study prompted me to gain a deeper understanding as to why these things happen to them. This study explores lesbian and gay students' experiences at a TVET College in Kwa-Zulu Natal in Harry Gwala District with the intention of getting a deeper understanding of how they cope in those spaces of discomfort.

### **1.10. Organization of the thesis**

The thesis consists of the following chapters

#### **Chapter One**

Chapter One introduced the research topic, research objectives and research questions and provides a general overview of the study and explained the rationale of the study.

#### **Chapter Two**

The second chapter is a review of relevant literature. I reviewed various local, national and international studies on experiences of gay students. The literature is organized according to themes. I firstly started by defining Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender. Then I followed by discussing the following themes: lesbian and gay students' experiences in Higher Education, coming out in college, lesbian and gay students' experiences in their respective communities, risk factors facing lesbian and gay students, traditional perspective on lesbian and gay students, religious perspective on lesbian and gay students and legal framework on lesbians and gays.

#### **Chapter Three**

Chapter Three discusses the theoretical framework and I explained why I have chosen it.

#### **Chapter Four**

Chapter Four discusses the research methodology. It explains the research design and research paradigm. It uses narrative inquiry in conjunction with queer theory and establishes a justification for their use. I also discussed the data gathering process, ethical consideration, limitation of the study, validity and trustworthiness and data analysis.

#### **Chapter Five**

The findings of the study are discussed.

#### **Chapter Six**



Chapter Six is analysing and synthesizing the data.

## **Chapter Seven**

This chapter concludes the study, summarizes the key features of the study and reflects upon its limitations and implications.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In many societies, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex (LGBTI) individuals are subject to serious human rights abuses because they do not conform to culturally established gender norms. As a result of their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, gender

expression or sex characteristics, LGBTI people are at heightened risk of violence, abuse, discrimination and exploitation.

Consequently, the primary purpose of this study is to seek an understanding of lesbian and gay identity. Including, understand the social interaction and treatment that lesbian and gay students face directly or indirectly within. As well as beyond the confines of the research site. The research site is a TVET College in a deep rural area of Kwa-Zulu Natal at Harry Gwala. The overarching research design has therefore afforded these lesbian and gay students a platform to let their voices be heard and in so doing, provides a glimpse into how they understand, identify and navigate the places and spaces in which they feel discomfort.

This chapter will attempt to highlight the gaps that exist within the literature on the experiences of lesbian and gay students. In light of the above, the literature review presented in this chapter discusses the empirical research studies and theoretical viewpoints related to the experiences of lesbian and gay students. These students have agreed to be participants in this study and are willing to share their experiences with the researcher. This literature review is organized thematically.

The literature presented in this study is drawn from the locally, nationally and internationally related articles pertaining to the experiences of lesbian and gay students who are affected directly or indirectly. I review the literature directly related to the following research questions driving this study:

1. A) How do lesbian and gay students experience being homosexual at TVET College?  
B) Why do they hold these views?
2. What are the risk factors arising from their sexual orientation in a TVET College, if any?
3. What strategies do they use to navigate these risk factors, if any?

The first question is addressed in this review by engaging with the literature that provides an in-depth definitions of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender from different theoretical perspectives. I shall therefore limit my discussion to what the following scholarly works and authors have reported with regard to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender identities: Mwanawina, (2016); Sharpe & Uchendu (2014), Gunderlov (1989); Eliason (1996); Cochran & Mays (2001); Gonsiorek & Weinrich, (1991); Chapman & Brannock (1987). Then in line with my second, third and fourth questions, I continue the review by contemplating literature

that identifies spaces in which lesbian and gay students experience discomfort. I also proceed to draw from an interdisciplinary body of literature that discusses lesbian and gay students' experiences; namely: D'Augelli (1989, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1999, 2003); Herek (2009); Whipple (2006); Lopez & Chisssm (1993); Rankin & Nationa Gay & Lesbian Task Policy (2010); Lynch (2005); Butler, Alpaslan, Struumpher & Austbury (2003); Ardnt & Bruin (2006); Kiguwa & Nduna (2017); Hames (2012); Ngcobo (2007); Soudien (2008); Aleksandrs (2019); Reddy (2002); Msibi (2009, 2011); Butler & Astbury (2008); Francis & Msibi (2011); Lesch, Brits & Naidoo (2017); Sithole (2015); Woods & Unitec (2013); Wang, Dey, Soldati, Weiss, Gmel & Mohler-Kuo (2014); Torres, Jones & Renn (2009); Craig, Austin, Rashidi & Adams (2017); Schmidt & Nilsson (2006); Coker, Astin & Schuster (2010); Matthyse (2017); Butler & University of Port Elizabeth (2000); Evans & Broido (1999); Hall & ECU (2010); Letsoalo (2016); Valenshia & Thabo (2015); Vincent & Minyuki (2017); Kheswa (2016); Kotegast & Van de torn (2018); Holland, Mathews & Schott (2013); Rockman (2013); Kus (2014); Pope (1995); Appleby, & Anastas (1998); Ryan, Legate & Weinstein (2015); Arnett (2000); McAnulty (2012); Cain (1991); Cass (1984); Ragins (2004); McAleavey, Castonguay & Locke (2011); Rankin, Weber, Blumenfield, Frazer & Q Research of Higher Institute (2010); Sanloo (2005); Epstein (2004); Zubernis & Snyder (2007); Claymen (2014); Sears & Williams (1997); Maslow (1965); Muskopf (2015); Gortmaker & Brown (2006); Whitman & Nadal (2015); Critcher & Ferguson (2014); Durso & Gates (2012); Jiang, Percy & hesser (2010); Russel (2006); Hass et al (2000); Mavhandu-Mudzusi (2017); Sithole (2015); Okolie (2003); Sundstroom & Sperling (2020); Anzollota & Nova South Eastern University (2017); Kheswa (2016); Henderson (2010); Ryan, Russel, Heubner, Diaz & Sanchez (2010); Cele, Sibiya & Sokhela (2015); Allotey (2015); Higa et al (2014); Robinson, Levy, Lee, Leuchter & O'Brasky (1998); Detrie & Lease (2007); Mayock, Bryan, Carr & Kitching (2009); Roggermans, Spruyt, Van Drogenbroek & Kepens (2015); Kite & Deuax (1987); Masson & Nkosi (2017); Prado-Castro & Graham (2017); De Ru (2013); Pincheon (2000); Chinoko (2013); Youde (2017); Matolimo (2017); Melisa & Bryan (2013); Lin, Button, Su & Chen (2016); Ferfolia Stavrou (2015), Potgieter & Reygan (2012); Moulaison, Sandy, Brendler & Keh (2017), Lefebvre (2014); Punt (2006); Wester (2017; Herickson (2009); Rippin (213); Sandfort Reddy (2013); Tamale (2014); Vincent & Howell (2014); Craig, Austin, Rashidi & Adams (2017); Hatzenbuehler, Panchankis & Wolf (2012); Cameron-Ellis (2013); Holland, Mathews & Schott (2013); Kuptesecvych, Graham, Hunter, Hunt & Minesota State of University (2014); Page (2018); Nkomazana (2014); Izugbara, Bakare, Sebany, Ushie, Wekesah & Njagi, (2020);

Mengewsha (2006); Stewart (2014); Cele, Sibiya & Sokhela (2015); Mubangazi & Twinomugisha, (2011) and UNHRC (2016).

The authors of this literature provide an empirical and theoretical understanding of lesbian and gay experiences and its intersections with lesbian and gay students' experiences in higher education. Such as, coming out in college, lesbian and gay students' experiences in their respective communities and traditional perspective on lesbians and gays. Including risk factors facing lesbian and gay students, religious perspectives on lesbian and gay students, and a legal framework perspective on lesbians and gays.

## **2.2 Defining lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender**

A wide variety of terms are currently used to address and refer to persons of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics. While acknowledging that language evolves, I use the acronym LGBTI as an umbrella term to describe diverse groups of people who do not conform to conventional or traditional notions of male and female gender roles.

In this section I will further define lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender as the signifiers that are used predominantly in this study.

Gunderlov (1989) describes LGBT as an inclusive term, non-discriminatory and objective which is used to describe individuals who were previously referred to as either lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. This term is used in this study where appropriate as it is less discriminatory and more objective.

A lesbian refers to a woman whose enduring physical, romantic and emotional attraction is to other woman (Mwanawina, 2016). Mwanawina elaborates that some lesbians may prefer to identify as gay or as a gay women. The term 'gay' refers to a person whose enduring physical, romantic and emotional attraction is to people of the same sex. Some women prefer the word lesbian when referring to woman (Mwanawina, 2016). Chapman & Brannock (1987) suggested that the state of being a lesbian exists in women earlier to their recognition of it but that some incongruence is required to bring the lesbian identity to the forefront. They believed that for a woman to call herself a lesbian, might mean that she is a certain kind of person, like others with the same label. Including that she engages in certain sets of sexual behaviours; that

she adopts a certain set of specific gender-anomalous behaviours; that she will have a particular political orientation; that she has a certain physical appearance or style of dress; that she has been and always will be a lesbian and or that her behaviour is consistent with her identity. In research, the category of lesbian is fluid with estimates of membership that vary depending on the way a lesbian is defined. Including the degree to which they are willing to disclose very private and perhaps stigmatized behaviours (Gonsiorek & Weinrich, 1991). Lesbians do not constitute an identifiable homogeneous population for research study. Some lesbians may belong to a community of women who self-identify as lesbian and share a culture of values and norms beyond sexual behaviours. Other groups of lesbians may fear the identification as a lesbian, despite having emotional and sexual partnerships with women. This is due to the potential stigma or negative consequence; still others may simply view their sexual behaviours as fluid within a bisexual or heterosexual identity. Diversity among lesbians also occurs along dimensions of race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, and whether they have children or not, and so on (Gonsiorek & Weinrich, 1991).

Sharpe & Uchendu (2014) elaborate that lesbian and gay people feel that they were gay from their first sexual stirrings. There is no rationalization for these early feelings. They begin young and are very distinct and somewhere along the line they may find themselves attracted to neither sex nor experience earlier homosexual attractions in their young or adolescent life. Sharpe & Uchendu (2014) state that you find some men happily married or dating women until midlife and then find attractions to other men steadily growing. In the same way, women fall in love with other women after they discover that they have no sexual desires for men. Women seem to be able to sexualize whomever they love; men tend to love the person they sexualize. The difference between a gay sexual orientation and lesbian sexual orientation is related at least in some major way to social experience that treats boys and men a certain way and girls and women another (Mwanawina, 2016).

Mwanawina (2016), comments that the core attractions that form the basis for adult sexual orientation typically emerges between childhood and early adolescence. These patterns of emotional, romantic and sexual attraction may arise without any prior sexual experience. He states that people can be celibate and still know their sexual orientation, be it lesbian or gay or heterosexual. Different lesbian and gay people have different experiences regarding their sexual orientation. Some people know that they are lesbian or gay for a long time before they actually pursue relationships with other people. Others engage in sexual activity before assigning a clear label to their sexual orientation. Prejudice and discrimination make it difficult

for many people to come to terms with their sexual orientation identities, so claiming a lesbian or gay identity may be a slow process (Sharpe & Uchendu, 2014). The essentialist gender belief implicit in intersex hypotheses is that an attraction to women is a masculine trait, which in the case of Freud (1974), led to his theorizing about lesbians as having a masculine psychology.

The term gay has traditionally been used to present a diverse group or people who are in a relationship with someone of the same gender. However, Cochran & Mays (2001) argue that it is important to understand that the term gay lends itself to different assumptions in different groups within the gay community. That is, there is no homogenous undisputed understanding of sexual identity within gay communities. Research has found that males in relationships with other men do usually identify themselves as gay. There is also a tremendous ethnic diversity among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities and this contributes to the different perceptions of the term “gay”. Eliason (1996) states that many lesbian and gay people claim an identity based on a self-perception, of a self that is attracted to the same gender, a self that is attracted to particular human characteristics rather than a gender.

Mwanawina (2016), defines bisexual as a person who has the capacity to form enduring physical, romantic, and emotional attractions to those of the same sex gender or to those of another gender. He asserted that people may experience this attraction in many ways and degrees over a lifetime. Bisexual people need not have had any specific sexual experiences to be bisexual; in fact, they need to have had no sexual experiences at all to identify as bisexual.

Sharpe & Uchendu (2014) points out that bisexuals are more tolerated because boys in many parts of the world are not allowed to get near girls until they marry and many boys wait until they are older and richer. So under these circumstances, same sex attraction become possible. He further explains that men are more licensed with each other. Bisexuality is more prevalent in prisons where a man may take a male partner for the duration of his stay and perhaps stops same sex affiliations on his release. They may merely use another man sexually, denying that the act is homosexual. They insist that if they are the one penetrating the other sexual partner then they are still playing a heterosexual part. They have had significant love affairs with both sexes over a life time and define themselves more strongly in terms of the person they are in love with presently. Bisexuals are seen as sexual outlaws because they are seen as denying their real core sexual attraction to both straight people and gay people (Sharpe & Uchendu, 2014).

Transgender is an umbrella term of people whose gender identity or gender expression differs from the sex they were biologically born with. People under a transgender umbrella may

describe themselves as using one or more of a wide variety of terms including transgender (Mwanawina, 2016). Sharpe & Uchendu (2014) define transgender as men and women who believe they were born in the wrong body. Although anatomically they are one sex, Sharpe & Uchendu (2014) state transgender people experience themselves as the other sex. Sometimes, transgender people correct their bodies with surgery or hormone treatments and their sexual orientation are diverse. Some male to female transgenders pair with men, some with women. The same is true for female to male transgender. Transgender offers a robust challenge to strictly social constructionist views of gender and sexuality. Transgender signals to the rest of us that all is not as it appears and that our simple gender categories do not work for everybody. However for transgenders, their experience of their gender identity is essential; it feels as if they were born into the opposite sex. Especially those who seek sex reassignment surgery. Transgenders feel convinced that they have a true gender and sexuality; one that defies the explicit and implicit expectations of their family and their environment. They feel that their biology must be realigned to be consistent with their mental state.

This preliminary clarification (albeit rudimentary in a complex and richly ambiguous domain) is used to focus on lesbian and gay students' experiences in a higher institution (TVET College). I want to get a deeper understanding of how they are being treated and how they overcome the challenges they face in those spaces.

### **2.3. Lesbian and gay students' experiences in Higher Education**

This section covers the literature that discusses how lesbian and gay students are being treated in their respective institutions. It will also look on how higher institutions respond to gay issues.

Several quantitative and qualitative studies have researched the experiences of lesbian and gay college students (Whipple, 2006; D'Augelli, 1989; D'Augelli, 1992; Herek, 2009; Lopez & Chism, 1993; Rankin, & National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2003; Reynolds, 1979). These studies consistently have shown that lesbian and gay students experience harassment and discrimination across campus and are less likely to view the campus as welcoming or safe (Lynch, 2005 p.10). In addition to the negative experiences, lesbian and gay students have had many positive experiences as well. Despite all of the negative experiences, many lesbian and gay students have persisted in higher education and graduated—though there is no research that shows retention rates of lesbian and gay students to my knowledge.

#### **2.3.1. Campus experiences**

During their college experience, most lesbian and gay students go through what is commonly referred to as the coming out process. During this time lesbian and gay students progress through several stages of identity development where they acknowledge their sexual orientation or gender identity to themselves, explore this sexuality, integrate their sexual orientation into the rest of their self-concept, and disclose their sexual orientation to the individuals in their lives ( Lynch, 2005).

In South Africa, there is paucity of research on the experiences of homophobia among higher education students in university residences. There has been an emergence of research focused on the experiences of LGBT youth, mainly focused at the basic education (primary and secondary school) level (Butler, Alpaslan, Strumpher & Astbury, 2003). Research findings from the existing studies suggest that while the South African constitution has endeavoured to protect the rights of every individual, regardless of sexual orientation, such protections have not been extended to schools and higher education institutions (Ardnt & Bruin, 2006; Butler, Alpaslan, Strumpher & Astbury, 2003; Kiguwa & Nduna, 2017; Hames, 2012; Ngcobo, 2007). Soudien (2008) found that many South African institutions are still lacking when it comes to transformation, especially with regard to LGBT issues.

Due to the stigma attached to homosexuality, lesbian and gay students face harassment in higher institutions and these students receive hostile responses from management structures at college, university and other organisational settings, as well as religious societies. (Aleksandrs, 2019). Reddy (2002) notes that hate speech is often used against persons involved in same sex relations, with the intention being to demean, discriminate and ill-treat people identified as gay and lesbian. Such hate speech involves labels like *isitabane*, *ungqingili*, *inkwili*, *uvezubuso*, *danone*, *moffie* and *faggot* (Msibi, 2009; Butler & Astbury, 2008; Kiguwa & Nduna, 2017; Francis & Msibi, 2011; Ngcobo, 2007; Butler, Alpaslan, Strumpher & Astbury, 2003). Reddy (2002) also notes that same-sex desire is considered un-African, which suggests that it is alien and foreign. This is confirmed by Msibi (2011), who notes that present-day African society often falsely believes that, before the colonization of Africa, same-sex identities did not exist. Also, that it had been introduced to African society by westerners. This belief is also present in many educational contexts across the country. This in turn sets the standard belief that heterosexuality is a norm, leaving gay and lesbian people powerless and prone to discrimination and abuse. Francis and Msibi (2011) also note that the negative attitudes often facilitate a witch hunt involving the identification of these people who are perceived to be 'deviant'.



Lesch, Brits & Naidoo (2017) added that campus experiences range from covert to overt discrimination and victimisation in campus environment. These forms of discrimination mostly occurred in public spaces and are perpetrated by other students. In fact, South African secondary and tertiary students experience harassment, rejection and isolation, not only from fellow students but also school administrators and teachers. LGBT students complain that they are ignored when answering questions and even in the class discussions (Sithole, 2015). Lesch, Brits & Naidoo (2017) further outline that the LGBT students experience the campus environment as homophobic and attributed these to traditional patriarchal gender roles. Same sex couples in the university may, therefore, feel pressured to conceal their sexual orientation and, romantic and sexual relationships in order to avoid harassment and discrimination. This indicates that these students, all over the country, get harassed every day in schools and higher institutions. Students who may be perceived as being LGBT also get harassed. In addition, global research in LGBT youth suggests that institutions of learning are considered some of the most dangerous places to be, with bullying and assault, cyber and text bullying and high rates of suicide, self-harm and alcohol abuse (Woods & Unitec, 2013).

Furthermore, college students take on new responsibilities, developmental tasks, and changes to their environment and social supports as they enter college (Arnett, 2006). The intersectionality of general college stressors and developmental tasks add to the complexity of college student development (Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009; Wang, Dey, Soldati, Weiss, Gmel & Mohler-Kuo, 2014). Students who are struggling with the coming out process may need even more support as they begin to disclose their sexual orientation to others. The convergence of these developmental processes, on top of the stress of going to college, may be overwhelming for some college students. Lesbian and gay college students often deal with stressors that their heterosexual peers do not have to worry about. Examples of these stressors include coming out to your roommate and others, finding supportive and affirming friends, and safe spaces to discuss sexuality concerns. Lesbian and gay students who are not prepared or supported during the transition into college may experience a disruption in well-being, or even mental health issues.

Woods & Unitec (2013) conducted a study on the experiences and perceptions of Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex students. This was done by questioning students on how their experiences differed from heterosexual experiences and perceptions of the campus climate at the Unitec Campus in New Zealand. Woods & Unitec (2013), similarly states that LGBTIQ students are underrepresented as a minority group and face hostile environments. The report

expressed fears for their safety, noting high levels of harassment, particularly in the form of derogatory remarks. Many reported instances of physical abuse and a reluctance to come out or openly identify as LGBTIQ. In higher institutions, these students experience a lack of visibility and endure experiences of conflict in the classrooms related to their sexual identity. Most LGBTIQ students identify a campus environment which they perceive to be homophobic with a lack of visible leadership, policies and support for LGBTIQ students and their issues. The study found that LGBTIQ students experienced a level of invisibility and had a strong desire for a sense of community with other LGBTIQ students. The study reveals that there is a reluctance to be fully 'out' both professionally and personally on the Unitec campus.

Likewise with Woods & UNitec (2013), Craig, Austin, Rashidi & Adams (2017) on a study about gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender. The study pertains to students in colleges and universities found that homophobia, trans-phobia, hetero-sexism, including, hostility on college campuses contribute to fear, anxiety, and depression among LGBTQ students. They concluded that educational climates have a profound impact on the mental health of students. Consequently, LGBTQ students do not report incidents of victimization to administration for fear of retribution, such as lowered grades or disrespectful treatment in the classroom. Schmidt and Nilsson (2006) add that LGBTQ students sometimes do not experience direct victimization in school but they face a bottleneck effect in career development. They would spend much time in addressing internal psychological issues regarding suppression and neutralization of their identity rather than being able to direct that energy toward their classes or careers. Negative perceptions of campus climate are associated with emotional distress and academic disengagement as well as a discrete stigmatization of events such as victimization by peers (Coker, Austin & Schuster, 2010).

South Africa is seeking to redress discrimination facing the marginalised groups due to their sexual orientation and gender identity. The current White Paper for Post-school Education and Training is silent about the homophobia and trans-phobia which troubles South Africa and institutions of higher learning (Matthyse, 2017). Matthyse further clarifies that sexual orientation in the 1997 White Paper was included as one of the focus areas for building a safe and secure campus environment. This was necessary as it would discourage harassment and hostile behaviour towards LGBTIQ people. In his study, about the challenges homophobia and trans-phobia pose to LGBTIQ students at University of the Western Cape, Matthyse (2017), explains that universities are significantly patriarchal. Yet, they are tasked with the

responsibility of creating safe, inclusive and transformed environments for all students to achieve their full potential. The study found that LGBTIQ students experience high levels of stigmatisation, discrimination, verbal and physical abuse and violence.

This suggests that fellow students and lecturers have pushed many lesbian and gay youth out of the formal educational system. Including the subjects that are taught in schools, and colleges, in addition, ignore the social contributions and the needs of lesbian and gay students (Butler & University of Port Elizabeth, 2000). Butler & University of Port Elizabeth (2000) claims three specific obstacles which lesbian and gay youths face in the educational system. Firstly, the need for emotional and physical safety of lesbian and gay students is compromised. Secondly, the need to be accepted within the diversity of student life. For example, college and school authorities have waged bitter vitriol against lesbian and gay students when they attend social events. More needs to be done in recognition of lesbian and gay student organization and the denial of access to school and college facilities and funds must be addressed. Thirdly, the lack of curriculum content and library resources on homosexual literature is another obstacle. He added that school and college libraries very rarely have books on LGBT sexual orientation and those that exist are often outdated and biased. Information regarding LGBT people is not taught on par with other subjects in classes, if at all, and it is seldom mentioned in sexuality education classes. Lesbian and gay students are being forced to listen to the rhetoric that everyone else's sexual and emotional feelings are natural whilst theirs go unmentioned (Buttler & University of Port Elizabeth, 2000).

Similarly, Evans & Broido (1999) emphasised that campus has a significant impact on student's willingness to disclose their sexual orientation, with the reactions they receive when they do disclose it. For this reason, students who have not disclosed their sexual orientation often experience guilt and anxiety as well as loneliness and isolation. Many students stay in the closet because it provides a degree of safety from bigotry. Therefore, the hostility expressed by peers prevents many students to come out and seek support from others. In this regard, campus climates are unwelcoming and isolating environments for lesbian, gay, and bisexual students.

Hall & ECU (2010) typically explains that large scale homophobic discrimination occurs through ignorance, a lack of understanding about the issues and barriers LGBT students face and because some homophobic behaviours go unchallenged. Hall & ECU's (2010) research has revealed that homophobic behaviour that commonly goes unchallenged are notions such as making jokes that are degrading to a person's actual or perceived sexual orientation. Including,

casual use of the word gay or lesbian in a generally uncomplimentary context; revealing the sexual orientation of colleagues who are not out; making assumptions and judgements about people because of their sexual orientation and using religious views or beliefs as a basis to defend discrimination against or harassment of LGBT people. Hall & ECU (2010) also confirms that LGBT students avoid places where they are likely to experience discrimination and it is difficult for students to avoid conflict in their halls of residence so when conflict does arise it can have extremely serious consequences for those involved.

Similarly, Letsoalo (2016) indicates that schools and other educational contexts are the first sites of victimization for LGBTI youth and homosexual students. These youths encounter challenges in university campuses because of how they are perceived and subsequently treated. Likewise with Coker, Austin & Schuster (2010), in his study, on challenges faced by gay and lesbian students at the University of Limpopo, Letsoalo (2016) emphasizes that challenges experienced by homosexuals can prevent them from achieving academic success and engaging fully in campus endeavors. The failure of academic success may also be caused by fear, anxiety and isolation that LGBTI individuals face at school as a result, they may be unable to learn and cope effectively. He also points out that students who attend school in unfriendly environments are more likely to alienate themselves from these homophobic environments by being absent or dropping out.

Letsoalo (2016) further states that LGBTI students are more likely to be victims of unwelcoming and unfriendly educational experiences than heterosexual counterparts. Letsoalo (2016) added that the LGBT students are a greater risk for victimization and harassment and thus more likely to suffer emotional and behavioral problems. LGBT, due to prevailing hostile environments, prefer to conceal their sexual identities. To hide the truth, according to Letsoalo (2016), is seen as a defense mechanism which can reduce stress as well as a mechanism to keep friends that may otherwise not be willing to be friends with them because of their sexual identity. Unsympathetic school environments may lead to psychological problems such as isolation and a reluctance to participate in school based activities, as well as dropping out of school.

With regard to residence in tertiary institutions, Letsoalo (2016) states that residence halls have been found to play a major role in promoting homophobia and they have been found to promote the coming out process of LGBTI individuals depending on the atmosphere in the residence. The study found that heterosexual females are more accepting, understanding, friendly and

easy to get along with than heterosexual males who are seen as discriminatory and less understanding. The study also reports that their peers tend to express homophobic comments following the use of narcotics.

On the contrary, Valenshia & Thabo (2015) affirms that Higher Education residences are homes away from home in which students with different social and cultural backgrounds live together holding different norms, values and practices. Due to various diversities often present in higher education institutions, distance away from their communities, many lesbian, gay and bisexual students find space and freedom and negotiate their same sex identities when they reach these institutions. Findings reveal a persistent culture of sustained tolerance for homophobia among the general students in the residences, determined fundamentally by the systemic circumstances present in higher education.

Vincent & Minyuki (2017) argue that it is not everyone that has the privilege of experiencing home in this way. The idealised conception of home as a place of nurturing, stability and permanence that comes from caring relationships, support and mutual recognition has been criticized. This criticism comes from those who understand home as a place for enactment of patriarchal hierarchies, oppressions and violence. In their study, on gay, lesbian and bisexual students' experiences of being at home in South African universities, they state that homes are delineating of boundaries. Including that homes can also be a place of fear, abuse, isolation and loneliness for those who do not fit in with prescribed values outlining the criteria of inclusion. Home has been theorized as incorporating social networks, identity, privacy, continuity, self-expression, warmth, and feeling welcomed. Kheswa (2016) insists that attitudes and discrimination against lesbians and gays continue to rise. South African Higher Education has done little to address issues related to homophobia because derogatory names are still being used to degrade the human dignity of lesbians and gays since they are perceived as deriving from a problematic sexual culture. In his study, on the impact of discrimination on the psychological well-being of lesbian students at a South African university campus, he claims that institutions which fail to protect their lesbian and gay students tend to foment a breeding ground for stigma, discrimination, harassment, emotional abuse as well as violence. The aim of the study was to investigate how lesbian students at the university of Fort hare, deal with discrimination, and this indicates that discrimination is more prevalent in rural university campuses, forcing lesbian and gay students to become invisible. So lesbian and gay's socialization in universities is fraught with tension and anxiety due to heterosexist expectations. Although lesbian and gay students may be at greater risk for difficulties with emotional

regulation, interpersonal relationships and informed decisions, not all lesbian and gay students experience the same level of stressors (Kheswa, 2016). He further comments that there are lesbians and gays who display psychological hardiness, an integrated sense of self and who are resilient.

### **2.3.2. Higher Education Institution's response to lesbian and gay issues.**

Colleges and universities have a moral and legal obligation to support survivors and prevent discrimination against students. Woods & Unitec (2013) indicates that tertiary students need to feel safe from harm, to feel emotionally respected by their peers and academic staff in order to interact fully and securely, and to engage productively with the tertiary learning environment. A positive campus environment has been shown to promote student learning and socialization. When students do not experience a safe, inclusive and supportive environment, their ability to learn is likely to be compromised. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are more likely to be targeted for hate crimes than other minority groups. Therefore safety within any campus environment is important for LGBT students.

According to Kortegast & Van de Toorn (2018), some institutions are making efforts to be more LGBTQ inclusive. However, many institutions have yet to institute policies protecting and supporting LGBTQ faculty, staff, students and administration. In addition, the experiences of LGBTQ student affairs professionals may be different depending on the type and the size of the institution. In his study on experiences of lesbian and gay student affairs, professionals at small colleges and universities, Kortegast and Van de Toorn (2018) highlight that few colleges and universities are able to provide LGBTQ specific administrative positions and large universities are increasingly expanding support services for LGBTQ students in the form of centers and dedicated staff. They also affirm that attention needs to be paid to small colleges and universities because of the cultural environments and organizational structures. More knowledge is needed about how LGBTQ professionals navigate institutional culture, professional responsibilities and, the issue of disclosure regarding their identity. The study found that the support environment at their institution allowed lesbian and gay students to feel comfortable. Being too gay and lesbian is linked with unprofessionalism or might make others uncomfortable. The study also found that hetero-normativity creates and maintains an inequitable, binary power system in which heterosexuality is seen as normal and superior.

In congruence with Kortegast & Van de Toorn (2018), Hall & ECU (2010) confirms that higher educational institutions have a role to play in challenging unacceptable behaviours. Equipping staff and students with the skills and confidence to recognize and address low-level as well as more serious homophobic behaviour and language is crucial to advancing equality. Hall & ECU (2010) suggests that Higher Educational Institution should not assume that all students are aware of what constitutes as acceptable behaviour in university accommodation and they are liable for the behaviour of students towards one another in halls. Therefore, steps should be taken to address discrimination. Higher Educational Institutions should not assume that those who have experienced homophobic behaviour, or are experiencing other difficulties related to their sexual orientation, would automatically know that they are welcome to raise these issues with a warden or other frontline members of staff. Higher educational Institutions must be clear about the fact that wardens or other welfare services exist to support students when they encounter such issues, otherwise some students will simply remain silent (Kortegast & Van de Toorn, 2018).

Holland, Mathews & Schott (2013), adding to what Kortegast & Van de Toorn (2018), and ECU (2010) articulated, that college campuses have played a vital role in creating change and promoting diversity related activities outside the classroom. They also state that more research studies indicate that students who are exposed to diverse ideas in the classroom during their first two years of college are more likely to break the perpetuation of discrimination.

Rockman (2013) claims that there is an overall improved experience of lesbian, gay and bisexual students on college campus when the students are increasingly involved and take on leadership roles. He ascertains that the students who assume leadership responsibilities in organisations are more open about their sexual orientation on campus and are there to increase support networks. One of the locations in which lesbian, gay and bisexual college students can enhance their leadership skills is the LGBT student group or centre that should be found on many college campuses. The support network provided by the LGBT student centre helps student leaders with issues such as being openly LGBT on campus and the ability to deal with harassment and disparaging treatment.

Moreover, in responding to the lesbian and gay issues, residential campuses allow for more anonymity, tolerance and acceptance of LGBT students. Therefore pointing to the need for supportive administration at commuter colleges (Rockman, 2013). The commute college should be providing opportunities for LGBT faculty and staff to serve as role models and

advisors for these students ensuring the existence of institutional discrimination policies that include sexual orientation and development, and maintaining relationships with off campus organisations that serve the LGBT community.

Since the institutionalized hetero-sexism causes many negative aspects to campus life. Including a lower overall quality and diversity of education, endurance of sexist environment in which women and non- heterosexuals are demeaned. Elicit prejudicial actions against any traditionally oppressed group leads to increased level of internalized oppression among LGBT people on campus. In addition, Rockman, (2013) emphasizes that the best way to remove hetero-sexism on community college campuses is for faculty, staff and administrations to become better educated about this issue and actively participate in its elimination.

#### **2.4. Coming out in College**

Butler & University of Port Elizabeth (2000) defines “coming out” as the developmental process through which gay and lesbian people understand their sexual preferences and to choose to integrate this knowledge into their personal and social lives. This definition was agreed upon by Kus (1995) who defines this concept as the process by which gay or lesbian people identify themselves as homosexual. This changes any previously held negative views of lesbians and gays and to accept being lesbian and gay as a positive stage of being. Evans & Broido (1999) describe coming out as the process of identifying oneself as lesbian, gay or bisexual and is an important developmental step for many youths. Student affairs administrators need to be familiar with this developmental process and ways to be supportive as students begin to disclose their sexual identity to themselves and others. Pope (1995) defines the coming out process as the whole process whereby a person comes to identify himself or herself as homosexual and recognizes his or her position as part of a stigmatized and semi-hidden minority. The development of homosexual identity is a long process that usually begins during adolescence though sometimes considerably later. Because of the fears and ignorance that surrounds our views of sex, students discover sexual feelings and behaviour incompletely and are accompanied by great pangs of guilt.

Disclosing one’s sexual orientation or gender identity is known as “coming out” as described in Appleby & Anastas (1998). Lynch (2005) states that coming out originates in gay and lesbian culture. Gay or lesbian people who deliberately keep their same-gender sexual activities hidden from others as a method of stigma management are considered to be “in the closet”. Coming



out, by contrast, refers to “coming out of the closet”, that is, to a process in which a person decides not to continue keeping his or her activities or self-identification a secret any longer. Thus the term coming out, has always implied some level of public declaration of one’s homosexuality.

Coming out, or disclosing LGBT identity to others, is an important part of LGBT identity development (Ryan, Legate, & Weinstein, 2015). According to D’Augelli’s lifespan model, the coming out process is part of sexual identity development and is when LGBT individuals incorporate this identity as part of their overall personal identity. The developmental stage that most college students are in, is called emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). This developmental stage coined by Arnett ranges from 18-25 years of age, and typically incorporates traditional college-aged years. Arnett stated that individuals in this stage feel that they are no longer adolescents, but are not quite ready for adulthood. “A key feature of emerging adulthood is that it is the period of life that offers the most opportunity for identity explorations in the areas of love, work, and worldviews” (Arnett, 2000, p. 473). College students are in a stage of exploring their love interests and are starting to experience an increase in sexual autonomy and exploration (McAnulty, 2012).

Researchers have found that coming out is a critical task in developing a positive lesbian and gay sexual identity (Cain, 1991; Cass, 1984; Ragins, 2004). Some lesbian and gay individuals wait to come out until they go to college. They may see this as a fresh start or a more supportive and open environment compared to where they were. For those individuals identifying as LGBT, the transition into college may further increase the risks for mental health problems. The stress of transitioning into college may also hinder the ability to cope with stressors related to the college environment and identifying as LGBT. Which creates a more difficult situation and context to ‘come out’ (McAleavey, Castonguay, & Locke, 2011). Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, Frazer & Q Research of Higher Institute (2010) found that one-quarter of LGBT college student’s surveyed experienced harassment or violence in college due to their LGBT identity. They also found that almost half of those surveyed, hid their sexual identity hoping to protect themselves from harm or harassment (Rankin et al, 2010).

Navigating the coming out process within a higher education setting can be a challenge for the student, staff, faculty and institution. Supporting students who are navigating through the psychological process of exiting one sexual identity and entering another, while at the same time supporting those who have already done so before entering college, can be a test for an

institution. Lesbian and gay students are navigating the coming out process in conjunction with their overall identity development. While Sanlo (2005) notes that individuals are coming out at an earlier age, many are still navigating the process within the college environment. This is often compounded with normal development processes, adding an additional psychological process for LGBT students. Epstein, (2004) found that for gay men “sexual identity development is often very prominent and occurs within the context of their college experience. For some gay men their sexual identity development occurs simultaneously in conjunction with “race, gender, and religious identity development” (p. 185). Navigating multiple identities can mean that some LGBT students can feel overwhelmed and taxed by their identity development, neglect aspects of their identity development or postpone the coming process to focus on other developmental processes (Zubernis & Snyder, 2007).

Coming out is a lifelong process; it has a beginning but not an end. While Lopez & Chism (1993) found that most LGBTQ persons navigated the coming out process in two months to two years, it is truly never complete. While some students may have already disclosed their sexual identity to peers and their family, college provides a new set of individuals and social situations to once again disclose their sexual orientation and identity. An LGBTQ person is in some way at all times engaged in coming out, either in new social situations or to new people. Thus, an openly LGBTQ student on a college campus could be completing some of the same stages or processes alongside a closeted student. It is not easy for LGBTQ people to “establish a secure identity in the face of marginalization, invisibility, and social censure” (Claymen, 2004). The campus and classroom climate can either be a help or hindrance to a student who is coming out. A negative campus and classroom climate can cause a student to remain closeted or make it difficult to successfully come out, while a supportive climate does the opposite. A persistent negative campus climate can be emotionally and socially damaging to LGBTQ students and can lead to physical abuse and attacks against them (Sears & Williams, 1997).

Moreover, Maslow (1965) believes that ending lies and misconceptions when a person announces himself publicly, it is an important part of actually discovering who one is as a person and becoming self-actualized. This provides a clear link between self-actualization and the process of coming out. Maslow (1965) describes coming out as an act of being honest with oneself and expressing this honesty to significant others in one’s life.

Butler & University of Port Elizabeth (2000), argues that a child's personality cannot grow without self-esteem. Feelings of emotional security, without faith in the world's willingness to make room for him/her to live as a human being. In his study, on the coming out process of gay and lesbian youth, Butler states that the experience of being young and gay has been seriously neglected in youth research. It is important that South Africa make an honest commitment to the safeguarding and protection of all youth. Including gaining critical understanding of a previously hidden and neglected group of gay and lesbian youth. He further explains that systematic discrimination, stigmatization and criminalization have placed many gay and lesbian youth at risk and this occurs in the home, at school, in communities, at work, and in churches.

Musskopf (2015) on a study about homeless lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in New York city, state that coming out changes a child's role within a family system and role changes are inherently disruptive to families. They further state that families are also parts of larger systems like churches and communities and they should manage how their response to their child's LGBT status will affect their own position. The study found out that only minority of homeless LGBT youth reported having been kicked out for being LGBT.

In agreement with the above literature, Gortmaker & Brown (2006), on a study on differences in perceptions and experiences among out and closeted lesbian and gay students, state that many lesbian and gay college students continue to conceal their sexual identity. Others take their first step out on campus. The study was primarily descriptive, but used independent t-tests and chi-square analyses to compare out and closeted students on core variables. The aim of the study was to compare the experiences, perceptions, and the needs of out and closeted lesbian and gay students. This was done in hopes of providing insights for improving the campus learning environment for lesbian and gay students. Eighty students returned completed surveys which their responses were categorized into two. 44 were categorized as the low out closeted group and 36 were categorized as higher out group.

Gortmaker & Brown (2006) explain that outness has been conceptualized as disclosure of sexual orientation to family members, friends and co-workers. Coming out involves a complicated process of self-realization of one's sexuality, then disclosing one's realization to others (Whitman & Nadal, 2015, p. 373). Herek (2009) added that disclosure to others has been acknowledged as a rite of passage and an important layer in the bricks of a student's self-

construction and by remaining in the closet causes students to lead double lives and endure psychological stress. Universities and colleges are often the setting in which students disclose their sexuality to others and subsequently, tolerate various positive and negative consequences. Coming out has been found to be beneficial by reducing the stress of concealing an LGBT identity (Crichton & Ferguson, 2014). LGBT individuals who report higher levels of outness also report positive self-perceptions and an increase in well-being (Whitman & Nadal, 2015).

Gortmaker & Brown (2006) describes the campus as the place that has a strong influence on the number of lesbian and gay students who are out on the campus. However, the peer hostility toward lesbian and gay students may prevent students from disclosing their sexual identity. Those campuses which show a support for lesbian and gay students and having lesbian and gay role models on campus encourage students to come out. Although some lesbians and gay come out, they continue to typically face a chilly climate including experiences of discrimination along with feelings of fear. They also face higher rates of harassment, assault and intimidation than heterosexual students. The study found that out students perceived the climate more negatively than closeted students, whereas closeted students felt the need to hide their identity. The study also found that closeted students report less activity within the lesbian and gay community due to fear and less political activism than out students. Out students indicated that they have more knowledge about lesbian topics. The study also indicated that out and closeted students differed in the changes they perceived necessary in the campus to meet their personal and academic needs. Out students would most likely report anti-lesbian incidents to faculty members, whereas closeted students would likely report to equity access and diversity program staff.

Coming out, may also have negative impacts as well although it is regarded as identity development. Coming out is considered a very difficult process due to the potential risks of harassment, victimization, and increases in suicidality (D'Augelli, 2003). Coming out to family is often considered one of the most difficult processes due to the potential loss of support and possible homelessness (Durso & Gates, 2012). Coming out also exposes LGBT individuals to stigmatization and prejudice from others, which both have been shown to increase depression and suicidality (Jiang, Perry, & Hesser, 2010) and substance abuse (Russell, 2006). Haas et al. (2011), reported that those adolescents who are out and identify as LGBT have higher suicidal behaviour than their heterosexual peers. Although, for those adolescents that reported same-

sex attractions and were not out, they showed no increase in suicidal behaviour compared to their heterosexual counterparts.

## **2.5. Lesbian and gay students' experiences in their respective communities**

LGBT people, as members of a social minority group, are suffering from various forms of socio-economic and cultural injustice. The lack of social recognition has an effect on the capacity of LGBT people to fully access and enjoy their rights as citizens. They are more likely to experience intolerance, discrimination, harassment, and the threat of violence due to their sexual orientation, than those that identify themselves as heterosexual (Aleksandrs, 2019).

Mavhandu-Madzusi (2017) agrees that LGBTI individuals in South Africa face hostility and violence although the South African Constitution of 1996 mentions explicitly the non-discrimination against people based on sexual orientation. This reaction towards the LGBTI individuals opens the gap between the ideals of the Constitution of South Africa which calls for non-discrimination and equality for all people who live in South Africa. LGBTI students end up in engaging in sexual practices which increase the risk of transmitting sexually transmitted diseases including HIV. In 2013, 61% of South African respondents believe society should not accept homosexuality. Negative attitudes were even more pronounced when survey questions were framed in terms of morality. Pew Research Center found that 62% of South Africans personally believe that homosexuality is morally unacceptable. A large majority (about 7 out of 10 South Africans) feel strongly that homosexual sex and breaking gender dressing norms is simply 'wrong' and 'disgusting'.

Sithole (2015) points out, in his study, that labelling often takes a very subtle form and may extend to micro-aggression. He defined micro-aggression as subtle, non-verbal or even preconscious daily actions that marginalize members of underrepresented groups. As multiple events, these acts may go unnoticed or may be forgotten and micro aggression contributes to a constant subtext of threat and stress for members of underrepresented groups. He further states that some labels used towards LGBT people in the community are 'tassies', an Afrikaans word, 'isitabane', a Zulu word for homosexual. Consequently, because of negative stigmatisation and labelling, the students of the LGBT community would invariably find it difficult to come out. Sithole (2015) added that labelling theory suggests that society views members of the LGBT community as sick and sinful. They are stigmatised with unfortunate circumstances. Labels attached to sexual minorities are derived from dominant social discourses and meta-narratives and they form social identities which are rational (Okolie, 2003). Okolie (2003) elaborated that

LGBT are subjected to sexual abuse and perpetrators of corrective rape believe that forcing themselves on lesbians would result in the latter becoming straight and therefore rehabilitated or rather cured from the abnormality of sexuality.

Sundstrom & Sperling (2020) states that the individuals who belong to more than one oppressed social groups are bound to experience a higher level of discrimination than the members of the oppressed social groups because there are distinguishing factors between the two groups. This has considerable implications for the manner in which discrimination against LGBT people take place and has considerable implications for the manner in which discrimination against LGBT people take place in society. The bias and intolerance expressed by an LGBT individual may have aspects in common with prejudice expressed towards a cisgender person minority race but two experiences are distinct in many ways. Furthermore there are differences even within the LGBT community. Sundstrom & Sperling (2020) further explained that the experience of a gay man, for instance, may differ significantly from the experience of a transsexual woman and there are sociological factors that may enhance the situation of oppression that takes place against this social group, taking into consideration aspects related to class, race and gender.

By labelling individuals as gay or lesbian, society is categorizing these individuals into abstract categories, ignoring that sexuality is a fluid concept that does not have to be put into categories. Anzollota & Nova South Eastern University (2017) explains that it is a safeguard against reducing or limiting members of the LGBT community into a particular box or label. The LGBT individual is often obligated to undertake his or her insertion into society by making reference to categories that may not correspond with individual's sense of true identity. In this way, labels such as butch, fem, queer, or dyke might become markers for empowerment but may also have a detrimental effect on the way in which the individual is able to integrate into society.

In tandem with Kheswa (2016), Mavhandu-Madzusi (2017), on a study about the impact on stigma and discrimination on the sexual wellbeing of LGBT students in a South African rural university. The study describes stigma as a strong feeling of disapproval that most people in society have about something whereas discrimination is a practice of treating a particular group in a society less fairly than others. The study's aim was to explore and describe the impact of stigma and discrimination on the sexual wellbeing of LGBTI students in a South African rural university. Lestoalo (2016) defines discrimination as inappropriate and potentially unfair

treatment of individuals due to group membership, in this case, being a member of LGBT community. He further explains that discrimination involves active negative behavior towards that group. Denying individuals or group's equality of treatment and biased behavior towards that group, which includes actions that directly harm or disadvantage them while favoring one's own group. Discrimination can take many forms and, in the case of LGBTI on campuses, it can be direct, for example, when a member of hostel staff refuses to serve someone because of their sexual orientation. It can also be indirect, when it occurs in a more subtle form.

Furthermore, Henderson (2010) conducted a study in the University of Western Cape on narratives of constructing gay identity and about having relationships in contemporary South Africa. The aim of the study was to examine how gay men construct a gay identity and have relationships within hetero-normative groups. Henderson (2010) explains that violence against lesbian and gay people are documented around the world and it occurs in the home, school and community. Black gay men are still marginalized due to amongst other factors. Such as, their geographical location. Gay men are fighting hard for their relationships to be recognized and accepted. Consequently, five countries other than South Africa recognize same sex relationships and this shows the struggle that gays and lesbians have to tolerate in the world. Henderson (2010) further elaborates that there has been little focus on their own experiences of being in unequal and abusive relationships. He also claims that power dynamics play a major role in lesbian and gay relationship. However, other forms of power are constructed within hegemonic notions of successful masculinity.

Henderson (2010) reveals that gays and lesbians experience verbal abuse and physical violence in these communities. The findings indicate that homophobia is experienced at school, home and in the community by feminine groups. This continues to tertiary educational levels, where they are insulted by others for not conforming to gender norms. The study also finds that there are assumptions that performing as "masculine" brings rewards such as acceptance of infidelity as a norm as well as the oppression of feminine acting men.

Moreover, Anzollotta & Nova South Eastern University (2017) distinguishes three stressors that have been identified as contributing to the experience of alienation and marginalisation. Including the elevated feelings of loneliness and isolation that the LGBT community experiences. The first is derived from direct experiences with prejudicial events. For older the generation of LGBT individuals, the experience of being a direct target for prejudice on a range of levels is almost inevitable.

The second major stressor that contributes to alienation and marginalisation with the LGBT community is commensurate with the first; this is the expectation of prejudicial reactions. After experiencing several prejudicial events, an individual develops the internal expectation of being rejected and targeted. The expectations can be easily understood within frameworks of social learning theory and the negative reinforcement mechanisms of behaviour.

Ryan, Russel, Huebner, Diaz & Sanchez, (2010) affirm that lesbian and gay students experience massive rejection and verbal harassment. To avoid such threats, violence and degrading treatment from the community, dysfunctional or supportive families, they are forced to suppress their lesbian and gay inclinations by being involved in heterosexual relationships. Consequently, lesbian and gay students frequently struggle with mental and behavioral concerns such as substance abuse, anxiety, depression, self-harm, and suicidal ideation. The study found that some pastors and roommates have a deleterious impact on the psychological well-being of lesbians and gays because they stopped attending church when they are at home. The study also found that the university atmosphere is conducive to learning and students are welcoming and tolerant as they have never heard cases pertaining to corrective rape and hate crime. The study also indicates that the experiences of secure attachment by lesbians with significant others, contributes to increasing their sense of autonomy and self-acceptance.

Cele, Sibiya & Sokhela (2015) added that LGBT students suffer discrimination and prejudice associated with HIV/AIDS. They explain that LGBT are sexually grouped together because of the same oppression and difficulties of discrimination.

Additionally, students are experiencing problems especially when it comes to looking after their health and getting access to health care services as this has become a serious concern (Cele, Sibiya & Sokhela, 2015). They articulate that lesbian and gay students have had barriers that made it difficult to access health care services. These barriers included being discriminated against due to heteronormativity, homophobia and not being treated equally when it comes to being given attention and sufficient treatment within health care services. The LGBT students encountered difficulties because some of them had not come out about their sexual orientation due to cultural reasons and others are not even accepted by their families and communities. Cele, Sibiya & Sokhela (2015) also elaborate that others decided to live without disclosing their sexual orientation or sexual behaviours in order to avoid stigma and discrimination.



Furthermore, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) people face tremendous difficulties growing up in a society where heterosexuality is often presented as the only acceptable orientation and homosexuality is regarded as deviant (Aleksandrs, 2019). This suggests these people continue to face discrimination and exclusion across the world in all spheres of life. Homophobic violence and abuse targeting LGBT people occur on a regular basis. Despite International law, in most EU Member States, same-sex couples do not enjoy the same rights and protections as opposite sex couples. Consequently, they suffer from discrimination and disadvantage in access to social protection schemes, such as health care and pensions. Moreover, in the labour market, a majority of LGBT people continue to hide their sexual orientation or, endure harassment out of fear of losing their job. Particularly vulnerable, are young LGBT people who experience estrangement from family and friendship networks, harassment at school and invisibility. This can lead in some cases to underachievement at school, school drop-out, mental ill-health and homelessness.

## **2.6. Risk factors facing lesbian and gay students**

In this section I will discuss the risks factors that hinder lesbian and gay identity. These risk factors are lack of family and peer support, absence of affiliation with the LGBT community and psychological distress.

### **2.6.1. Lack of family and peer support**

When a family's reaction to coming out is not favourable, the LGBT individual may experience higher levels of depression and anxiety (D'Augelli, 2003). Fear of rejection from family and friends alone is found to increase levels of depression and anxiety (D'Augelli, 2003; Allotey, 2015). Ryan, Legate & Weinstein, (2010) reported that LGBT youth who experience family rejection are 8.4 times more likely to attempt suicide, 5.9 times more likely to suffer from depression, 3.4 times more likely to use illegal drugs, and 3.4 times more likely to engage in unprotected sex than their heterosexual peers. Unfortunately, for those LGBT individuals who are rejected by their family, some may end up homeless and on the streets. Durso & Gates (2012) stated that about 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBT.

### **2.6.2. Absence of affiliation with the LGBT community**

A possible reason for LGBT students not connecting with an LGBTQ community or organization might be the potential for victimization. This suggests that lesbians and gays may open the door for discrimination and prejudice (Higa et al., 2014; Cochran, Bandeira & Mays,

2013). Being involved with an LGBT community differs from person to person, and level of comfort with being out is a factor in involvement. Therefore, this can increase the potential for minority stress and possible negative consequences (Cochran, Bandiera & Mays, 2013).

The lack of connection with a like-minded community may produce negative outcomes. People with low connectedness are prone to low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression (Robbins, Levy, Lee, Leuchter & O'Brasky, 1998). A lack of connection may lead them to avoid social situations and isolate themselves (Detrie & Lease, 2007). For some LGBT individuals who choose not to be involved or affiliated, or do not have a choice due to lack of a LGBT community, these individuals may encounter more negative experiences from coming out as compared to those who are involved in such communities.

### **2.6.3. Psychological Distress**

It is difficult for lesbian and gay students to be out in rural areas (Aleksandrs, 2019). Rural LGBT people may be more likely to leave the place of their birth/youth than the general population. Lesbian and gay students are more likely to experience depression and anxiety than their heterosexual counterparts. These emotions might include intense sadness, anxiety, loneliness, discomfort in social situations, and feeling overwhelmed. It's not because of their gender identity alone, it's because in a patriarchal society, being gender variant causes a lot of distress. A number of factors may contribute to this, from living in an often homophobic society to facing family rejection to being closeted in some or all aspects of life. Most likely, this is due to violence, social rejection, and isolation. LGBT community experience higher rates of anxiety, mood and substance use disorders, and suicidal thoughts among people ages 15-54. Possibly due to rejection from both gay and straight communities, bisexual women have been found to have significantly poorer mental health than either lesbians or heterosexual women. Mayock, Bryan, Carr, & Kitching, (2009) in a large scale Irish study, report that young LGBT people as a whole are more vulnerable to psychological distress. They report that over 60% of respondents directly attribute stress and depression directly to their non-heterosexual identity. There is a large body of evidence which supports the claim that poor emotional health can be as a result of homophobic attitudes. Also, heterosexism in society leads to lowered self-esteem, confidence and an increase in stress, particularly for young gay women.

## **2.7. Traditional perspective on lesbian and gay students**

In this section this study discusses the literature regarding traditional perspective on lesbians and gays.

Roggemans, Spruyt, Van Droogenbroek & Keppens (2015) claim that traditionalism is often a mediating factor in explaining the relationship between religion and negative attitudes towards homosexuals. The traditional division of roles between men and women is a crucial value in every tradition and religion. Homosexuality is a violation of this belief. Negative attitudes towards LGBT arises as a consequence of the perceived violation of traditional roles. Kite & Deaux (1987) defines the gender belief system as a set of beliefs and opinions about males and females and about purported qualities of being a male and female. This belief system includes factors such as stereotypes about men and women. Including attitudes towards appropriate roles for women and men perceptions of those who presumably violate the traditional pattern of gender roles, including lesbians and gays.

Evidence supporting this idea is that this belief system relates to heterosexuals' perceptions of homosexuality. It derives from research that indicates that men who are described as having feminine characteristics are likely to be judged as gay and that women described as having masculine characteristics are likely to be judged as lesbian (Roggemans, Spruyt, Van Droogenbroek & Keppens, 2015). People who engage in role behaviours associated with the other gender or who possesses characteristics with the other gender are disapproved of by the gender belief system. The gender belief system, holds the perspective that heterosexuals dislike lesbian and gay men because they are stereotypically perceived as having cross-gender traits, roles and physical characteristics. Heterosexuals 'attitudes towards gays are derived from the beliefs about the characteristics that heterosexuals should show (Roggemans, Spruyt, Van Droogenbroek & Keppens, 2015).

Pertaining to African leaders, Masson & Nkosi (2017) elucidate that many African leaders believe that lesbian and gay rights are against their cultural and religious value systems and consider the dawn of homosexuality to be a flaw arising from Western countries. Homosexuality is punishable by death in some parts of the African continent in countries like Nigeria, Uganda, Tanzania and Sudan. Masson & Nkosi (2017) quoted one of the leaders of the African countries, the late president Robert Mugabe as a term of reference, where he explained explicitly that homosexuality is un-African. He explained that is a white disease and colonial import. Also that Europeans must keep their inhuman homosexual practices within

their own territories and try not to impose them upon Africans. In fact, Robert Mugabe referred to homosexuals as worse than pigs and dogs.

Prado-Castro & Graham (2017) conducted a study on constructing our identities. Identity expression amongst lesbian women attending university. They point out that there is a strong belief in South Africa that homosexuality is a western concept and it is also not African. They also state that this belief has a clear influence on cultural practices as well as the politics that surround LGBTI individuals. Cultural beliefs together with Apartheid policies paved the way for the construction of a society which was un-accepting of homosexuality. The results indicate intersections of identity expression with shifts in policies, westernisation, privilege, and power. As well as, an increase in LGBTI consciousness and access to information, has allowed for wider expression of sexuality that attempt to break gender binaries.

In agreement with Prado-Castro & Graham (2017), De Ru (2013) points out that culture is one of the major reasons most African governments have rejected LGBT identity. The LGBT identity in Africa is virtually unknown and says that Africa is rigidly heterosexual (Lamb, 1982). Pincheon (2000) rejects the claim that LGBT identity is rooted in western culture. He further states when missionaries came to Africa to spread Christianity they preached against LGBT identity hence the existence of homophobia today in Africa. Anderson (2008) also argues colonialism may have brought Europe's concept of LGBT identity to Africa but, it did not introduce same-sex eroticism. A number of African leaders, in recent times have openly criticized LGBT identity (Chinoko, 2013). He states that the Malawian president Bingu Wu Mutharika has stated that LGBT identity is against Malawian values.

Youde (2017) conducted a study on the politics of sexual identities in Zimbabwe. Similarly with the above literature, they argued that Africans knew, practiced and in some cases, even honoured sexual relations between members of the same sex. They indicate that it can be presumed from Khoisan (Bushman) rock paintings in Zimbabwe that homosexuality existed in pre-colonial Africa. LGBT experimentation among adolescents took place as a normal part of the boys learning process and out in the bush herding cattle. Adult men who were seen engaging in same sex acts were seen as having been bewitched or being witches themselves.

On the contrary, Matolino (2017) affirms that the lesbian and gay community members have sought to strike at the hearts of fundamental cultural tenets of certain African people. Such practices could be seen as either an affront to traditionalist communities or as an attempt at

forcefully re-writing African reality, if not impudently. He cited some examples, for instance, some people may consider it strange to see a young Zulu man do a ceremony known as 'umemulo' (a ceremony celebrating the coming of age of young woman) in quest to celebrate his femininity. Others may also consider it strange when one of the men in a relationship insists on paying 'ilobolo' (bride price) to a lover's family. A possible response to the forgoing could seek to point at what same sex partners are trying to attain, is full membership of and recognition by the community. They seek to be recognized as having gone through the rites of passage.

Melissa & Bryan (2013) emphasize that some of the main factors affecting people's attitudes toward LGBT are gender. Including, the beliefs about the cause of homosexuality and religiosity. Adolescent females tend to be more accepting of homosexuality than their male counterparts with males engaging in more prominent homophobic behaviour. Those who subscribe to the view that homosexuality is adopted by choice, are less accepting because a choice is internal and controllable. In contrast, those who believe homosexuality has a biological origin, hold more positive attitudes towards LGBT.

McKinnon (1989) perceives heterosexuality as the root of gender hierarchy and oppression. Women and men are divided into sexes as we know them, by social requirements of heterosexuality which institutionalized male sexual dominance and female sexual submission. If this is true, sexuality is the linchpin of gender inequality. It can be extrapolated from this position that the social requirements of heterosexuality are responsible for negative treatment of individuals who deviate from these prescribed norms, in other words, for the LGBT community entirely (McKinnon, 1989). In particular gender roles become problematic for individuals who found themselves caught between the tensions of societal prescribed gender identity such as female and sexual identity that runs contrary to these societal expectations. Anzollotta & Nova South Eastern University (2017) confirms that the traditional and common practice is a challenge to feminism and to enforce patriarchy. LGBT rights are opposed and not acknowledged unless they provide a direct pleasure to the man. Biases are once again, in place to benefit such gender. This displays the subjugation of women. In a patriarchal system, for instance, sexual relationships between two men or two women are not accepted. As long as patriarchy remains prevalent in society, women and other minorities including LGBT community will need to work harder in order to change their social perceptions of these groups.

Anzollotta & Nova South Eastern University (2017) added that there is a process of social regulation that emerges from the ownership of the bodies of the individual exercised by dominant groups. Those identities, as LGBT, are therefore marginalised because their bodies cannot be owned in the same way as those who abide by the social norms imposed by this exercise of power. Therefore, the lack of subjugation leads to further marginalisation and imposition of structural violence in order to punish those who dare to defy the established order of things. The bodies LGBT individuals are not submissive in relation to the dominant group because they are not subject to same process of disciplining and regulation that is expected of heterosexuals.

Lin, Button, Su & Chen (2016) conducted a study on Chinese college students' attitudes toward homosexuality, exploring the effects of traditional culture and modernizing factors. They used a survey to collect the data of 494 college students from two universities in China. They point out that practices of LGBT sex were not all rare in ancient China. Generally speaking, homosexuality in imperial China was a privilege of ruling class males who were married to women but enjoyed the company of male favourites or concubines. Although not a common practice, homosexuality was never considered a sin in historical Chinese culture. Contrary, in contemporary China, sexual intercourse between males was considered a punishable crime classified under hooliganism until 1971 and it was classified as mental disorder until 2001. A large proportion of gay and lesbian people in China conform to traditional expectations and eventually end up in heterosexual marriages.

Despite this shift, Lin, Button, Su & Chen (2016) also indicate that studies continue to show that traditional views about male superiority in sexual relations are still prevalent among college students. Attitudes toward premarital sex and masturbation are more conservative as compared to students in Western countries. The study found that Chinese college students generally hold accepting attitudes toward homosexuality although the extent of tolerance is limited and is affected by various factors. Traditional cultural factors predict less tolerance for homosexuality and gay and lesbian people, whereas modernizing factors predict greater tolerance. Although both traditional and modernizing factors shape contemporary attitudes toward homosexuality in Chinese society, modernizing variables seem to have a greater impact.

Ferfolja & Stavrou (2015) postulates that hetero-sexism is historically omnipresent in schooling cultures. It is reinforced through narrow and limiting policies, practices and curriculum. These factors discursively construct heterosexuality as natural, normal and fixed,

as the only acceptable form of sexuality, and the sexuality to be celebrated and rewarded. These antiquated understandings of sexuality persist in schools, colleges and university, resulting in the surveillance and regulation of all gendered and sexual subjects. Many who transgress the norm are punished in the Foucauldian sense through marginalisation, harassment or other types of discrimination. Such surveillance and regulation reinforces the silencing and invisibility of sexual diversities not only on the level of the subject, but in curriculum, policy and pedagogical practice; in some institutions, even debate and discussion is silenced.

## **2.8. Religious perspective on lesbian and gay students**

In this section, I will look at different religious perspectives, observing how different denominations perceive lesbian and gay issues. I will look at the following: South African Churches' perspective on gay people, international religions (Islamic and Jewish religions) and religious researchers' perspectives on lesbians and gays.

### **2.8.1. South African Churches' perspective on gay people**

Various denominations have different views of what appears to be a general trend towards homosexuality. Most of them do not condone homosexuality as it is against the teaching of Christianity. From an African perspective it is important to discuss religious beliefs as it pertains to homosexuality. In the place where the study is located, Christianity is the dominant religion. The study looks on the following main churches that are located in South Africa regarding the perspectives on lesbians and gays: Nazareth Baptist Church (known as Shembe church and subscribed by Africans), Pentecostal Church, Charismatic churches, Roman Catholic Church and Dutch Reformed Church.

#### **2.8.1.1. Nazareth Baptist Church (Shembe Church)**

The Shembe Church has a huge following, including within the rural areas. Their followers broke away from the African Native Baptist Church. The followers of Shembe believe that the Sabbath is on Saturday, not on Sunday. Nazareth Baptist church views homosexuality as a sin, but there are lesbians and gays in the church. Mduduzi Shembe was speaking at Enyokeni in the Palace in Nongoma when he allegedly made negative remarks against gay people. He reportedly made statements that implied that gay people are to be blamed for the drought in the country. In contrast, Nobel prize winner Archbishop Tutu has condemned the negative stance which churches have taken in relation to gay and lesbian individuals. He states that "I have found the position of the church illogical, irrational and frankly un-Christian, totally

untenable”. He also challenges the position of his own church, the Anglican Church on homosexuality because while the church does not condemn homosexuals, it condemns homosexual activity. He argues that sexual activity is part of being human and contributes to people being more like God intended them to be (Potgieter & Reygan, 2012).

In addition, the Sunday Times, by Bongani Mthethwa, in 14 February 2019, reported that the Nazareth Baptist Church has introduced rules that ostracize lesbian and gay members. 14 pastors of Nazareth Baptist Church also known as Shembe, adopted new church rules. The 14 pastors belong to Ebuhleni faction, which is regarded as the biggest and the most powerful amongst its 4, 5 million members. The Shembe Church combines the Zulu traditions and Christian values. Followers believe that their leader is equivalent of Jesus Christ and insist that female followers be virgins at marriage. The new rules are as follows:

- A female member of the church married to a gay man must return to her home to be cleansed by her father through the slaughter of a goat.
- A lesbian member of the church who marries a man will be permanently stripped of her right to be a wife.
- A woman who leaves her husband will subject to a hearing. If she is found to have been in the wrong side she should not be allowed to marry again.

Regarding the new rules, there have been strong criticism against the Shembe church rules. Gender Links CEO Colleen Lowe Morna strongly criticized the new rules as unconstitutional. She affirms that whatever its belief, the Shembe Church cannot violate the constitution. Therefore the church would be advised to recant its position immediately. The Commission for Gender Equality spokesperson Jabavu Baloyi added that the rules are discriminatory on the basis of gender and sexual orientation.

#### **2.8.1.2. Pentecostal church**

This church states that same sex-sexual acts were disapproved because it did not serve the purpose of procreation and implied the wastage of semen. The patriarchal systems define the role of women as possessions of fathers or brothers. When they marry, women will be possessions of their husbands, without legal recourse or rights of their own. Patriarchy determines the sexual ethics found in the Bible, including the prohibition of mixing things that do not belong together. The result was that man to man sexual relations are frowned upon for



the same reason as sexual relations between human beings and animals are forbidden Moulaison Sandy, Brendler & Kohn (2017).

Moulaison Sandy, Brendler & Kohn (2017) indicate that the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa in July concurs with this perspective and publishes their view of homosexuality and the Bible as follows:

*As a church with the authority of Scripture, the AFM (cannot) rely on the guidance of theologians focussed on deconstructing a Biblical text they neither believe in nor venerate. For this reason, the church affirms its belief in the Bible as God's written word, inerrant, infallible and inspired. It must be noted that both the Old Testament and New Testament evaluate homosexuality in the same way. It is the calling of the church to declare and affirm the Bible's position on this matter, that marriage as the rational norm, is exclusive, binding, affectionate union between one man and one woman and that functions as God's natural and created context for sexual relations and procreation. Sexual relationships that deviate from this ideal can be neither holy nor Biblical. The AFM affirms its position that sexual immorality whether heterosexual or homosexual are unambiguously and unconditionally forbidden by God's word.*

Moulaison Sandy, Brendler & Kohn (2017) added that the supposition is that God created sexuality exclusively for the permanent relationship between man and woman in the marriage. This imply that a sexual relationship between people of the same gender is not part of God's will. People who persevere in the practice of same gender sex are committing a sin.

### **2.8.1.3. Charismatic Church**

Charismatic churches in South Africa, regularly and openly utter homophobic statements. Prominent South African preacher and evangelist, Angus Buchan asserts that the LGBTI lifestyle is contrary to biblical teaching and that gay people are destined for hell. He has made claims about homosexuality being curable, implying that it is some sort of disease. Prominent charismatic movement, McCauley has been quoted as saying his church could not agree with same sex marriage (Sunday World, 2015).

However, if two people with the same sexual orientation choose to legalize their partnership and live in a monogamous relationship then we must respect that decision. Our church is not onto gay bashing. We have gay people attending our services and are registered members. Despite the latter claim, however, some of his subsidiary churches have known to expel married gay men from fellowship. For example, prominent Grace Bible Church made headlines when

South African LGBTQI entertainer, Somizi, left a service because homosexuality was being labelled as disgusting and sinful from the pulpit (The Citizen, 2017).

#### **2.8.1.4. Roman Catholic Church**

The Roman Catholic Church's catechism is unambiguously in its condemnation of homosexual acts as depraved, intrinsically disordered and contrary to the natural law. The catechism refers homosexuality as relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. Basing itself of Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered. They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual acts to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved (Lefebvre, 2014).

#### **2.8.1.5. Dutch Reformed Church**

The acceptance of gay people as equal citizens and practice of criticism of sex-marriage have continued to be debated heatedly. This was illustrated by the controversy and criticism provoked by the Dutch Reformed Church's decision in 2015 to admit gay members and allow them to marry in the church. The Dutch Reformed Church is at a watershed with regard to its policy on homosexuality. It is embroiled in court proceedings, with opposing factions fighting over the suspension of an October 2015 General Synod decision to allow same sex marriages and gay ministers to have partners. The decision was suspended in 2016, which led to the court action. Indeed, there is a clear strong faction opposing gay rights (Punt, 2006).

### **2.8.2. Islamic view on lesbians and gays**

Discussing Islamic and Jewish religions, I want to give a sense of international perspective regarding lesbian and gay students. The study firstly looks on Islamic religion and followed by the Jewish religion.

#### **2.8.2.1 Islamic religion**

Wester (2017) indicates that the religion of Islam consists of a so called Islamic Law that is called Sharia which means the path to follow god's law. The intention of the law is to guide the individual regarding daily matters. For example, when it comes to personal hygiene, diet, sexual relations and rules of how to pray. This law is also used in situations of guiding people's behaviour. There are different schools within Islam and the majority of the Islamic jurist have agreed that there are four main sources of Islamic laws to be found and followed. The first one to follow is the Holy Quran and within the Holy Quran one can find rules regarding the Islamic faith, ethical rules and practical rules. According to many Muslims this is the source you first need to read if you wish to learn about Islamic legislation. The second main source of legislative rules after the Holy Quran is the Sunnah (Tradition), the Sunnah is complimentary to the Quran. The third and fourth are Ijma (Consensus) and the Qiyas (Analogy), these can be used in settlements between conflicting issues. They are supposed to help the individual to establish and obtain a decision, making a comparison in order to gain equality between the two matters.

Wester (2017) also elaborates that there are four schools of thoughts, the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi and Hanbali. These schools of thoughts differ in terms of interpretation and application of the individual elements of the religion. This means that they show different local and orthodox methods in their responses. Every school depends on the Quran and Sunnah for the knowledge but where they differ is in the use of Ijma and Qiyas on how to solve legal dispute within Islamic society and punishment for homosexuality. The Hanafi School is considered as the first school of jurisprudence and is mostly dominant in family and religious laws amongst the Muslims of Balkan, Pakistan, India, Central Asian republic and China. Within the Hanafi School there is no physical punishment for being a homosexual. The Maliki School is considered as being the second Islamic school of jurisprudence. This school of thought is dominant in Algeria, Libya and Morocco and considers homosexuality as being an act deserving of punishment but it requires four male witnesses if one is going to be charged with the act of homosexuality.

Wester (2017) also points out that the Shafi is the school of Islamic jurisprudence that also came from the city of Medina as the Maliki School. This school is mainly found in Yemen, Egypt, Syria, Malaysia, and East Africa. As with the Maliki School, the thoughts of Shafi is that homosexuality is an act that needs to be punished but also requires four male witnesses. The last school of jurisprudence is Hanbali School. This school differs from others as it has a lot more focus and emphasis on the Quran and Sunnah and is less in favour of the Qiyas and

Ijma. This school has fewer followers and has special influence in Saudi Arabia and Qatar. This school is the one with strictest laws and interpretations in regards to homosexuality. If someone has to be punished for homosexuality, the same rule applies. Just as in the other schools four male witnesses are needed and punishment can include the death penalty.

The word homosexuality did not exist in the Quran, but in order to condemn it, the story of the people of Lut was used for this purpose and can be found in the Quran. This tells the story of the two cities Sodom and Gomorrah where people had turned away from God and instead worshipping a god of war and destruction. The story describes how foreigners visit the people of Lut who then upon arrival get raped, by the men of Lut. This has been interpreted as an act of homosexuality between men and thereafter condemned.

Henrickson (2009) postulates that all Muslims agree that no other laws may contradict the Quran extrapolated from secondary sources such as the Hadith. The Hadith contradicts the Quran on the issue of homosexuality and the punishment for public sexual offences. It challenges the Shariah law which criminalises homosexuality and demonstrate that such law is inconsistent with the Quran. He adds that the Hadith contains many inconsistencies, contradictions and distortions of facts. It is no surprise that hate crimes against LGBT, including the justification for their execution, stems largely from the hadith. The Muslim clergy believes that homosexuality is a phenomenon which is non-existent in the Islamic world both past and present and in places where it does exist. It is either imported by the West, or practiced by ignorant or uneducated Muslims. The Muslims describe homosexuality as a moral disorder, a moral disease, a sin and corruption and that no one is born a homosexual, just like no one is born a thief, a liar or a murderer. People acquire these evil habits due to a lack of proper guidance and education. According to Islam, the LGBTQI movement promotes sexual behaviours contrary to the natural way ordained by the Creator, reducing humans to a level below animals. The evidences for its prohibition are numerous and are explicit. Some of these evidences are as follows: ﴿وَالَّذِينَ ذَلَّ الْمُلُوكُ رُفُوجُهُمْ أَفْحُونُ﴾ ظُرُوعِي أَرَلَّاعِلَهُمْ أَجَ ﴿أَوْ﴾ ﴿مَكَتَامَ أَيْمُ لَمْ أَلْفَ مُمْغِيرُومَ﴾ يَنْ لَمْ نَبْ تَوَى غَرَاءَكَ لَذَهْ أُولَى فَمُعُونَ ﴿أَدَّال

Translation: And they (the believers) are those who guard their private parts, except with their wives or those 'bondwomen' in their possession, for then they are free from blame. But whoever seeks beyond that are the transgressors. (Rippin, 2013, Quran 23:6-8).

In the Shariah, the only lawful means whereby an individual can fulfil his or her sexual desires is through marriage, furthermore Shariah declares all other forms of sexual relationships or gratification as unlawful. Regarding marriage, the Shariah only recognises the legitimacy of marriages of the opposite sex (with rules and regulations). As for same-sex marriages, the Shariah strictly prohibits it and does not recognise its legitimacy. Therefore, if a person were to contract a marriage with someone of the same gender that marriage will be invalid and thus all relations committed will be regarded as *Zina*; adultery and fornication.

### **2.8.2. Religious researchers' perspectives on lesbians and gays**

Sandfort & Reddy (2013) extrapolate that religion indeed reinforces the low levels of social acceptance of LGBT in Africa. They postulate that the historical and colonial legacy in most countries in Southern Africa, create a context where people are motivated to carve out and define independent national identities. This fuels the creation of myths that sexuality and alternative gender identities are 'un-African' and not part of African sexuality. Tamale (2014) argues that religion plays a central role in shaping both African sexualities, as well as homophobias. 86% of the continent's population subscribes to the imported religions of Islam and Christianity. This also exposes the irony in how those who condemn homosexuality as alien rest their arguments on rationale from the foreign religions of Islam and Christianity.

Vincent & Howell (2014), in the South African context, find that homophobia in the era of human rights discourse has been framed importantly by notions that homosexuality is 'un-Godly'. They state that for the majority of South Africans, the church is a highly significant space for community and social engagement and it is where attitudes and ethics are formed. Heterosexual staff and peers viewed LGBT students as sinners, satanic or demon possessed. Discrimination ranged from the denial of services to religious strategies, to threats of violence (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy, 2015).

Nkosi & Masson (2017) conducted a study on experiences of Christian homosexual university students. The aim of the study was to explore the individual experiences, views and opinions of ten students about their sexuality and their religion. Snowball sampling was used to identify and invite potential participants to be part of the study. They point out that students at universities have many challenges which are not only at an academic level but also in their own quest for identity and purpose in life. Traditionally, Christianity promotes heterosexuality and does not advocate for acceptance of homosexuality or bisexuality.

With regard to biblical perspectives, Masson & Nkosi (2017) state that many theologians argue that throughout the Old and the New Testament, the practice of homosexuality is condemned. This is established in the New Testament in Leviticus 20:13, 'If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death.' Many scriptures in the New Testament also speak against acceptance of LGBT and many Christians empathetically quote these scriptures and use them as a basis to condemn LGBT identity saying that the Bible is very clear on its position.

Moreover, Masson & Nkosi (2017) explain that the Christian church comprises numerous denominations each with various interpretations of the Bible and Christianity. For example, traditionalists, who are against LGBT, argue that sex was intended for procreation purposes and Christians stand with the argument. Some argue that is not a sin but that one should enjoy sex. The study found that homosexuals experienced discrimination and prejudice from the church. They felt that it was unfair that they were persecuted for a sin that they did not choose to commit and an act in which they had no control. The study also indicates that homosexuals tend to be rude and harsh to others as a solving strategy since they experience hostility on a daily basis.

Craig, Austin, Rashidi & Adams (2017) conducted a study on experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning students in religious colleges and universities. The study used grounded theory to analyse the narratives of LGBTQ former and current students. Craig, Austin, Rashidi & Adams (2017) point out that many religious societies have not fundamentally altered their viewpoint that the LGBTQ lifestyle goes against their moral code. LGBTQ students have long experienced rejection by many religious denominations. As few of the more than 2500 American religious denominations actively affirm LGBT sexual orientation and morally support their lifestyle, while others still condemn it as a sin. In addition, other studies have found that that religion negatively impacts the well-being of LGBTQ populations and hostile religious social contexts contribute to higher rates of alcohol use, sexual health risks and suicide attempts (Hatzenbuehler, Pachankis & Wolff, 2012).

Cameron-Ellis (2013) added that most religious denominations consider homosexuality as immoral. Churches do not agree among themselves if LGBTQ is right or wrong. Some churches ordain LGBTQ people while others do not allow LGBTQ to worship. Cameron-Ellis (2013) point out that there is not much said biblically about homosexuality except for three

references directly pertinent to the issue. He mentioned the story of Sodom, the law in Leviticus and Paul's directions in Romans, and other scriptures in the new testament that refer to homosexuality such as 1 Timothy 1:8-11 and Corinthians 6:9-11. He indicates that men of Sodom were trying to demean the visitors because they did not show the entire city their credentials. The objective was to prove their power over the visitors as they were seen as weak and vulnerable.

Furthermore, Cameron-Ellis (2013) quotes Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:13 as scriptures about LGBT. He affirms that these scriptures say that homosexuality is disgusting, God hates it and the punishment for homosexuality is death. Scholars have many interpretations for these scriptures, ranging from condemnation to justification that homosexuality is not a sin. One of the reasons that homosexuality was prevented along with other practices, was that it was the characteristics of the Canaanite population of Palestine. Homosexuality was Canaanite's worship and Israel needed to stay separate from other nations.

Holland, Mathews & Schott (2013) noted that although there is a great variation in the level of acceptance of same sex relationships, this acceptance is most likely to be absent among Christian religious institutions. They also affirm that although attitudes toward gays and lesbians have improved in society as a whole, many churches have answered by adding anti-LGBT statements to their official policies. Their research shows that college students who are members of the conservative protestant denominations display the highest levels of homophobia. Much research indicates that higher levels of conservative protestant religiosity are correlated with lower levels of acceptance of the LGBT community at large.

Kuptesevych (2014) conducted the study about the influence of religiosity on the attitudes towards homosexuality among college students. This was a descriptive study and data was analysed by using regression analysis. On the contrary, non-Protestants, with regards to same sex unions in particular, are much more likely to support the lesbian and gay students. Protestants and members of Conservative Protestant denominations have the highest homophobia scores, followed by Moderate Protestants; Catholics; Liberal Protestants; Non-Affiliated and Non-Christian groups.

## **2.9. Legal framework on lesbians and gays**

In this section, the study considers what International law, and the African Charter say about the rights of lesbians and gays. The study also looks on South Africa and one African country, Zimbabwe, on how these countries treat lesbians and gays regarding their legal framework.

### **2.9.1. International law and African Charter**

The Page, 2018 states that there are 80 States which still criminalize consenting same sex relations. This includes the death penalty in seven countries, in which these countries understand this to be incompatible with the international law. Further, such criminalisation has an adverse impact on the enjoyment of other human rights by LGBT people, such as the right to privacy and health, as well as of association, assembly and expression. The research elaborates that criminalization, moreover, frequently brings about other human rights violations. The violations consists of torture, cruel or inhuman treatment, and violation of the right to life with the implementation of the death penalty or increased tolerance of so called honour killings of LGBT people and the accompanying impunity.

Page, 2018 further point out that discrimination is the most common issue that LGBT people face in the majority of countries and on a daily basis on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. Discriminatory practices can be found in the workplace and in public sphere. Specifically regarding access to health care and education. Such practices go against the right to equality and non-discrimination in the enjoyment of human rights as stated in Articles 2 and 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Article 2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICCESCR).

Similarly, Nkomazana, (2014) explains that the situation of LGBTI persons in African countries is generally very difficult. It said that over 35 countries in Africa criminalize certain same sex sexual acts and few have any anti-discrimination or other supportive legislation. The extent to which the legislation is implemented varies between countries. Men have mostly been targeted in this colonial inherited legislation, but in more recent legislation women are also targeted. Nkomazana, (2014) further explains that transgender persons are rarely mentioned in laws, as the focus is often on the same sex acts but are still often a target for arbitrary arrests and accusation of homosexuality. The psychological impact of living under criminal laws is huge and the continual threat of arrest or violence constitutes in itself a violation of the right to peace, safety and security of the person. The impact of this includes depression, anxiety, substance use and addiction with social and psychological consequences for the affected person. If LGBTI persons live openly, this brings a risk of getting rejected when applying for



employment, housing and education as well as being denied access to food and health care, including SRHR services and information.

In addition, LGBTI movements and persons on the African continent have become more visible and vocal in claiming acceptance and rights. On the other hand, many countries have experienced a backlash in terms of human rights of LGBTI persons, fuelled by religious fundamentalism (Nkomazana, 2014). One of the most extreme examples is Uganda, where evangelical pastors from the US have paired up with homophobic politicians to spread anti-LGBTI propaganda. Nkomazana, (2014) stated that the accountability of governments in Africa for the Human Rights of LGBTI is generally poor. Few governments in Africa have shown themselves willing to make commitments to protect the rights of LGBTI persons and some countries are responding to the visibility of the LGBTI movement by sharpening their words against LGBTI rights. Countries like Uganda, Zimbabwe and Mali are debating the limitations of rights of LGBTI persons. Whereas Tanzania, Nigeria, and Liberia have passed laws against homosexuality. South Africa has the most protective constitution for LGBTI persons in the world; the LGBTI movement pushes the government to take actions against the hate crimes. Mozambique has a labour code that prevents discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, but at the same time they are not allowing LGBTI organisations to register. Namibia is still criminalising same sex acts through colonial common law while implementing the legislation and allowing LGBTI movements to work freely.

Izugbara, Bakare, Sebany, Ushie, Wekesah & Njagi (2020) indicate the regional legislative and policy instruments that have value for efforts to promote LGBT inclusion in socio-economic development in Africa developed and published between 1981 and 2018 by the African Union namely African Youth Charter and Common African Position (CAP). The authors state that the African Charter which was endorsed by the African Union in 2006, is a key regional enforceable legal instrument. The Charter strongly guarantees enjoyment of rights to all youths irrespective of colour, sex, sexual and gender orientation. The Charter specifies that African member's state signatories of the charter have no grounds to discriminate against LGBT youth or criminalise their activities and lifestyles as LGBT persons. The Youth African Charter has profound impact for LGBT youth in Africa who is particularly at risk for exclusion, harm, and denial of SHR services and offers one of the clearest regional level commitments to the rights, health and wellbeing of youth in Africa. Article 2 (2) of the Charter clearly commits member-states to ensure that no youth suffers discrimination based on their status, activities, opinions or beliefs. In Article 11, the Charter guarantees all young people, irrespective of their SOGI,

the right to full participation in all spheres of society. By affirming the social, economic, health and other rights of the region's youth irrespective of colour, sex and other status. The Youth Charter offers critical grounds for safeguarding the wellbeing and the participation of young people in Africa.

Mengesha (2006) argues that the African Charter provides the primary regional mechanism for the protection and promotion of people's rights on the African continent. The Charter makes a provision for individual, family and group rights. It guarantees protection to vulnerable and marginalized persons such as women, children, the aged and disabled. It however, does not enshrine any explicit recognition or protection of rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex person vulnerable and marginalized category. The Charter is silent in stating the question of sexual orientation or in addressing the rights of sexual minorities. He supported his view that this could be the result of the fact that at the time of drafting the Charter, the question of sexual orientation might not have been an issue that posed any serious concerns. As did the question of racial discrimination, which demanded more attention on that time.

### **2.9.2. South Africa in respect of lesbians and gays**

On the issue of South Africa, Stewart (2014) stated that the progression of South Africa in 1994 into a fully-fledged democracy and transformation that prevailed, resulted in the adoption of the New Constitution in 1997. The Act 108 of 1996 of the constitution of South Africa legislates that the state may not unfairly discriminate against an individual. More specifically, directly or indirectly, including race, gender, sex, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture or language. He adds, 'as the constitution captures the very essence of equality for all citizens, this must also signal, a new recognition of the value and worth of South Africa's young lesbian and gay citizens'. He further explains that a lesbian, gay and bisexual Charter was disseminated and endorsed on 11 November 1993. The Charter defines the constitutionally entrenched right to equality on the condition of sexual orientation. The fundamental rights of the Charter pertaining to the lives of lesbians and gays are education, policing, access to complaints, services, information and employment. The Charter explains that non-discriminatory education regarding gender, sexual orientation and sexuality shall be included in the curricula of schools, tertiary institutions, youth and community programmes. Staff in health, welfare, police and other law enforcement agencies and in the armed forces, administration of justice and public service, shall receive

training on issues relating to gender, sexual orientation, and sexuality. Including education on new non-discriminatory laws and measures.

In regards to policing, police and other law enforcement bodies shall protect all people against abuse, including the prevention of harassment, victimization and bashing of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals. Pertaining to access to complaints, services and information, the Charter explains that all people have equal access to all facilities providing advice, information, support, counselling, health care and welfare service. Youth students in particular shall have access to sex education and counselling to give them support with discovering their sexuality. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual employees, including teachers and others working young people shall not be victimized if they are open about their sexual orientation in the workplace (Stewart, 2014).

Cele, Sibiya & Sokhela (2015) asserted that Section 9 (3) of the South African constitution disallows government discrimination on the grounds of race, gender and sexual orientation. Section 9 (4) prohibits discrimination on the same grounds by private parties. The Constitutional Court has stated that this section also prohibits discrimination against transgenders. There are no legal prohibitions against the freedom of expression and assembly of LGBT individuals in South Africa. The South African Constitution grants universal rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association and Protection of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, specifically prohibits harassment related to sexual orientation. There are gay night clubs in all South Africa's major cities. Johannesburg and Cape Town, each host annual Gay Pride events.

Mwanawina (2012) noted that the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality and South African Human Rights Commission challenged the discriminatory laws as unconstitutional (Section 27 of Human Rights 2010: 228). HIV/AIDS and STI Strategic Plan for South Africa 2000-2005 called for these laws to be withdrawn. The South African Law Commission recommended in its review of the Sexual Offences Act that age consent for homosexual men and women should be the same as the heterosexuals (Section 27 of Human Rights 2010: 229). On the basis of these laws, the court resolved that the criminalisation of sodomy in private between consenting males is a severe limitation of gay men's right to equality in relation to sexual orientation because it hits at one of the ways in which gays give expression to their sexual orientation. The harm radiates out into society generally and gives rise to a wide variety

of other discriminations. Which collectively unfairly prevents a fair distribution of social goods and services and the award of social opportunities for gays.

Mubangizi & Twinomugisha (2011) also point that the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act, which was enacted in order to amend the law relating to procedure and evidence in criminal cases. The act contains a provision that expands upon the charges for which a person charged with a sodomy or assault, with intent to commit sodomy may be found guilty. Including indecent assault, assault, committing unnatural offence or contravening Sections 3, 4, or 5 of the Sexual Offences Act. The Act was amended in 2001 in order to include sodomy in the definition of Sexual Offence. Under this Act, a magistrate is empowered to enact a punishment for sexual offence of imprisonment for a period not to exceed twenty years or a significant fine.

The Section 29 (2) of the New Constitution provides that the state must take appropriate, fair and reasonable measures to ensure that no person is refused emergency medical treatment at health institution (DFAT, 2016). However, in practice, state services are not made available to members of the LGBT community. Furthermore, consistent with the general public's perception of homosexuality and trans-gender, many healthcare providers in Zimbabwe are homophobic or trans-phobic and fail to understand sexual orientation and the needs and concerns of LGBT individuals. As a result, even if they are not explicitly denied access to medical services, persons who identify as LGBT often fail to seek medical care for sexual transmitted diseases or other health issues out of fear of being shunned and prosecuted.

UNHRC (2016) asserted that the new constitution specifically provides for freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of to demonstrate and petition. However, the government authorities continue to utilize repressive legislation to restrict these freedoms. Particularly as they relate to members of the LGBT community or anyone speaking against non-discrimination, based on real perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Specifically, the government leaders have used the Public Order and Security Act (POSA). The Criminal Law Act and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act are used to search private offices and dwelling without a warrant. Including, ban unlawful public meetings and gatherings, revoke operating licences and deregister organisations.

The continued criminalization of consensual same sex conduct and discrimination against LGBT individuals in the above mentioned African countries with the exception of South Africa, violates a wide range of international and regional human rights, norms and treaties. The case studies of Malawi, Namibia, and Zimbabwe demonstrate the tremendous challenges

that LGBT individuals continue to face through Southern Africa with the respect to discriminatory legislation and behaviour including violence targeted towards persons based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

In the light of the above literature, I would like to highlight that there is a paucity of research about the experiences of lesbian and gay students studying at a TVET College which is situated in a rural town. Although there is a vast of research which has been shown by international, national and local literature about lesbian and gay students in universities. Certain traditional practices make lesbian and gays default to being closeted. Most of the research here in South Africa is done in urban universities and not in rural TVET Colleges which creates a gap. My study addresses these gaps by studying how students from a rural context and traditional background perceived to be homosexual, navigate their sexual identity.

## **10. Conclusion**

This chapter reviewed the literature on lesbian's and gay's experiences. Drawing from local, national and international studies, the chapter began with a definition of LGBT, as the word that was used throughout the study. Each term lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender was defined in detail. I also discussed the empirical and theoretical framework used by different authors from studies on lesbian and gay experiences looking at the following factors: defining lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, lesbian and gay students' experiences in Higher Education, coming out in the college, lesbian and gay students' experiences in their respective communities, risk factors facing lesbian and gay students, traditional perspectives on lesbian and gay students, religious perspectives on lesbian and gay students, and legal framework on lesbians and gays. On the light of the above review, it is clear that research on gay student experiences in a rural TVET college warrants further scholarly attention. This study attempts to address this gap in a designated context.

The next chapter discusses the theoretical framework that guides this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This study seeks to draw attention to the experiences of lesbian and gay students in a TVET College. The use of a theoretical framework will assist in understanding the nature of lesbian and gay students in a rural area. Researchers conceptualize the theoretical framework as the frames of theories that summarise uncertified ideas, experience, hypothesis, propositions, assumptions and objectives informing the study (Neuman, 2000; Allen, 2009). Andrews (2018) state that it serves as the guide on which to build and support your study and also provides the structure to define how the researcher will philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically and analytically approach the dissertation as a whole.

Ravitch & Carl (2016) agree that the theoretical framework assists researchers in situating and contextualizing formal theories into their studies as a whole. They also state that it guides a researcher's choice of research design and data analysis plan. Lester (2005) confirms that the theoretical framework also helps the researcher in finding the appropriate research approach, as well as analytical tools and procedures for his or her inquiry. It makes research findings more meaningful and generalizable. In order to comprehend queer theory, it is significant to define the concepts underpinning the theory pertaining to queer and queerness or queering. Then I will present a review of literature which will clearly display the gap this study addresses.

This study uses queer theory as its theoretical approach. I used the following scholars under queer theory: Andrews (2018); Allen (2009); Neuman (2000); Ravitch & Carl (2016); Lester (2005); Fryer (2010); Warner (2004); Jagose (1996); Gedro & Mizzi (2014); Butler (1991, 1993, 1999); Pinar (1998); Epstein (1996); Halperin (2003); Martens (2010); Sedgwick & Sneidiler (2008); Kirch (2000); Sullivan (2003); Levy (2009); Parker (2016); Henderson (2010); Foucault (1978, 1984a, 1984b); Weed & Schor (1997); Walters (1996); Ringer (1994); Giesecking (2020); Turner (2000); Riggs & Trehanr (2017); Moorland & Willox (2005); Giffney (2007); Van Zyl & Stein (2005); Green (2002); Oswin (2008); Moore ((1994); Jones (2019); Munoz (1999); Grotz (2004); Halbertstam (2005); and Renn (2010).

### **3.2 Key concepts under queer theory**

The concepts in queer theory are often a subject of debate and therefore require clarity and a working definition. These concepts are interpreted differently by many researchers and also overlap in their definitions or vary in their use by researchers.

The absence of an explicit definition of queer leads to various definitions. Queer, as an umbrella term, signifies lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and questioning communities (Fryer, 2010). As a descriptive term, queer signals an identity or stance that opposes the essentialism and normativity that is implied with lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Warner (2004) agrees that queer is a protest against the idea of normal behaviour. Jagose (1996) states that queer describes those gestures or analytical models which dramatize incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and sexual desire and it focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and desire.

Gedro & Mizzi (2014) indicate that queer has been used to silence, suppress and shame practices, as well as identities and values located outside of perceived boundaries. Butler (1993) says queer becomes defined against what is considered normal in social practices, identities and values. She adds that the goal is to establish social regulation so that people govern themselves according to what is wrong or right, good or bad. The recent reclamation of the term queer represents a resistance movement, largely led by academics and activists, to transform the oppressive connotation of the term into a positive, political, preferable depiction of the self, especially for differently gendered individuals (Pinar, 1998). He further explains that the deployment of queer in this manner is also an attempt to move beyond the hegemonic and historic practice of institutionalized systems using identity categories to shame, regulate and eradicate same sex sexual behaviour.

According to Fryer (2010), queer began as a term to replace lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual which were seen as narrow and limiting. This term is utilized by those who do not find the pre-constructed categories of lesbian, gay, or bisexual useful or who feel removed and ignored by the way in which these terms are used. Queer is considered the greater equalizer, placing lesbian women and gay men, bisexual and transgender people on an equal footing (Epstein, 1996). This term is used in this particular case to transcend the terms lesbian and gay (Halperin, 2003). Therefore the term queer is used to be more inclusive of individuals of different races, ethnicity, or genders (Martens, 2010).

Sedgwick & Snediker (2008) has suggested that the only definitive indicator of queerness is the inclination of an individual to designate her or himself as such. Kirch (2000) states that

while queerness cuts across class, status and power, the interplay of scapegoating and rejection is performed in the same arenas as the struggles against class, oppression, racism and sexism. In fact, in every case, the stigmatized group who does not meet an ideal, suffers the consequences.

Sullivan (2003) describes queering as a deconstructive practice that owes an intellectual debt to Jacques Derrida, whose work on deconstruction has been an invaluable conceptual resource for queer theorists. Levy (2009) describes deconstruction as a textual strategy that can destabilize hierarchal oppositions and disrupt foundational assumptions for the purpose of opening up new possibilities for critical social analysis and political practice. Queering seeks not to replace one set of foundational assumptions with another, but to render the normal permanently open to interrogating and contestation (Sullivan, 2003). Queering represents a mode of critical resistance against conceptual closure and normativity, offering alternatives to norms, stable and universal identities, and regimes of the normal and of common sense (Parker, 2016).

### **3.3 Queer Theory**

In this section I start by defining queer theory then I will explain the reason why I chose to use queer theory in my study.

Henderson (2010) explains that queer theory emerged out of new strands of thinking about sexuality in the 1990s and it is drawn on post structuralist, particularly the work of Foucault (1978, 1984a, 1984b), Jacques Derrida (1972), and Lacanian psychoanalysis and emerged out of and in dialogue with feminist theory. Sullivan (2003) stated:

"Poststructural theorists such as Foucault argue that there are no objective and universal truths, but that particular forms of knowledge, and the ways of being that they engender, become 'naturalised,' in culturally and historically specific ways" (p. 39)

Queer theorists apply these ideas to gender and sexuality to suggest they are socially constructed (Butler, 1990).

The relationship between queer theory and feminism is both close and contested (Weed & Schor, 1997). Queer theory is heavily influenced by the work of Gloria Anzaldwa, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Judith Butler, Jose Esteban Munoz, Lauren Berlant and Walters (1996). Queer theory builds both upon feminist challenges to the idea that gender is part of the essential



self and upon lesbian and gay studies, in a close examination of the socially constructed nature of sexual acts and identities (Ringer, 1994).

Queer theory critically analyses the meaning of identity, focusing on intersections of identities and resisting oppressive social constructions of sexual orientation and gender. As such, queer theory is an umbrella term by and for persons who identify as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex or by individuals who use the term as an alternative to LGBTI labels (Sullivan, 2003). Some find the term belittling, depending upon their race, class, personal experiences and also their generation. Heterosexuals whose gender or sexuality does not comply with popular expectations have used the term queer to define themselves. Thus queer theory is a framework of ideas that suggests identities are not stable or deterministic, particularly in regard to an individual's gender, sex, or sexuality (Halperin, 2003). Queer theory is committed to critiquing and problematizing previous ways of theorizing identity. Queer is a discourse model that destabilizes the assumptions and privileges of secure hetero-normative models of study and everyday life and practices (Giesecking, 2020). It also acknowledges fluidity and instability.

Turner (2000) describes queer theory as a framework of ideas that suggests identities are not stable or deterministic particularly in regard to an individual's gender, sex and sexuality. Riggs & Treharne (2017) defines queer theory as an oppositional orientation to understanding how bodies and psyches are produced not through individual intent or experiences but rather to what Butler (1999) refers to as matrices. Queer theory is a discourse model that destabilizes the assumptions and privileges of secure hetero-normative models of study and everyday life. It politicizes and acknowledges the fluidity and instability of identities (Sullivan, 2003).

Queer theory is part of the field of queer studies whose roots can be found in women's studies, feminist theory, lesbian and gay studies, as well as postmodern and poststructuralist theories. Moorland & Willox (2005) also define queer theory as a theoretical attempt to deconstruct the gendered and sexed praxis of academia.

### **3.4 Rationale for using Queer Theory**

I have chosen queer theory to use in my study because queer theory has effectively re-opened the question of the relations between sexuality and gender. It encourages both theoretical and political resistance to normalization and dramatized the far reaching theoretical promise of work in lesbian and gay studies (Halperin, 2003). In our society heterosexual people are reluctant to accept lesbian and gay people as members of the community. This ends up excluding lesbian and gay people in all practices in the community and even being expelled from their homes. Heterosexuals believe that these types of behaviours need to be corrected. As the researcher, I see queer theory as an appropriate theory to gain insight into the phenomenon under study.

Pinar (1998) states that queer's main project is exploring and contesting the categorisation of gender and sexuality. He believes that identities are not fixed, and they cannot be categorized and labelled because identities that consist of many varied components. There is an interval between what a subjects does, that is role taking and what a subject is, and that is the self. Queer theory destabilizes identity categories, which are designed to identify the sexed subject and place individuals within a single restrictive sexual orientation (Giffney, 2007).

Kirch (2000) states that queer theory infers that categories and labels are to be ignored. Queer theory is still a deconstruction of existing categories of people and cultures. In one sense, it is simply a reaction to labelling and on that note, it is definable in relation to a purpose for it does not propose a social alternative. Moorland & Willox (2005) agree with Kirch (2000) that queer theory is about the construction and refusal of labels of personal sexual activity and it is also concerned with removal of pathologies of sexuality and gender behaviour. It concerns 'genderfuck' which is a full frontal theoretical and practical attack on the dimorphosism of gender and sex roles.

Prado-Castro & Graham (2017) states that queer theory is not a simply theory, it is a word which meanings are attached and to which identification is possible. Queer theory encompasses identity construction especially related to homosexuality and the expression of social identity. They explain that gender is one aspect of identity in which performance plays a crucial role and thus gender is limited to queer theory (Butler, 1999). Butler (1993) proposed that gender is a cultural fiction created through the repetition of acts which become normalized over time. Butler (1999) referred this behaviour as performativity even though this is not chosen but given performance. It is explicit that gender constructs have privileged heterosexuality and deconstructing these beliefs that legitimate other sexual identities.

Henderson (2010) indicates that one of the aims of queer theory is to critique the heterosexual family in particular, the way that heterosexual men deny homoerotic impulses. Theorists scrutinize texts to explore how heterosexual characters dominate while lesbian or gay characters are silenced or subordinated and lifestyles normally excluded in relation to heterosexual families and other superior lifestyles. Queer politics therefore, through questioning workings of the hetero normative, makes space for alternative sexualities which are deemed other or marginal (Van Zyl & Steyn, 2005). Queer embraces other outlaws from the patriarchal family by celebrating boundary crossers such as transgender and bisexual people (Green, 2002).

According to Padro-Castro & Graham (2017), queer theory also applies to the queering of spaces. Queer spaces are those spaces which are not heterosexual spaces. However, queer spaces much like the rest of the queer theory, goes beyond the hetero-normative formulations and also beyond gender and sexuality. Spaces are more important because these are foundations where queerness is playing out. According to Oswin (2008) spaces are constructed to reflect constellations of power and therefore are made to fit particular sexualities. For some, queer spacing is about colonizing spaces which were previously exclusively heterosexual. Oswin (2008) argues queer spacing should be deconstructed alongside other forms of social exclusion in a broader analysis of intersecting power relations.

Queer theory also talks about the interaction between the material and intangible that is the body. Queer theory directly challenges the biological sex or social gender binary on which much of gender and development thinking is based (Henderson, 2010). Queer theorists such as Butler (1991) have pointed out that there is no pure biological body onto which social gender is inscribed. Rather the body and the social are interactive and influence each other. Moore (1994) describes the body as an interface or threshold between the material and symbolic, the biological and cultural. Women may have hysterectomies, bear children or not, have anaemia, eradicate facial hair or grow beards. Men may or may not be muscular malnourished, have children or suffer from war or sports injuries. These are all politically laden experiences which shape physical bodies.

Butler (1991) argues that bodies are not only physically shaped by political and social constructs, they are morphologised. The categorisation of people according to their potential capacity for pregnancy or type of social organs is not a neutral descriptive but rather a political decision to prioritise particular aspects of the body over others, particular differences between

bodies over others. There may be as great a variation between groups of bodies of one sex, and between bodies of different sexes.

Butler (1991) refuses to accept this account of the origins of gender roles. She, instead, reverses the perspective to examine how culture informs our understanding of biology. On Butler's view, the assumptions about gender and sexuality in positive unconsciousness of the culture determine our concept of biological sex as origin of gender identity. Butler (1993) argues that feminist lose the possibility for thinking about the subversive ways to convey gender meanings when they insist that identities depend on sexed bodies as the loci of agency. She says no gendered identities exist, rather daily practices of socialization result in the bodies significance of gender. Butler (1993) thus rejects the notion of a constitutive subject who would refuse gender identity in favour of some more egalitarian options, instead she posited subjects who necessarily operate through gendered signs. The subjects who repeat the signs have the capacity to change their meaning through repetition.

Butler (1999) states that if we are classified as men or women due to discourse around our bodies rather than the nature of bodies themselves, then sex as well as gender becomes social or political constructs that can be challenged. She added that if sex loses its essential meaning then same sex and differentiated and fixed categories like sex and gender are revealed to be socially or politically constructed. Pinar (1998) argues that queer theory brings sexuality and desire to the fore and engages with a queer pedagogy that examines our positions, representations, relations and needs in relation to a re-structured self.

Fryer (2010) insists that specification of the body such as an original source actually resulted from historically specific meanings of gender in our culture, the positive unconscious of gender. He also states that Butler and other theorists point out that our conceptions of our bodies whether as material or important or neither, come to us through language. Belief in a pre-culturally material body as the ultimate ground of identity itself depends on the circulation of meanings in culture.

For queer theorists, sexuality is a complex array of social codes and forces, forms of individual activity and institutional power. Which interact to shape the ideas of what is normative and what is deviant at any particular moment and then operates under the rubric of natural, essential or god-driven (Roseneil, 2002). Sedgwick (1990) examines homosexuality first as the central disciplinary mechanism for gender solidarity among men and second as one of the interpretive keys to modern Western culture. She argues that the historically differential shapes of male and

female homosexuality will always be articulations and mechanisms of enduring inequality of power between men and woman. Her belief is that the precedent of describing an individuals' sexual identity as binary is sorely inadequate. It is impossible to move outside current conceptions of sexualities; therefore, no one can actually be defined as either completely heterosexual or homosexual.

Gedro & Mizzi (2014) concur that queer theory problematizes fixed and stable identity categories, including male or female, masculine or feminine, and lesbian or gay, or straight distinctions and re-thinks notions of plurality, intersectionality and fluidity in the discourse production. Queer theory attempts to break down the continual use of categories and labels, that stereotype and harm those who are in marginalized positions, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.

Queer theory introduces the concept heteronormativity which is a powerful discourse that structures human relations according to heterosexuality (Parker, 2016). Heteronormativity interferes in individual psyches and social institutions, practices and knowledge systems as a means to heterosexuality as the dominant sexuality. Another notion is performativity. Butler (1999) put forth the notion of performativity as it relates to the expression of identity and a radical critique of category-generating terms that manage identity. Butler (1999) drew attention to social practices and rules and points out how difficulties arise for a subject trying to develop a sense of agency, resistance and subjectivity around their gender identity. These rules dismiss individual autonomy and demand that they are adhered to. Butler (1999) argues that gender identity then becomes performative whereby individuals perform their gender according to these social rules and practices. She says that gender identity categories are fluid and not fixed. And also troubles the hegemonic nature of these social rules and practices by exposing them and interrogating the ways in which they construct and bind gender.

Jones (2019) states queer theory is not a theory in the traditional sense of the word; it is rather a perspective that scholars take in order to better understand how people conceptualize sexualities and how to change them. Queer begins from the notion that identities are not destiny; our identities do not determine who we are, who we become or how we view the world. Instead identities are constituted and constructed in order to meet particular goals. In this sense queer theorists have paid much attention to what is considered normative, as well as to how and why people sometimes resist normative Jones (2019).

Jones (2019) posits that if someone has a baby, people may ask if the child is a boy or a girl. This assumes that there are only two possibilities. If the baby is a boy, he may find himself surrounded by blue clothes, blankets and other gendered items. As he grows older he will face normative expectations that he should play with certain toys like trucks. He should engage in certain activities like sport. He should not want to play with dolls or engage in sewing. These gendered constructions are historically and culturally constituted. They are not the same in all historical eras or in cultures around the world. In other words, these gendered ideas are not natural or grounded in biology. Queer theory insists on the constructed aspects of identities and by so doing it opens the possibility of constructing identities in other ways and for other goals (Jones, 2019). Queer theorists, by adopting the queer term, acknowledge its negative history but to attempt to take negativity and redefine it, reworking term into something that could change the way we think about sexualities.

Congruently with Butler (1993), Riggs & Trehane (2017) point out that queer theory constituted a rejection of the hetero homo-binary and a conception of sexualities, non-essentialist, shifting and transitional, post-structuralist understanding of sexuality identities. Queer theory aims to provide an approach open to all those oppressed by hegemony of heterosexual norm, celibate, undecided, hermaphrodite and androgynous (Abes, 2008).

To narrow our focus within queer theory, I isolated three concepts that resonated with the development of multiple identities: heteronormativity, performativity, and liminality.

Heteronormativity is the use of heterosexuality as the norm for understanding gender and sexuality (Warner, 1991). Queer theory critiques this dominant social construction of gender and sexuality and aligns with the aims of this study. First, heteronormativity creates a binary between identification as heterosexual and nonheterosexual in which nonheterosexuality is abnormal and measured in its difference from heterosexuality (Abes and Kasch, 2007). This binary suggests that individuals separate into two distinct groups with identifiable differences. Second, heteronormativity consolidates nonheterosexuality into one essentialized group (Muñoz, 1999). The use of the label LGBTQ to represent students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer as one group is an example of consolidating nonheterosexual identities. Essentializing this diverse group of students reinforces the binary. Third, by privileging heterosexuality, society does not acknowledge gender and sexual orientation as reflections of social power structures (Foucault, 1976/1978). Heterosexuality's hegemony

creates the perception (or lack thereof) that heterosexuality defines what is natural or acceptable (Britzman, 1997). Queer theory provides a framework for resisting heteronormativity.

The second concept that informs this analysis, performativity, uses heteronormativity as a point of tension. Performativity describes how individuals create genders and sexual identities through every day behaviours or performatives (Turner, 2000). As performatives, actions do not represent identity; instead, actions create identity (Turner, 2000). As such, an individual's gender and sexuality do not exist before she or he performs them; they are not predetermined by physiological sex or attraction to a specific gender. Instead, the individual learns how to perform gender and sexual identity and socially constructs them into being through her or his behaviour. Because individuals enact genders and sexualities that do not exist prior to their enactment, performatives provide the potential for resisting dominant social constructions of gender and sexuality. This process depends on creating an identity through repeating actions; however, an individual never repeats actions precisely the same. Thus, identity is always changing (Abes and Kasch, 2007).

The third concept supporting this analysis is the idea of liminality, a transitional period of indeterminacy (van Gennep, 1909/1960). Liminality represents a state of flux between two distinct and stable stages of being. This idea is critical to understanding how heteronormativity and performativity play out in students' lives. For example, heteronormativity creates a binary of two fixed sexualities: heterosexuality and nonheterosexuality. Liminality is a resistance strategy in which elements of heterosexuality and nonheterosexuality are incorporated into one identity that rejects normalized definitions of either heterosexuality or nonheterosexuality. Liminality, as resistance, is a state of becoming (Grosz, 2004). It facilitates flexible genders and sexualities and, reflects how an individual may perform a seemingly contradictory performative in ever-changing ways. As such, liminality provides a framework for understanding the complex ways in which an individual performs sexuality in resistance to and as part of heteronormativity. The "becoming" quality of liminality emphasizes the unstable meaning of gender and sexuality (Halberstam, 2005), reflecting queer theory's resistance to stable identities. A common thread between these three concepts is that queer theory creates complex intersections of identities through multiple strategies of resistance, as this study will demonstrate.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the researcher utilized queer theory to explore the lesbian and gay students' experiences. Renn (2010) makes an unambiguous call for researchers to engage in comprehensive research that is practical, utilizes quality research method and applies queer theory to persistent questions and problems in higher education. Few studies concerning college students' experiences use queer theory framework.

This type of theory examines the identities within the minority population, for example, lesbians, gays, and bisexuals, results in a richer analysis of their experiences and rejects treating them as homogenous group. Queer theory favours examining a broad spectrum of sexualities and realizing that each is unique. In fact, not all lesbian and gay students are the same or have the same experience. As a result, queer theory provides a useful lens for the study.

## **CHAPTER 4**



## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter situates the study within a particular methodological tradition and provides a rationale for that approach. It describes the research setting and sample, describes data collection and analysis methods used. The chapter provides a detailed description of all aspects of the design and procedures of the study.

### **4.1. Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to seek an understanding of lesbian and gay identities. This study investigates social interaction. It looks at the treatment that lesbian and gay students face directly, or indirectly, in a Technical and Vocational Education and Training College, in a deep rural area of Kwa-Zulu Natal at Harry Gwala District. The study is organized as follows:

- Research design
- Rationale for the research approach
- Research setting/context
- Research sample and data sources
- Data collection methods
- Data analysis methods
- Issues of trustworthiness and validity
- Limitations and delimitations
- Summary

### **4.2. Research design**

The research design is exploratory, descriptive and contextual in nature. As it seeks to describe a particular phenomenon thoroughly (Auriacombe & Mouton, 2007)). It includes the entire process of research, from conceptualizing a problem to writing narrative (Creswell, 2007). It is a strategy which moves from underlying philosophical assumptions to specify the selection of respondents. Including data gathering techniques and data analysis (Maree, 2007). Pursuant with the above assertions, the research design used in this study is explorative in nature as the goal of the study is to explore gay students' experiences in a rural TVET College in Kwa-Zulu Natal.

### **4.3. Rationale for research approach**

The study in this section will look on the following themes: research paradigm, narrative inquiry, and methodological issues.

#### **4.3.1. Research paradigm**

According to Creswell (2002), the design of a study begins with the selection of paradigm. Paradigms, in the human and social sciences, help us to understand phenomenon and they advance assumptions about the social world. Including how science should be constructed and what constitutes as legitimate problems, as well as solutions and criteria (Creswell, 2002).

##### **4.3.1.1. Interpretive paradigm**

This study is located within the interpretive paradigm. The interpretive paradigm is a way to gain insights through discovering meaning by obtaining an understanding of the subjectively created social world as it is (Nel, 2019). Van Niekerk & Coetzee (2012) state that the interpretive paradigm's aim is to characterize how people experience the world. It aims to assess the ways people interact together and settings in which these interactions take place (Packer, 1997). Reeves & Hedberg (2003) add that the interpretive paradigm involves taking people's subjective experiences as the core of what is real to them.

Interpretive paradigm researchers believe that reality consists of peoples subjective experiences of the external world. According to Willis (1995), interpretive paradigm researchers are anti-foundationalists, who believe there is no single correct route or particular method to knowledge. The idea is not to pass judgement, but to accept that people have different experiences. The aim of the study is not to judge the participants but to understand their experiences in those spaces of discomfort. Willis (1995) argues that interpretive researchers assume that knowledge and meaning are acts of interpretation. Hence, there is no objective knowledge which is independent of thinking reasoning humans. Meyers (2009) also argues that the premise of interpretive researchers is that access to reality is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meanings.

According to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011), the main drive of the interpretive paradigm is to understand personal experiences of participants. I chose the interpretive paradigm because the study aims at understanding the personal experiences of the research participants. As previously mentioned, the purpose is to explore the experiences of gay students in a rural TVET College in Kwa-Zulu Natal. The aim of the study is to understand how gay students

comprehend being a lesbian or gay and, identify and navigate the spaces of discomfort in which they consider themselves vulnerable.

Reeves & Hedberg (2003) note that the interpretive paradigm stresses the need for analysis in context. It uses meaning oriented methodologies such as interviewing or participant observation that rely on subject relationship between the subject and the researcher. Maxwell (2004) insists that interpretive paradigm does not predefine dependent and independent variables but focuses on the full complexity of human sense-making as the situation emerges. According to Burrell & Morgan (1992), interpretive paradigm is not a single paradigm. It is in fact a large family of diverse paradigms and the philosophical base of interpretive paradigm is hermeneutics and phenomenology.

Pursuant with the goals of interpretive paradigm, the current study seeks to give a voice and emancipate gay students. It also addresses their situational environment and assumptions, powerlessness and vulnerabilities by enabling gay students to shed light about their experiences.

This research study seeks to explore the nature of gay experiences within and outside the school environment. I believe that gay students' construction of realities lies on their sense making and negotiations of the external world. That is, college student's experiences, community, and their interpretation of this world. I am undertaking this research for the following; the belief that human life can only be understood from within, as a form of external reality and, that the human mind is the purposive source of meaning (Niewenhuis, 2007). The focus of this study is therefore experiences of gay students within the college and outside the school environment since this college does not have accommodation.

As the researcher, I want to understand the gay experiences in the TVET College from their own perspective and not from my own view. According to Niewenhuis (2007) knowledge should emerge from the local context and should privilege the voice of the insiders taking into account what people say, do and feel. Including how they make meaning of the phenomena under investigation. The central endeavour in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2004). It is characterized by concern for the individual and efforts made to get inside the persons' mind and to understand it from within. Situating my study in the interpretive paradigm enables me as the researcher to achieve this goal. Reeves & Hedberg (2003); Henning, Jones & Holdford

(2005) and Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) concur that interpretive paradigm adopts meaning oriented methodologies such as interviews, in an attempt to understand phenomena.

#### **4.3.2. Narrative inquiry**

There are several approaches to qualitative studies, of these I chose to employ narrative inquiry as a method of data generation. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) define narrative inquiry as a way of understanding experiences and as collaboration between the researcher and the participants, over time, in place or a series of places and social interactions within an environment. Gillham (2000) adds that narrative inquiry focuses on life experiences of one or few participants rather than those of a large group. One of its goals is to give a voice to those whose stories have been previously unheard in educational research. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) also state that narrative can be used to bring about social justice with a series of truth-making. Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou (2008) argue that narratives carry strong representation and generation of truth. Also, the reality about socially lived experiences with the aim of understanding their challenges and problems in their own environments.

Narrative inquiry is composed around a particular wonder rather than thinking about framing a research question with a precise definition or an expectation of an answer. Narrative inquirers frame a research puzzle that carries a sense of search, a research, a searching again and, a sense of continual reformulation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). They also state that narrative inquiry is a process of entering into lives in the midst of each participants and each inquirer's life. Narrative inquiry always begins in the midst of on-going experiences (Clandinin & Murphy, 2007). They also suggest that the process of narrative inquiry is described as a recursive process. It is about being in the field, composing field texts, drafting and sharing interim research texts and composing research texts.

Clandinin & Huber (2010) explain that living in the midst of stories in the field, is not an easy undertaking. The field can be a series of on-going conversations with participants, where they tell stories or participants in a particular place. Sarris (1993) notes that stories are often not shared in chronological sequence and Hooks (1998) also explains that people's life stories are not linear, they do not move from point A to point B.

Based on the above, narrative inquiry seemed an appropriate choice for my study because this study sought to understand and give meaning to people's lives through their stories (Trahar, 2009). Additionally, a qualitative narrative approach uses thick description and explores the

contextual and situated lives of individuals to understand their personal experiences (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Accordingly, I used narrative inquiry in order to understand the gay students' experiences within and outside the institution.

In addition, narrative research includes written, oral and visual focus on the meanings that people ascribe to their experiences. As narrative inquirers, we strive to attend to the way in which a story is constructed, for whom, and why, as well as the cultural discourses that it draws upon (Trahar, 2009). Moreover, in narrative, the relationship between the researcher and the participants remains open and agnostic. The data can be collected as a story, a life story provided in an interview or different manner and as field notes of an anthropologist who may write up his or her observations as a narrative or in personal letters. Narrative research is any study which uses or analyses narrative materials (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiash & Ziber, 1998; Trahar, 2009). Drawing on the above assertions, I have chosen to use narrative methods, which include oral interviews.

Bruner (1986) remarks that humans make meaning and think in terms of storied texts which catch the human condition, human intentionality. Including the vividness of human experience, multiple perspectives and lived realities of participants. Stories personalise generalisations and, are evidence based (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Further, they catch the chronology of events as they unfold over time. Narratives not only convey information but bring information to life. Gibbs (2007) comments that narratives not only pass information but they meet people's psychological needs in coping with life or help a group to crystalize or define an issue. Including, view perspectives or stance, or they can persuade or create a positive image. Narratives can help researchers and readers to understand the experiences of participants and cultures and contribute to the structuring identity.

#### **4.3.3. Methodological issues**

The study adopted a qualitative approach. Denzin & Lincoln (2018) suggest that the only way to find out or understand how human beings interpret phenomenon is to attempt to get deeper to the core of the phenomenon and that is possible through a qualitative approach. This means that qualitative researchers collect the data in the field where participants live and experience in the context under study.

Qualitative research primarily follows the confirmatory scientific method because its focus is on hypothesis testing and theory testing (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). It follows the

exploratory scientific method and is used when little is known about a topic or phenomenon and, when one wants to discover or learn more about it (Cherry, 2000). I used qualitative approach to understand lesbian and gay students' experiences since the intention of the study is to get a deeper understanding of how lesbian and gay students are treated in a TVET College. In addition, Ulin (2002) suggest that although qualitative researchers may offer different descriptions; the common thread is that it is influenced by the perspectives of experience and personal knowledge. As the researcher, I see that it is important to acknowledge lesbian and gay experiences because this contributes to my understanding of how the community at large views itself and others. It also deepens my analysis of the data.

Qualitative research views human behaviour as being fluid, dynamic and changing overtime and place. Qualitative researchers are not interested in generalizing beyond the particular people who are studied (Tewksbury, 2009). The study was not intended to generalize the data. I chose one TVET College, and also sampled 9 participants through snowball sampling. In a qualitative approach, different groups are said to construct their different realities or perspectives and social constructions. Reciprocally, influence how they see or understand their worlds, what they see as normal and abnormal and how they should act. McMillan & Schumacher (2006) qualitative research often uses what might be called a narrow angle lens because the focus is only one or a few causal factors at the same. It used a wide and deep angle lens, examining human choice as it occurs naturally in all of its detail (Punch, 2013). Qualitative research understands multiple dimensions and layers of reality such as the types of people in groups, how they interact, what kinds of agreements or norms are present and how these dimensions come together holistically to describe a group (Lincoln, 2005).

In qualitative research, researchers generally contend that reality is constructed (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). They argue that is important to get close to subjects or objects of the study through participant observation so that they can experience for themselves the subject dimension of the phenomena they studied. According to Creswell (2013), researchers using a qualitative approach ask questions, collect data, make interpretations. Researchers also record what is observed and constantly tries to understand the person he or she is observing. Henning, Rensburg & Smit (2004) added that qualitative research data is usually in the form of words, images and descriptions. Including that language, verbal or non-verbal communication has symbolic meaning. While designing this study, I became interested in exploring gay physical reactions and interactions. Including, the socio-cultural backgrounds, and their experiences of homophobia within and outside institutions and social spaces. In tandem with my view, Flicks

(2018) stated that qualitative researchers are focused on understanding the insider's perspective of people and their cultures and this requires direct personal and often participatory contact. The qualitative research allows for a focus on thick descriptions from small samples of participants, rather than data from large samples, as is typical of quantitative research (Plummer, 2001). In this view participants are able to describe in great depth, their experiences, and practices and how they engage in relationships. In this study I sampled a small number of participants, 9 students who identified themselves as gays, and interviewed them in-depth, hence, my choice not to employ quantitative methods of inquiry.

Literature indicates that qualitative research has its own unique characteristics as discussed below.

#### *Interpretive nature*

Creswell (2009) regards qualitative research as generally interpretive. The assumption is that a qualitative researcher is concerned with meaning and seeks to understand people's definition of a situation (Henning, Rensburg & Smit, 2004). In other words, as a researcher, one becomes part of the mission by raising questions about how people define their situations. As well as, how they interpret the world around them (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). The intention of the researcher is to explain the world, making sense of it by first understanding it (Creswell, 2009). The interpretive research regards the context of the research as important (Henning et al., 2004). McFarlane & Morgan, (2021) asserts that people create their own perceptions of their world and then act upon those perceptions. It is therefore one of my tasks as the researcher, to interpret these perceptions and make sense of them.

#### *Descriptive nature*

Qualitative research aims to provide a rich description of the phenomena from the participants' point of view and in the specific context (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Creswell, 2009). This means that the experiences of participants are described in their own words hence the responses of the participants need to be richly described (Creswell, 2008) and substantiated by theory and practical evidence (Henning, et al., 2004). In this study, verbatim notes from the data were used, providing a rich description of participants in their own words. The visual data provided in the form of drawings were highly descriptive in themselves and also interpreted through the participants' own explanation. In other words, through this data, I was able to comprehend how lesbian and gay students understand and navigate in these places and spaces of discomfort.

### *Inductive nature*

Qualitative research implies that data is collected and inductively analysed (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Creswell, 2009). This means that themes and categories that emerge from the data are analysed in their raw nature without pre-conceived ideas (Creswell, 2009). In this study, I only used theory to analyse and guide my research and I had no pre-conceived ideas about how lesbian and gay students experienced their own lives. I then critically interpreted the data and discussed it by comparing it to available literature.

### *Exploratory nature*

Qualitative aims to generate meaning from situations about which relatively little is known (Denscombe, 2003; Creswell, 2009). The researcher discovers more themes as more opportunities of exploring data has emerged (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Creswell, 2009). Drawings, individual and focus group interviews were used in research for this purpose, therefore, the study was exploratory in nature.

### *Interactive nature*

Qualitative research is also viewed as an interactive process, because of the involvement of the researcher and the participants in the research process (Creswell, 2009). The researcher needs to be aware of his/ her paradigm to try to prevent their views from influencing the interpretation and the research process (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). My reflection of the research process enabled me to engage with my interpretive paradigm and prevented me from bias engagement.

### *The Researcher as an instrument of data generation*

According to qualitative research principles, the researcher is an important research instrument and as a researcher I had to be sensitized to my own prejudices, so that I may not be biased during data generation and analysis (Patton, 2002). When I embarked on this study, my first thoughts were that participants would not be willing to open up about their own lives, but I decided to put aside my fears, since, I was aware of my role as researcher.

I had to embody and communicate to the participants the values of trust, non-bias and respect when interacting with them (Creswell, 2009). Hence, during the research process, I permitted the participants to make meaning of the data by explaining what their drawings meant to them. In addition, I put my assumptions about what their lives were like aside and tried not to influence them in any way.



#### **4.4. Research setting/context**

This study is located in a deep rural town called Umzimkhulu, in a TVET College. Umzimkhulu is a former Transkei land and Eastern Cape Province. The inhabitants of Umzimkhulu are, Bhaca speaking people, Zulu speaking people, Xhosa speaking people and Coloured people. There are four languages that are spoken in the area, IsiXhosa, IsiZulu, IsiBhaca and Afrikaans. When there was an introduction of Transkiean curriculum, children were forced to speak IsiXhosa from Grade one as their mother tongue, thus why Umzimkhulu had many people who speak IsiXhosa.

The TVET College is outside the located town and it is about 2, 5 kilometres away. The mode of transport is by bus, van and taxi. Students who are studying at the college walk to the school premises. The college is comprised of majority black students and few coloureds students. The college offers the different courses namely: farming management, public management, management assistant, business management, engineering, and agriculture science. Gay students are minority group in the college. The majority of students are renting rooms outside the college since the college does not have accommodation. These rented rooms have no security and some of them do not have adult figures. Students living there become vulnerable in various ways verbally, physically and sexually.

IsiBhaca and IsiZulu culture is much embedded in the communities of Umzimkhulu. Students are embedded with customs, beliefs, values and attitudes. Every child in the community has to respect her/his own culture. Unemployment is high among the citizens of Umzimkhulu and the standard of living is very low. Many people usually seek employment in the nearby farms, towns and cities where they can earn minimum wages for feeding their families. Some people have managed to make their own quality of lives and have secured employment and have bigger homes for themselves and their families.

Traditional leaders openly express a heterosexual identity. They are orthodox and frown upon lesbian and gay relationships. The patriarchal system is the way of life in these communities. Since Umzimkhulu is deeply rooted in Zulu and Bhaca culture, there are certain cultural practices that need to be honoured by people in these communities such as umemulo (Zulu culture) or umgquzo (Bhaca culture) – a practice that is done to a girl when she reaches an age of 18 years, and boys' circumcision practices amongst others. These practices are made to be compulsory for community members and failure to do so results to one being labelled as deviant. Zulu and Bhaca culture strongly condemn same sex marriages and community leaders

also strongly refuse to grant community members permission to be involved with or marry in same sex relationships.

Same sex is viewed as non-African and violating cultural norms. Traditional leaders believe that homosexuality is not African, rather it is imported to Africa. They regard it as a disgusting in African culture. In society, a human being is classified as either male or female. Each person has his or her own role to play in the community.

#### **4.5. Pilot study**

A pilot study, according to McLeod (2003), is a small-scale practice test before the main study is constructed. A pilot allows the researcher to test the study with a selected few individuals so that if problems arise they can be altered before the main study. It is beneficial because it saves time and money (McLeod, 2003). In addition, it is conducted in order to assess the safety of treatment or interventions and recruitment potentials. Including, examining the randomization and blinding process, increase the researchers experience with the study methods and interventions provide estimates of sample size calculation. The semi-structured and focus groups were tested on two available participants; the lesbian and the gay students, in order to determine if the questions asked could be clearly understood and answered with ease.

Questions were examined to make sure that they kept to the objectives of this study. The researcher also made use of the pilot study to identify how long the overall process of interviews would take to ensure that the time-frame could be suitable for all participants. The pilot study was conducted with semi-structured interviews, to understand gay students' experiences. This pilot study was performed to ensure that all questions were asked in an ethical manner.

The participants were given time to introduce themselves. I explained the intention of the study and I did a lot of talking to make the members feel comfortable. Ground rules were clearly set to prevent disruption of the session like switching off the cell phones. Questions were asked in their own language.

## **4.6. Research sample and data sources**

### **4.6.1. Sampling**

In order to obtain rich data I used snowball sampling because it was useful for hard-to-reach populations for which there was no sampling frame, but the members of which were somewhat interconnected (Check & Schutt, 2012). I choose this type of sample because it is used to sample members of such groups as closeted gay students, educators and informal organizational leaders who have suffered. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) assert that researchers, in snowball sampling, identify a small number of individuals who have the characteristics which they are interested in. They elaborate that these people are then used as informants to identify, or put the researchers in touch with others who qualify for inclusion and these, in turn, identify others. Similarly with Check & Schutt (2012), Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) assert that this method is useful for sampling a population where accessibility is difficult. Due to it being a sensitive topic, for example, sexual violence or where communication networks are undeveloped. The duty for the researcher is to institute who are the critical or key informants and with whom initial contact must be made.

The chosen sample was between nineteen and thirty years of age. The sample was further limited to gay students from one of the TVET College in Kwa-Zulu Natal. I used the snowball sampling to select my participants since it is hard to reach the population. The sample of TVET gay students does not represent all the nineteen and thirty years' gay students in TVET College but it does assist in understanding how gay students are being treated and how they cope with these experiences. As the sample of this study was small, the findings of this research cannot be generated to all students. Generalisation, however, is not the main purpose of this study.

Furthermore, my sample was comprised of gay students coming from deep rural areas who have not been the principal focus of academic research and their views largely neglected (Brady, 2007). To acquire knowledge, I used these students in my study because I believe that they are not passive and can narrate their stories of how they have been treated in the TVET College and in the entire community. I also believe that these gay students are social actors and active agents in their own spaces and places, who are capable of meaning making.

The researcher searches for key information from key informants, groups, places or events to study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). In other words, this sample is chosen because they are likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomena the researcher is

investigating. I chose two sexual orientations, which is lesbian and gay, because I believe that they experience ill-treatment equally. They are the social actors and experts in their own lives; they have the right to participate in research that aims to make their own lives visible (Moss, 2011).

#### **4.6.2. Recruitment process**

I spoke to one of my colleagues lecturing at TVET College, a male lecturer. I told him about the intention of the study and we also looked at the possibilities of the study in the college. He indicated that there were few students who exposed themselves about their sexual identity. Consequently, he brought one lesbian who was open about her sexual identity. I spoke with her in a discreet place, an office of a Departmental Head. She agreed to participate and she also saw it as an opportunity to make their voices heard. I kindly asked her to find more participants.

My participant initiated snowball sampling by recruiting LGBT students that she knew in the campus. She phoned me and informed me that she got two male students who are gay. I also met them and explained the intention of the study. I asked them to recruit more LGBT students, as many as they can. They promised to do so. Consequently, they got six students, one gay and five lesbians. I organized a private venue from our local municipality and they gave us a boardroom. I explained the intention of the study and ethical information. They agreed to participate in the study. I was very pleased to get a huge number in a rural TVET College although there was an imbalance in terms of gender. The males indicated that the boys are scared to expose themselves because they are not known by their families and the public at large as homosexuals. The college on the other hand is built in a rural town where all rural people are buying groceries, so they are afraid that they might be seen by these people or their family members.

#### **4.6.3. Interviews**

In order to obtain the data for this study, I used interviews. Kvale (1996) regards an interview as an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest and sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production. Interviews are methods of gathering information through oral means using a set of pre-planned questions. According to Shneiderman & Plaisant (2004), interviews can be very productive, since the interviewer can pursue specific issues of concern that may lead to focussed and constructive suggestions. Terre

Blanche & Kelly (2014) concur with Kvale (1996) by stating that interviewing is a more natural way of interacting with students instead of asking them to fill out a questionnaire or conduct an experiment. Therefore, this fits well with the interpretive approach to research. Tuckman (1999) asserts that one of the purposes of interviews are, that it may be used as the principal means of gathering information, which can have a direct bearing on the research objectives. It is good at obtaining detailed information and few participants are needed to gather rich detailed data.

Drawing on the theoretical insights, I chose this method as a means of data gathering because the interview has the potential to provide rich and illuminating material and it is a flexible and adaptable way of finding things out (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The face to face interviews offer the possibility of modifying one's line of inquiry and allows following up of interesting responses. It also allows for the investigation of underlying motives; and for the use of non-verbal cues which may give messages which help in understanding the verbal responses (Robson, 2002). Fisher (2005) & Wilson (2003) concur with Robson (2002) that in depth interviews are personal. Unstructured interviews aim to identify participant's emotions, feelings and opinions regarding a particular research subject. They emphasise that the main advantage of personal interviews is that it involves personal and direct contact between interviewer and interviewee. However, the interviewer needs to develop the necessary skills to successfully carry out an interview. Three types of research interviews were used in the study. Namely, the semi-structured interviews, focus group and visual methodology interviews. I chose to interview students because I believe that students are the source of information and it is important as a researcher to enter their world and to see their situation through their eyes.

Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) emphasise that the research interviews are far more resource-intensive. It requires eliciting information from participants on one to one basis and interviews can last longer than an hour and produce vast amounts of data. They state that the physical organisation of interview settings are an important part of the interview process. We used the boardroom from our local Tourism Department as a safe, quiet and convenient place for my participants. The seating plan consisted of an interviewer and interviewee setting alongside each other with a recording device. I was discreetly positioned so as not intimidate or distract the interviewee. I used my laptop and cell-phone to record the data. I also observed social distancing and also giving the interviewee space to feel comfortable. I introduced myself, outlined the purpose of the interview and its intended format and structure. I took notes while he/she was speaking and emphasised how data from the interview will be used and ensured

anonymity. I provide the interviewee with comfort signs or acceptance cues like nodding the head to indicate that I did understand and I had interest in interviewee's response. I ensured that there was appropriate eye contact maintained during the discussion. When we finished, I thanked the interviewee for his/her voluntary participation in the interview.

The advantages of using interviews (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011) are:

- ✓ There is direct contact as a researcher, and the researcher achieves hundred per cent response rate of his/her questions.
- ✓ Interviewer can decide the follow up questions.
- ✓ The researcher can hear far more than just what the participants tell you. The researcher can observe the body language and interpret the tone of response to question.
- ✓ Participants often see interviews as an opportunity to voice opinions and share a lot about the problem and their experience.
- ✓ In most cases they provide vast amounts of rich and useful data for further analysis.

Interviews have disadvantages on the other hand. Interviews are time-consuming and costly to conduct. Data generated through interviews can prove difficult for the lone researcher to analyse. Interpretation of interview data may differ between researchers and, interviews can easily meander from the main subject. As the researcher I tried to be patient as much as I can because I understood the importance of the study.

## **4.7. Data collection methods**

### **4.7.1. Semi- structured interview.**

Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain in depth information from participants. Interviews are widely used instruments of data collection (Davies, 2007: Mears, 2009: Guthrie, 2010, Cohen Manion & Morrison, 2011). The aim of this study, in using semi-structured interviews, was to obtain rich descriptive data that will help to understand the participants' construction of knowledge and social reality (Niewenhuis, 2007). The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that it enables probing and clarification and it is an interactive process between the phenomenon being researched through the interviewer and interviewee and is aimed at producing rich data. According to Whitley (2009) probing is the key to successful in depth interviewing and they mention the following probing techniques:

The silent probe (waiting for response)

The silent probe (repeating the last thing someone has said and asking them to continue)

The Uh-huh probe (asking questions like “Could you tell me about that or why do you say that?”)

Semi-structured interviews can be defined as conversations with purpose (Burgess, 1984). It generally starts from a number of predetermined questions or topics, but also adopts a flexible approach for the discussions with an interviewee. The interviews were conducted in their home languages; IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, IsiBhaca and English since I have one participant who was a Coloured, they felt comfortable to express their experiences. The interviews took between 30 to 50 minutes, depending upon how quick the interviewee understood and answered the questions. My intention was to make participants feel comfortable.

Semi-structured interviews offer face to face interactions between researcher and the participants (Adler & Clark, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Flick (2007) argues that the success of interviewer competence is when the interviewer asks questions. I was very aware that the study dealt with a sensitive and personal issue which had the possibility of evoking emotions. I found no evidence of emotional trauma in any of the participants who agreed to participate in the study although I was researching about gays' experiences. Semi-structured interviews offer an opportunity for the participants to tell their stories in a chronological manner (Mears, 2009). Participants have to recall, re-live and reflect their past experiences in an organized manner. The nine gay students were interviewed individually. After consent had been granted, each individual response was recorded and transcribed later. I took notes while the participant responded to the questions. The transcribed interviews were translated into English.

Bell (2010) highlighted that the researcher should not assume that all participants will be willing for their responses to be recorded. None of the gay students refused to participate in the study. I told all the participants that the audio-tapes would be treated with confidentiality and it was meant for the purpose of the study.

#### **4.7.2. Focus group interview**

Focused groups are contrived settings, bringing together a specifically chosen sector of a population, previously unknown to each other (Hyden & Bulow, 2003). This is done to discuss a particular given theme or topic, where interaction with the group leads to data and outcomes

(Smithson, 2000). In the focus group, a social environment is created to enable group members to be stimulated by one another's perceptions and ideas and this can increase the quality and the richness of the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Focus group interviews are a strategy based on the assumption that group interactions will produce a range responses. By doing so, activating forgotten details of experience and releasing inhibitions that may otherwise discourage participants from disclosing information (Maree, 2007). The reliance is on the interaction within the group who discuss a topic supplied by the researcher (Morgan, 1997), yielding a collective rather than individual view. This encourages other participants to disclose information they might have not remembered to disclose if they were alone (Maree, 2007).

A focus group interview is conducted after a series of individual interviews to further explore the general nature of the comments from different individuals. In a group, people develop and express ideas they would not have thought on their own (Shneiderman & Plaisant, 2004). The researcher yields insights that he might not otherwise have been available to foresee before the interview.

Focus groups are economical on time, producing a large amount of data in a short period of time (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). In the current study, the focus group method facilitated an open discussion amongst the participants about gays' experiences. The focus group was composed of lesbians and gays between the age of nineteen and thirty years. The questions were asked in their home languages, IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, IsiBhaca, and English. This was done in order to allow participants to express themselves without language constraints. The focus group method enabled the participants to answer probing questions freely.

Focus group interviews are organized along altogether different lines (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). When a focus group is interviewed in the same room, interviewees interact with the interviewer only. They do not interact with their fellow interviewees and each takes his or her turn to talk. Focus groups rely on the success of the ways people mutually engage in conversation. It is within such situations that participants may recall details of their own experiences, release their own inhibitions and feel comfortable. The participants contribute their own comments and responses to comments made by other members of the group in supportive or critical ways. The intention is that the discussion will be richer, deeper and more honest and incisive than any interview with a single participant could produce.

I also considered the five 'S's of group interaction mentioned synergism, snowballing, stimulation, security and spontaneity (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).



- ✓ Synergism is a cumulative process in which individual participants react to and build the responses of other group members. The results of the combined group effort may produce a wider range of information, insight and ideas likely to be revealed more so than by any single member of the group in one to one interview. Participants were permitted to share his/her experience and to build upon responses of other group members.
- ✓ Snowballing is a situation in which a comment by one participant triggers a chain of responses from others which in turn generates new ideas and topics. Participants were allowed to connect from one's response but mostly observed each other.
- ✓ Stimulation is a situation in which the group setting spurs members to express their own ideas. I asked participants to introduce themselves to each other so that they could call one another with names. Interviews were flowing because no one was afraid to talk.
- ✓ Security of focus group interviews encourages group members to express themselves more freely, especially if they find that others share similar opinions or if the group members are relatively shy or lacking confidence. All members were free to talk.
- ✓ Spontaneity refers to the fact that no individual is forced to have particular views or opinions about a topic and to express those views to the rest of the group. No one was obliged to say something if he/she did not want to.

The main advantage of a focus group is that the data it yields may accurately reflect people's genuine thoughts and feelings about the subject. Rather than obtained through individuals interviews in which participants feel forced to answer with insufficient time to consider all the issues.

On the other hand focus group has disadvantages. Participants respond in a way designed to please others (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011) and individual group members are unwilling to diverge too far from the group consensus. Participants may choose not to reveal certain information in a group setting. Especially in situations which are complicated, highly personal or sensitive. In concealing such information, data which may have proven invaluable for your own research would remain hidden from view. The leader effect of dominant individuals is a frequently observed phenomenon (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). So if the group members know each other or be a stranger, they may feel reluctant to speak frankly to one another. The researcher has less control over a focus group than he/she would have over one-to-one interviews.

Before I did the focus group, I firstly started by looking for the venue where the interviews would take place. I approached the manager under Tourism Department at Umzimkhulu Municipality to provide us with a room that would accommodate at least six people at a time. I explained the intention of getting the room and the purpose of the study. I checked it and I saw that sessions would be taken without any interruptions. The reason for choosing this venue was that the participants were not feeling comfortable if the interviews might be taking place in the college. They wanted a comfortable, discreet area. I conducted two focus group interviews. The reason of doing so was that South Africa was experiencing Covid-19 pandemic, which affected many lives of people. Some of my participants were infected by this virus and others were affected, which hindered my progress in the collecting the data. The president in consultation with the National Command Council, also decided to put the country into lockdown under different stages. Some stages of lockdown were not allowing us to gather together. So I decided to do two focus groups and I followed the Covid-19 protocols with social distancing, sanitizing and wearing of masks. I started with those who were living around Umzimkhulu since the space of the room we used was not enough to accommodate all participants and I also looked at the availability of the participants.

The interprovincial journey was affected by a curfew. One of my participants was from Eastern Cape and the majority of my participants were from areas around Umzimkhulu. In my first session I got 5 lesbians. We followed all Covid-19 regulations such as checking everyone's temperature, sanitising every 20 minutes, wearing of masks and observing social distancing. In the second session I got one lesbian and two gay participants, and we also followed the Covid-19 regulations.

Before interviews I had a few gatherings to help participants get acquainted and made them feel comfortable when they are with me. Some of them used to call me "Bhuti" means brother and others say "Skhokho or Mpinthi" means friend. I was aware that the participants still regarded me as an authority figure, since I am older than them and I was the one who facilitating the process of interviews.

#### **4.7.3. Visual methods (Drawing as a data generation method)**

More recently, interest has grown in performing qualitative research which focuses on the visual images themselves in order to explore participants' experiences and meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). According to Driessnack (2005) there is renewed interest in the research since traditional methods often fail to elicit the socially silenced voices of vulnerable and

marginalized youth. This has led to an increasing acceptance of the visual methods. It can provide valuable and valid data about issues of concern to the social sciences. There have also been calls for further application of these methods to psychological questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). There is evidence in literature that drawings as a research method, has been used in a number of studies (McGregor, Currie & Wetton, 1998; Guillemin, 2004; Ozden, 2009; Wood, Theron & Mayaba, 2012). These studies highlight different approaches and purposes of using drawings with adults, young people and children. I used drawings in this study to enrich the qualitative data.

Drawings, historically, have been used in the field of psychology with young people as an assessment tool to measure their cognitive or emotional development (Backett-Milburn & McKie, 1999; Veale, 2005). The argument against the use of drawings alone without an accompanying explanation, points to their inadequacy. It reveals young people's well-being since they can sometimes replicate what they see in their surroundings instead of revealing their inner thoughts (Thomas & Silk, 1990). Drawings are unique perspectives of lived experiences of being gay. They indicate power relations and the impact of social difference.

Current studies seem to be using drawings alongside the drawer's articulations of the image (Lavoie & Benson, 2011). This technique is commonly known as the "draw and write" approach (McGregor, Currie & Wetton, 1998). The format of this approach is explained by Mair & Kierans (2007) as follows; firstly, participants respond to a researcher's enquiry with a drawing. Secondly, participants are then asked to elaborate on their completed drawing through written answers or oral answers to further describe and clarify the content of the picture. Then provide a commentary around the researcher, which can build the analysis.

In educational research studies, drawings, along with descriptions were used among teachers to investigate whether an intervention programme on teachers affected by HIV and AIDS had made a difference (Theron, 2008). Through the write and talk or draw approach teachers in that programme were able to explore their feelings about the virus. In a study amongst adults by Lavoie & Benson (2011), a drawing voice approach was used to explore how the community members viewed the role of local languages and culture in schools. Findings in this study revealed that talking about drawings helped to generate enough data, as the participants engaged in discussion that was stimulated by their drawings.

One advantage of visual methods is that not all participants are able to express themselves verbally. Experiences, such as pain, cannot be expressed through words and some people have

preference for visual expression (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Clark (2010) added that visual methods can provide data that world-based cannot. Bagnoli (2009) describes insight conveyed by images considering quality such as participants depicting themselves at crossroads with different potential features stretching ahead. This also elicits detail that might otherwise be difficult to talk about, leading to the disclosure of more sensitive issues and emotional details. The process of producing a visual image allows participants time to reflect on the topic being explored which may not only produce rich and insightful images but also inform a more detailed interview. “We bring our own values, biographies, cultures and background to bear on images (Rose, 2007).

I asked the gay students to draw their own representation of their own lives in the college, community and in the future. The prompt question is read as follows: *Draw a picture that describes how you feel at the college, in the community and how you dream about your future. Explain key points in writing and how you would improve the situation.* I also explained to them verbally in IsiZulu, IsiBhaca, and IsiXhosa to accommodate all of them. I asked them to not copy others drawings as I wanted to comprehend their individual lives and strengths. I added that the significance of writing their own was that I valued their opinions and their voices are important.

I gave the participants 15 minutes to 20 minutes to draw their pictures or perfect dream that showed how they felt in their respective places, college, community and future. I handed them the pencils, although most of them had brought their own writing tools, including pens. I asked them to draw and write explanations in their mother tongue or English, the language of teaching and learning in their institution. When they finished, I asked them about their pictures. I took notes and recorded all their explanations. I scanned the drawings and saved in my cell phone. After scanning the drawings, I transcribed all the narratives one by one and linked it to each one participant’s drawings. After this process, I reflected on the process using drawings and explanations and I also asked them to reflect on the process. Lastly I analysed the drawings alongside their explanations.

#### **4.8. Data analysis methods**

According to Ader Herman, Mellenbergh & Hand (2008), data analysis is a process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming and modelling data. It has the aim of discovering useful information, suggesting conclusions and supporting decision making. Data analysis is also

described by Babbie & Mouton (2001) as the process concerned with reducing the amount of collected data in order to provide meaningful statements of information. Data analysis in this study entailed a process of systematically searching and arranging all the data collected from the drawings, and narratives from semi-structured interviews.

I analysed the data by emergent or key themes. I used verbatim quotations from participants where relevant. Illuminative can add life to narratives and often convey the point very expressively without being mediated or softened by the academic language researcher.

I also analysed the data through content analysis. Content analysis was used to analyse the data which was gathered from personal interviews. According to Moore, McCabe & Craig (2012) this type of research is gathered and, into themes and sub-themes, so that it may be comparable. A main advantage of content analysis is that it helps in data that is collected, be reduced and simplified. While at the same time, produce results that may then be measured using quantitative techniques. Moreover, content analysis gives the ability to researchers to structure the qualitative data collected in any way that satisfies the accomplishment of research objectives.

#### **4.8.1. Analysis of textual data**

I actively participated in the collection of all empirical data and I was also the primary instrument in the data analysis. Data was analysed in coding topics and categories. Niewenhuis (2007) defines data analysis as the process of dividing data into parts by a classification system. I begin this process by reading through the transcripts and engaging in the data. I then break down the raw data, putting it back in new ways by highlighting the text in different colours, and I also extracted the main ideas. I wrote the all the highlighted words and phrases on blank pages and numbered all the words. I then went back to the transcripts to verify if there were any other significant phrases and words that I had missed. Words that were left out were added to the pages for codes. This was the first level of coding called open coding, where data were labelled or tagged.

I began to read through these codes and phrases several times until I was able to group them into categories. Words and phrases that could not fit into a category were left out until there were other words and phrases that could be linked to them to form a category. This process is referred to as thematic analysis. Ader Herman et al., (2011) which entails working with codes to identify patterns and similarities and the differences between them.

The next step was categorizing. I had to read through all the categories to verify how they connected with the study. Rakatsoane & Rakatsoane (2006) suggest that it is necessary to reduce categories of data after becoming familiar with the data to make the data manageable. I had to rearrange the themes and put them under different categories if they could link with the study. I refined them several times until I was satisfied. This data analysis therefore was inductive in nature. It facilitated the interpretation of smaller units as the analysis started with the researcher reading all the data to gain a sense of the whole study. The coding process then allowed me to familiarise myself with the text in order to start making links by constantly asking myself questions about the data. Data analysis also provided opportunities to get close to the data in order to generate and draw up findings and conclusions for this research.

#### **4.8.2. Analysis of symbolic drawings**

As Bagnoli (2009) indicates, that it is important that the drawing is not the visual in question, but rather the meanings the drawing conveys for the individual and the world in which he or she lives in. Images that help are ones that contain powerful messages rather than their beauty. Participants used the objects in their drawings and included their direct meanings. The meanings were analysed by means of content analysis.

#### **4.9. Issues of trustworthiness and validity**

Validity in qualitative research has certain principles as the researcher should act as a facilitator to prevent data manipulation and data should be presented according to the participants view and minimal intrusion of the researcher. Bell (2010) explains that validity refers to ‘seeing’ and ‘reporting’ the situation through the eyes of the participants. Data should be produced, presented and reported according to the participants rather than the researcher’s point of view.

A-participant-led-process in data production is a key aspect of validity and reliability of the study. I ensured that gay students were partners with me in the research, especially in the engagement with the participatory tools. According to Lowe (2007) data collection requires an intensive personal involvement and in-depth data responses from individuals to ensure a high level of validity and reliability. If the participants are actors in data production it is more authentic and reliable. Lowe (2007) states that validity allows the researcher to be sure whether the data collected truly describes the item of study.

#### **4.9.1. Quality criteria**

The four constructs suggested by Lincoln & Guba (1985), namely credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability, were used to evaluate the quality of this research. This was done to ensure the trustworthiness of procedure was followed. According to Niewenhuis (2007) trustworthiness is the test of data analysis, findings and conclusions.

**Credibility** – Credibility in the research was assured by means of triangulation of different methods of data collection. Data from multiple sources were collected. The data from these sources were narratives from drawings, semi structured interviews and focus group. An in-depth description of the setting and interaction of the participants were presented. There was prolonged engagement with the participants for more than five months with the intention to get more participants. The participants were permitted to read the transcribed data to check if the transcriptions captured their experiences in the way they intended.

**Dependability** – Dependability in this study was about whether the research process was logical, well documented and audited. I put myself to account for ever-changing context within research conducted to make sure that data collected overlapped methods. The process in this study was well documented. An audited trail representing of assuring quality, this research was developed in line with Lincoln & Guba's (1985) guidelines. This audit trail documented the course of the development of the analysis and all research decisions and the activities throughout the study. All decisions taken about methodology analytic choices were stated explicitly. I conserved sources of all research activity, documented all data collection analysis procedures throughout the study. This was done to enable any reader to trace the course of the research step by step via decisions made and procedures described. The data was tape recorded with the permission from the participants and then the data was transcribed verbatim, and analysed thematically.

**Transferability** – transferability refers to whether the findings of this research can be generalized. I described the research context and the assumptions that were core to the central research. Gay students were engaged. The gender was also observed, gay and lesbian. Although the case of gay students in Harry Gwala District may be unique, it could be an example within a broader group. Therefore it is my responsibility to ensure that sufficient contextual information about the field work was provided to make such a transfer, as suggested by Leedy & Ormrod (2005).

Conformability- Conformability is about whether the findings of this study could be confirmed. I had provided evidence that corroborated the findings and interpretations by means of auditing. In order to reduce the effect of my own bias I made use of triangulation. I made use of a member check by giving participants the opportunity to verify if their narratives, drawings and interviews had been analysed accurately and if the data was a true reflection of what transpired.

#### **4.10. Limitations and delimitations**

The study was limited to nine gay students in one TVET College in Kwa-Zulu Natal. The sample of this study was small and the findings of this research, therefore, cannot be generalized to all gay students. Generalizations, however, were not the main purpose of this study. The majority of participants were Black South Africans and there was one Coloured person participating in the study. The participants were between the ages of 19 to 30 years. The study was limited to one TVET College where I used snowball sampling to find 3 gays and 6 lesbians. The sample of 9 participants does not represent all the 19 to 30 years old gay students in Umzimkhulu Location but it does assist in understanding how gay students are treated and how they cope with these experiences.

#### **4.11. Ethical consideration**

According to Butler (2000) there are key principles that underpin an ethical approach to research. These include respect, equity, avoiding harm, non-discrimination, privacy, confidentiality and protecting the weak. Hereafter, I attended to the relevant ethical issues I addressed prior and during the research process.

Permission was sought from the TVET College and college principal. The students involved in the study signed the informed consent forms. Participants were informed of the purpose for the study and their written permission was obtained before the commencement of the study. I ensured that the participants in the study were given notice of the dates, times and location of the interview process. The participants were informed of the possible consequences of the research study.

According to De Vos, (2011), obtaining informed consent implies providing adequate information on, what the research is about, the expected duration of the participants' involvement and procedures to be followed. It also includes possible advantages and



disadvantages of the participations, dangers to which participants may be exposed, and the credibility of the researcher's communication with potential participants. A written informed consent form with accurate and complete information about the goal of the investigation was provided to participants. To ensure that participants fully understood the details of the study, the information was read to them, and they were given the opportunity to ask questions. I distributed the consent forms to the students who were willing to participate.

I explained that confidentiality would be observed. Confidentiality is about keeping information secret, as it is not intended for others to observe. The data collected would be used for this study only. Pseudonyms were used to guarantee the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, as well as the school involved in the study. Their names were not used or mentioned during the interview process. I also used document identification numbers (DIN) to identify the participants' responses.

Participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time if they wished. The interview was conducted in an appropriate, safe, conducive, non-stressful and non-threatening environment, ensuring that the participants were comfortable and treated with the necessary respect at all times. Guillemin & Gillam (2006) state that participation in the study, should, at all times be voluntary. The information about voluntary participation and potential impact of the research was communicated to participants beforehand. The information offered the participants the opportunity to withdraw if they wish to do so.

A debriefing session was held with participants to render them the opportunity to work through their experiences and its aftermath. The problems generated by the research experienced can be corrected through debriefing (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). During this session participants were encouraged to discuss their feeling about the research immediately after data collection was completed. Participants had access to the findings of this research and they could contact the researchers if they had problems concerning the study.

Participants were thoroughly briefed on the research procedure and the instruments that were used to collect that data. They were given the opportunity to seek clarification with any concerns they had prior to the starting of the study.

Participants might experience concrete harm with regards to their family life and relationships. The ethical rule of social research is that research must bring no harm to participants (Auriacombe & Mouton (2007)). I limited all the risks against the importance and possible benefits of the research project.

Deception refers to misleading participants, deliberately misrepresenting facts or withholding information from them (Struwig & Stead (2001). It involves offering incorrect information in order to ensure the participation of participants. It happens when the researcher misleads participants through verbal instructions, or the actions of the researcher or certain aspects of the setting. Participants were told about the research and everything they needed to know about their involvement in the study. They signed the consent forms. At no stage were participants misled. The data presented in this study is a true reflection of what transpired during data collection.

According to Wiersma (2008), researchers are forced to ensure that they are competent, honest and adequately skilled to undertake the proposed investigation. Even well-intentioned and well-planned research can fail, or can produce invalid results if the researchers or field workers are not adequately qualified and equipped. Especially if there is no adequate supervision of the project (Wiersma, 2008). I also worked closely with my supervisor who is a qualitative researcher.

The participants were also told that they would get a copy of their interview transcript in order to verify and rectify any misunderstandings that may have occurred. I obtained ethical clearance from the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, allowing me as a researcher to conduct the study.

#### **4.12. Conclusion**

The chapter provided a detailed discussion of the research design. In the rationale for research approach, I described the research paradigm, narrative inquiry and methodological choices. I have explained how they informed the study. I also explained the research setting; pilot study; research sample and data sources; and data collection methods. The study also explained the data analysis methods and I elaborated on the measures that I took to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. Limitations and delimitations of the study were also clarified. Lastly, the ethical consideration was also explained.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DATA PRESENTATION**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

In Chapter Four, I described the research design, rationale for the research approach which includes the research paradigm, narrative inquiry, methodological issues and how they informed this study. I then explained the research setting, and how I generated the data throughout the study. Subsequently, I elaborated on the measures that I took to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. Thereafter, I explained the ethical issues that I considered relevant and significant to this study.

In this chapter, I will present the data that I got from participants. I will discuss the themes that emerged from the raw data and support my interpretation of the data by verbatim quotations from written and oral responses of the participants and visual images from the drawings.

#### **5.2. Overview of this chapter**

The purpose of the study was to explore the lesbian and gay students' experiences at a Technical Vocational Education and Training College in Kwa-Zulu Natal in Harry Gwala District. Content analysis was utilized to comprehend the experiences of lesbian and gay students who participated in this research. The research questions that guided this inquiry are:

1. A) How do lesbian and gay students experience being homosexual at a TVET College?  
B) Why do they hold these views?
2. What are the risks factors arising from their sexual orientation at the TVET College, if any?
3. What strategies do they use to navigate these risk factors, if any?

This chapter presents the data from the semi-structured interviews, focus group and visual methodology from the participants who identified themselves as lesbians and gays in a TVET College.

Coding of data refers to the process of transforming collected information or observations to a set of meaningful, cohesive categories (Roman, 1997). It is a process of summarizing and representing data in order to provide a systematic account of the recorded or observed phenomenon. A coding process comprises of taking text data or pictures gathered during data

collection, segmenting sentences and labelling those categories with a term often based in the actual language of the participants (Cresswell, 2009). Coding of data was done as follows.

I listened to my recording of the semi-structured and focus interviews several times to become familiar with the data. This process involved attention to each participant and their transcripts from their answers to the interview questions. The procedure was as follows. I reviewed the transcripts individually and marked or underlined exploratory comments. Emerging themes developed by grouping exploratory comments for each participant. I then grouped the emerging themes into similar categories or clusters and the main themes emerged from those clusters. The themes were found by a continual process of comparison and analysis.

I also use drawing as a visual methodology. Drawing is a powerful technique for eliciting attitude and beliefs and generating discussion around an issue of interest (De Lange, Mitchell & Stuart, 2007). When drawing is used as a research method, it entails participants drawing and talking (Backett-Milburn & McKie, 1999) about meaning embedded in their drawing. The collaboration is vital precisely because no visual product can be neutral. The drawing is produced by specific individuals in a particular space and time (Rose, 2001). The drawer's context must colour what is drawn, how it is drawn and what the drawing represents. As such drawing as a research tool must be complemented by verbal research methods.

I use drawings to allow me to get inside the minds of the participants (Fischer & Schratz, 1999). Beyond the drawing itself, its meaning and its value lie partly in the sociocultural context from which a drawing arises, with the individual who created the drawing or the social practices and discourses that may have shaped the drawing. I requested the participants to draw after the completion of focus group interviews. They drew pictures in response to the following prompt question:

*In your perfect world as the LGBT student, what would your perfect world be like? Draw a picture that portrays you in the college, community and in the future. Below or next to each drawing explain what it means to you.*

I firstly created a relaxed and low anxiety zone by beginning this process with some casual conversation and joked with the participants. I scheduled the interviews for two days. On the first day I interviewed five participants and on the second day I interviewed three participants. The reasoning of scheduling the interviews is because of the prevalence of COVID-19. One participant withdrew because he was in contact with a person who had COVID-19. My request was usually met with nervous laughter. "I can't draw" was the common response. The

participants were provided with A4 sheets, pencils and ball pens. After completion of the drawings I requested the participants to provide an analytical narrative of the pictures they had drawn. The purpose was to allow participants to give voice to their drawings. I observed that the use of drawings is appropriate for obtaining memories, thoughts and feelings of adults. The description was audiotaped. Some narratives were written in English and others were mixed with English and participant's home language. The fourth core principle of positive ethics is ensuring fair, equitable and appropriate treatment (Odoul & Cornforth, 2019) of research participants.

I discuss all eight of the drawings presented by participants. These drawings and narratives bring an understanding of how gay students feel when they are at the college, in the community and how they perceive their future. I compared the drawings and their written or oral explanations and interpreted the data.

The strength of qualitative research also lies in the credibility of the study. It is based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participants or readers account (Adlem, 2017). Equally, credibility in this study is achieved through the application of multiple strategies which Creswell (2009) refers to as key elements enhancing the researcher's ability to ascertain the findings and therefore to convince the readers of their reliability. The strategies I have used to ensure credibility, include careful recording of the interviews, through analysis of collected data and impartial presentation of data. The process was also complemented by the manner in which the interviews were transcribed, which was verbatim.

### 5.3. Bibliographical profile of participants

They were nine participants, of which were three gay students and six lesbians. These participants directly and indirectly experienced discrimination and abuse within and outside the institution. They all came from different backgrounds.

Participant	Age	Gender	Rank	Qualification
1. TL	25	Female	Student	NCV Level 4
2. MG	25	Male	Student	NCV Level 4
3. AG	23	Male	Student	NCV Level 4
4. ZL	22	Female	Student	NCV Level 4

5. NL	23	Female	Student	NCV Level 4
6. VG	19	Male	Student	NCV Level 4
7. TEL	29	Female	Student	NCV Level 4
8. LL	25	Female	Student	NCV Level 4
9. SL	19	Female	Student	NCV Level 4

In this regard, the first column illustrates the code of each participant. The second column in the Table indicates the age of each participant. Further, the third column shows gender of each participant, three students are at the age of 25, two students are at the age of 23, the other two students are at the age of 19 which I regard them as the youngest in the study, one student is at the age of 22 and the last student is at the age of 29. In terms of the context in which the nine participants resided, four participants resided in town and six participants resided in rural context. One participant was from Eastern Cape and the other one is a Coloured.

#### **5.4. Data presentation**

The data presented is in response to my first research question: *How do lesbian and gay students experience being gay at a TVET College?* The data is obtained from the participants' responses during semi-structured interviews. The following themes emerged:

1. Perceptions of what it means to be gay
2. Discovering of self
3. Coming out

##### **5.4.1. Perceptions of what it means to be gay**

In this theme, as a researcher, I wanted to know the participants understanding of being gay.

Mwanawina (2012) explains that a gay is the person whose enduring physical, romantic and emotional attractions is to the people of the same gender. The data presented by the participants revealed that they shared a common understanding of gay as a concept and agreed that being gay is when someone is attracted to the same gender. The following definitions are the participants' responses regarding the understanding of being gay. The two participants share the same sentiments and these are their own explanations of being gay. TL defines gay:

*Being a gay means when someone is felt attracted to the same gender by means of love (DIN 1).*

MG also echoed:

*To be gay means to be attracted to same sex (DIN 2).*

The seven participants elaborated to define what is meant by being gay from their own perspectives and how people think about being gay. AG said that people question their sexual orientation as it does not coincide with historical and accepted cultural norms. Here is what he uttered:

*A gay person is someone who is different and unique in the same way as human. But the problem is that their sexual orientation determines whether you are straight or homosexual or transgender. People used to say a gay person is making himself a girl, they don't understand who you really are. If you are a gay, you only feel to love someone with the same sex. You won't change your gender (DIN 8).*

ZL added that being gay is what the gay person feels innately and she agreed with AG that they do not change their identities. This is how she explained it:

*A gay person is a person who is attracted in the same gender but people make a mistake that we are changing our identity. It is not that we are changing our identity; it is just because we are attracted. This is what we feel and you will never prohibit feelings. Mhhhhh.....you see what I'm talking about. So if you like something you make sure that you get it. Even our feelings control us to have relationship with other females. It is not that we change our identity but we are attracted, this is what I can explain (DIN 3).*

TEL shared her different ideas on the concept of gay. She believes that to be gay is not something that happens during the course of night but is something you are born with until you discover yourself. She also explained there are times she wanted people to know about gay identity. TEL's own explanation of gay is as follows:

*It is not something occurs over-night. You grow up and you discover yourself. There is a drama book that we issued out; its title was about "lesbian versus guys". There was a time where one of the grandmothers came to me to appreciate what we are doing. She said in her time this was not allowed and she is still married although her feelings are on the same gender. I also learned that being lesbian is not something new or happened during democracy; even old people discovered themselves on their time (DIN 4).*

SL also imparted that to be gay does not mean a girl changes to be a man and does not mean lesbians are aggressive with man for sexual identity. SL explains:

*Being a gay doesn't mean that I am a man. It does not mean again that my sexual identity will change completely. It is only my feelings that make me a lesbian. We are not fighting with males for sexual identity (DIN 9).*

LL added that there is nothing wrong if someone dated the same gender. This is what she said:

*A gay person is normal person. Her/his feelings are attracted to the same gender of which I don't see as wrong thing if someone loves the same gender. The person is living his/her own life; only the feelings that are attracted to the same gender (DIN 6).*

VG had a different explanation where he said being gay is something natural. He had a feeling that people regard it as demonic and unethical. But he argues that the gay people are honest to themselves. VG explained:

*If you are gay you feel attracted to your gender. If you are gay you must know that it is a nonstop. Haybo! Being gay is fun for some reasons, I know it is fun. The way people treat us is like we are demonic.....when you are a gay person you are really honest. This is the reason why girls like most gays. For example, when a girl is asking a gay person about outfit, he responds honestly telling how it really fits her. We love, care and support. Hmmm.....down to earth sometimes they become dramatic (DIN 7).*

NL also added that if a lesbian or gay wanted to have a baby she or he may adopt the child. This is what NL explained:

*A gay is a person who is dating a same sex, a girl dating another girl or a boy dating another boy. So if you want to have a baby you adopt the baby (DIN 5).*

One participant refers to a gay person as unique and different. The two participants agreed that a gay does not change his or her sexual identity. One participant believes that a male coming out as gay is honest and that is the reason that he is mostly loved by the girls. Some participants are worried about the way people treat them.

#### **5.4. 2. Discovering of self**

Cass (1984) states that the individual realizes that being gay is just one part of who she or he is and synthesizes his or her gay identity into a holistic sense of self. People are different and their feelings and desires are personal to them. The important part is that they are comfortable



with who they are and how they feel. Sexual feelings are a significant part of many people's lives and can bring a lot of pleasure although these feelings are exciting, they can also be complicated and confusing.

Participants usually describe themselves as gay or homosexual when they find themselves emotionally and sexually attracted exclusively to the people of their own gender. Girls who are gay call themselves 'lesbians' and boys who are gay they call themselves 'gay'.

AG expressed his experience when he discovered that he was gay and how he had noticed that he was completely different to other boys. This is what AG said during the interview:

*Well, I don't think it is a choice. When I grew up I felt differently when I'm with my family guys. We grew up and played together. We played "Umasigconsi" (children's play where the girls become mothers and boys become fathers). In that play, I would prefer to be a female, I was more of the soft person than a rough person. I found a hard debt to be on the male side than on a female side. When I grew up I finally discovered who I am. I started to understand that I'm a lesbian and I'm different. My features are not exhibiting that I'm a man. I should have beard and my voice is too soft. In all, it is not a choice from me, .....it is something that I grew up with. So I was born with it (DIN 8).*

ZL also described how she discovered herself and how she got homophobic language articulated by different people in the society since they believed that there was no such thing in the community. ZL was very emotional when she shared her experience since people called her with different names. ZL clarifies:

*I'm attracted on it. It started when I was growing up as a child, I was wearing boy's clothes and I love to wear them. As I grew up, I saw myself when I was in a Junior Secondary. I was sitting with my friend, I felt loving her instead of a boy. It happened the time I was reaching the stage (menstruation period). I started to propose girls. Unfortunately, I was living in rural area, people hate lesbian. When I continued dating my girl, people said I sleep my girlfriend with a snake (a snake used for bewitching) which means I'm bewitching and it had never happened. I asked myself what happened to me, what type of demon entered to me. I have never seen a girl dating another girl (DIN 3).*

VG explained how he noticed when he played with other boys which led him to understand who he was. He shared his experience:

*I don't think it is a choice. When I grew up, we usually went to the river as boys to swim. We were playing a game there in the water and that game was nice to me. When I grew up I discovered that I'm gay (DIN 7).*

NL described how she knew that she was gay and how she became confused when people commented about her personality. This is what he said during the interview:

*There is no reason to be a gay.....what happened when I was young I didn't feel comfortable when I wore a skirt. I walk like boys and people ask me why I go like this referring to my walks. So the boys on other hand were busy proposing me and I decided to date one of the boys to satisfy people in the society since they are talking too much about my personality. We dated but when we were two, I didn't feel well. My life started to be serious when I met other students in the college. I started to discover myself fully who I am. Consequently I stop dating boys since my feelings are on the same gender. I started to propose girls (DIN 5).*

TEL revealed how she discovered herself, how she ended up dating the boy and how her mother felt about her at that stage. TEL reveals:

*I didn't sleep and became "Isitabane". I have grown up as a lesbian. I discovered myself when I was doing Grade 7 and I started to date a girl which was living in a nearby village. I was learning in one of the primary schools in Umzimkhulu (she mentioned the name of school) I loved girls "Ayibo" (showing smile) and boys came to me to ask help when they want girls. They know that when I proposed a girl for a boy, the boy would get that girl. On other days I and my friend who is a lesbian used to visit our girl friends in their places. I also dated a boy because I was scared of him, since boys are abusive in rural areas. When we met, there was nothing happening between us like kissing, hugging and other things. I discovered that I don't have love for boys. There was once upon a time where I visited my friends (boys), I like to hang around boys so my mother beat me thinking that I have started dating not knowing that I'm a lesbian (DIN 4).*

LL also shared that she was in stage of confusion as a result she had started to doubt herself and her life. LL describes her experience:

*I discovered that I was born as a gay person but I tried to find out what happens to me. Am I abnormal? There are things that happened to my life. For example, when I played with girls I had feelings. So my home is a home that doesn't accept homosexuals. What confused me is that what I am, is not what is observed by the people. I ended up being a "fem" A fem is a girl that*

*wears like girls but loves other girls “the butch”. If you see me you would not identify me as a gay person. It is only me who knows me and those who are close to friends (DIN 6).*

SL observed her sexuality when she started to date other girls (butch). SL explained:

*I am a lesbian and I’m attracted to the same gender. I get more comfortable when I’m with a girl. I have more feelings for girls than boys. I enjoy staying with them (DIN 9)*

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In this theme, participants expressed how they discovered that they were gay. They also explained how it was difficult to discover themselves and how their sexuality was being observed by the community members. All participants agreed that they discovered their gay identity at an early stage but on different occasions. Some of the participants indicated that there was a stage where confusion emerged during the time they discovered themselves. They also explained that people in the community made some deleterious comments towards their sexuality.

### **5.4.3. Coming out**

Participants, in this theme, shared their experiences of coming out during the interview. They also indicated who they came out to and who they did not come out to. Three participants indicated that they had come out to everybody which was a good experience with them but to other participants it was hard for them to be known by everybody especially their family members. AG spoke about those who know about his sexual identity. While he was elucidating, he claimed that he was very positive about his life because everybody knows about his sexual identity. He stated:

*At home they know. I mean the broad family like my grandfather, uncle and the different relatives also know that I’m a gay. When I was growing they were hoping that I would change and quit this thing, .....maybe is just because I’m in the stage and I was still young. But they have seen that as I’m growing up I’m getting on it. So people around my place know that there is a boy who behaves like a girl. Sometimes they fail to identify me whether I’m a boy or a girl kind alike..... is irritating. Most people in the public accept because there is nothing they will do (DIN 8).*

ZL shared different experience pertaining to coming out. She stated that she hid her sexuality from her family members and revealed it to the public. This what she had said during the interview:

*Yes, people know that I'm a lesbian. I used to go Northern Cape and other places where there are lesbians' gatherings. I also talk with it in Pietermaritzburg Local Radio Station as a radio presenter. My grandmother, grandfather and father don't know about my sexual identity. So if I'm at home I hide my sexual identity (DIN 3).*

VG described that everybody know. He explained:

*Yes they do at home, school and some people in my village (DIN 7).*

NL also shared the same sentiment and revealed that she had hidden her sexual identity to her family members. She had explained:

*Yes at school but at home, my parents and people in the community don't know (DIN 5).*

TEL was happy because she had revealed her sexual identity and she received warmth and understanding wherever she goes. She stated:

*People know about my sexual identity, everywhere in Durban and other places. Wherever I go the word "Isistabane" doesn't hurt me (DIN 4).*

LL, during interview, revealed that certain individuals know. She explained:

*Not all of them. I'm only known by few students at schools, few friends in my community and few siblings in my family (DIN 6).*

SL also revealed that only few individuals know and this what she had explained:

*Some people know and others don't (DIN 9).*

The following data responds to my second research question: *Why do they hold these views?* The data is taken from participants' responses from focus group interview, and visual method.

The following themes emerged from the responses to this question:

1. Positive attitudes about the college,
2. College as home, and
3. Gay students' attitudes towards sticking together.

#### **5.4.4. Positive attitudes about the college**

Participants shared why they have developed positive attitudes about the college. Participants all agreed that they do not receive much discrimination and harassment at college. In fact, they are permitted to be who they are.

NL revealed that she does not receive much discrimination and she is understood by the college officers. She explained:

*Some of the students and lecturers understand us. They don't discriminate unlike in rural areas. You wear what you like to wear and there are no limitations (DIN 5).*

SL also shared the same sentiment as to how she enjoys to be in the college. This is what she had said during the interview:

*Some of the students and lecturers support us. They don't judge us. We do whatever we like to do (DIN 9).*

LL reflected on the treatment she got in the college. She stated:

*As a fem, I'm not visible. I'm not involved in other things. There is no discrimination. Both heterosexuals and homosexuals are treated equally. I didn't hear any complaints (DIN 6).*

TL explained how she feels about the college and when she feels accommodated. She described:

*I have seen nothing surprising at the college. But there are differences. Something good at the college it is when we discuss LGBT topics in Life Orientation, I feel accommodated. I notice that students do not say negative although you find that there are those have negative attitudes towards LGBT group. Another thing is that we are not expelled at the college and we are welcomed (DIN 1).*

TEL also reflected how she is being accepted when she is in class. She affirmed:

*At the college, they quietly accept me. If there is an open discussion in the class, they are not bad against lesbians and gays (DIN 4).*

ZL revealed how she appreciated the changes that have been made by the college. This is what she stated:

*This year I see forms that ask about the gay students experiences and we don't get discrimination as such (DIN 3).*

AG also revealed how he uses the Life Orientation class to educate other students about gay identity. He clarified:

*I get platform to express about the LGBT in the classroom. I see students do not judge and treat me unfairly (DIN 8).*

MG reflected the way the college is trying to educate students about sexual identity. He said:

*They educate us about homosexuality so that the heterosexual could understand that there is gay community (DIN 2).*

The participants revealed that they feel happy because they are not questioned about their dress code. They are given opportunity to express themselves during Life Orientation period. According to one of the participants, the college is trying its best to educate students about lesbian and gay sexuality.

The following visual data presented revealed how lesbian and gays students view the college.

#### 5.4.5. College as home

Participants shared that when they are at the college they feel at home because they feel comfortable. Some participants agreed that they enjoy being at the college.

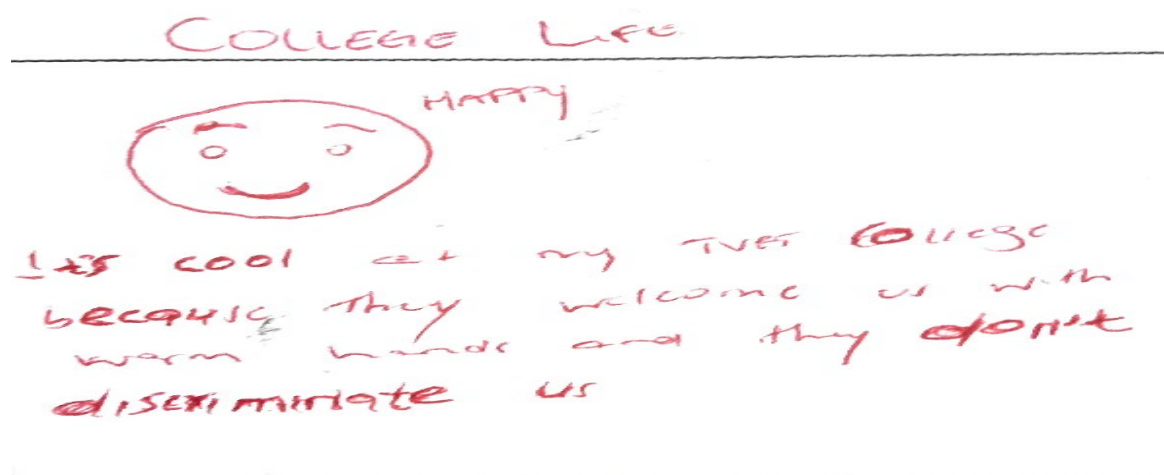
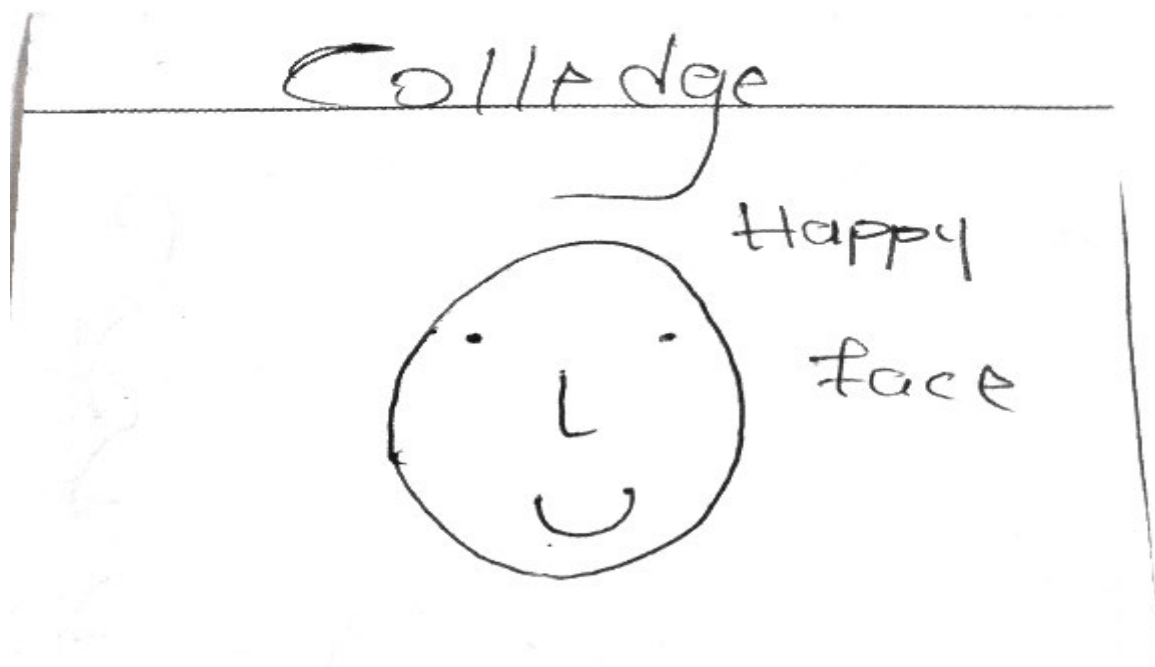


Figure 1

### NL's drawing reveals how she feels when she is in the college

In her drawing, NL has a happy face, smiling and feel relaxed because she feels accepted. NL also reflected verbally how she feels comfortable when she is in the college. This is what she stated:

*I'm cool, people welcome me. I'm comfortable. She also warned other students and she said: I would like the gay students not listen what the people say about us. I don't want them to look the past and internalize negative things (DIN 5).*



At School I get

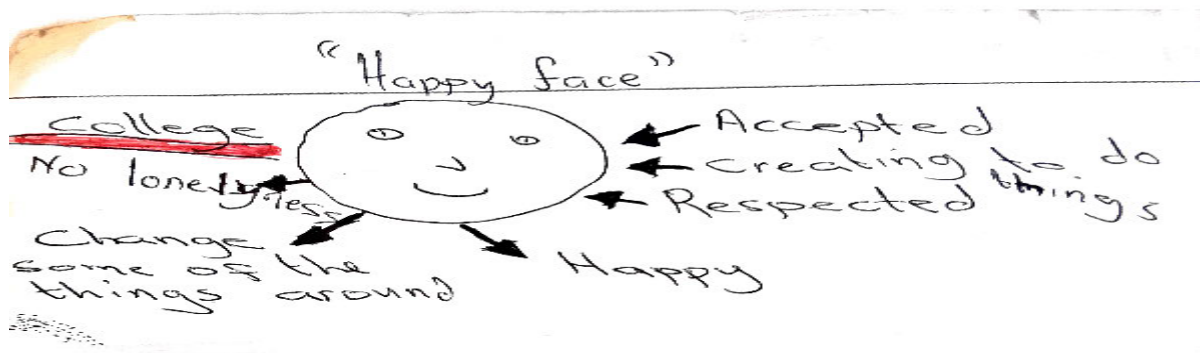
~~Comfortable~~ in everything  
I do no one judges  
me

**Figure 2**

**SL's drawing indicates how she feels when she is in the college**

SL has a happy face because students do not turn against her. SL also explained that she is also happy to be in the college. She stated:

*I'm happy. I don't have a problem and I'm not judged. I wish gay people to live and feel comfortable (DIN 9).*



**Figure 3**

**TEL's drawing reveals how she feels when she is in the college**

TEL drew herself as a happy person and she feels that she is accepted and respected. TEL revealed how she associates with other students. She said:

*I'm happy. I'm not lonely. I hang around with students. If they want to understand about us I help them although sometimes they ask deep questions. There should be rules that will govern us, for example, if there is someone who abuses other students. The person should appear before disciplinary committee (DIN 4).*



In this theme, participants revealed how they feel being at the college. They indicated that they feel respected, welcomed and accepted but they had suggested that there should be a structure that will deal with their problems.

#### **5.4.6. Gay students' attitudes towards sticking together**

Participants shared how the gay individuals treat each other when they are in the college. AG revealed what makes him stick together with other gay students and indicated how they treat each other. This is what he explained:

*Yes there are times where we stick together during free lessons talking about our experiences. In most of the time, gay students hide their sexual orientation scaring to be seen by students who come from his or village. There is jealous among gay students which makes sometimes difficult to stick together (DIN 8).*

ZL affirmed that she does not stay with other gay students because there is an issue of class and stipulated how she separated herself with them. She said:

*I don't hang around gay students because you see somebody who needs you and the one who does not accept or welcome you. There is an issue of dress code among us; you feel that the person undermines you because he or she wears expensive clothes. I distance myself from those gay students who undermine me. Gay students are undermining each other more especially the lesbians do not support each other. We don't greet each other (DIN 3).*

SL mentioned that she stayed with both heterosexual students and gay students. But she is selective when it comes to the gay community. She clarified:

*I stay with straights because they like me to stay with them and like to know deep about our sexual identity. I don't undermine them. I also like to chill with male gay students because the "butches" are the problems. They are bossy. They like to be listened, dominating discussions. They think that they are real men whereas there are not men. They have tattoos. To me it seems as if there are required characteristics (DIN 9).*

LL also said she does not like to hang around with lesbian students rather prefers heterosexual students. She observes competition happening amongst the gay community. This is what she told the researcher:

*I stay with straights. I don't want to lie. I see lesbian students better than me. There is a competition. I don't see myself hanging around them.....Yaaa.....If you hang up with*

*them, they don't care about you, talk their own language.....I see I don't fit. I don't chill with lesbians but I chill with male gay students because they are funny. They are doing jokes. Lesbians are bossy, judgemental, self-egocentric and have pride. They force life and they wish life could go on their own way (DIN 6).*

NL stated why she is used to staying together with other gay students. She articulated:

*Sometimes we eat and smoke together. It may happen that we go together as lesbians but in other times I go with other students (DIN 5).*

Furthermore, she revealed why she is used to stay with other students

She said:

*Most of the time, the heterosexual students like to stay with lesbians because we like to joke (DIN 5).*

TEL also revealed that she goes with both of them, homosexuals and heterosexual students but she reflected that homosexual students have suspicion since she goes with heterosexual students. She explained:

*It depends.....Mhhhh.....I go with gays or I go with straight guys. I love to hang around with straight guys, so the homosexuals abuse me since I like to hang around with straight guys. They assume that I sleep with them, forgetting that I grew up with these guys and we are all at the college now. Homosexuals have negative attitudes towards me since I like stay with boys at the college (DIN 4).*

TL explained why she prefers to stay with straight guys rather with gay students. But sometimes she feels ashamed the way how they treat her because of her sexual identity. TL revealed:

*I prefer to chill with straight guys students. In this LGBT community we discriminate each other. They look at our background (DIN 1).*

While responding she touched the issue of class. This is what she said:

*Status is an issue. It is used to happen even if I'm chilling with straight, they tend to judge me. So if you are gay, you feel as if you don't have a place to belong (DIN 1).*

MG revealed why he sometimes stick together. MG clarifies:

*It depends how you feel about yourself. We stick together sometimes (DIN 2).*

In this theme, the participants revealed different views relating to sticking together. Two participants revealed that they prefer to stay with heterosexual students because they do not receive welcoming treatment. The other two participants also revealed that they like to hang around with gay students. Two participants reflected why they prefer to stay with heterosexual students especially male gay guys. The last two participants prefer to stay with both heterosexual and gay students. Those who do not want to hang around with other lesbian and gay students stated their reasons.

When responding to the third of my research question: *What are risk factors arising from their sexual orientation at a TVET College, if any?* The following themes emerged:

1. Students attitudes towards gay students,
2. Treatment of gay students by lecturers,
3. Family attitudes towards gay students,
4. Community attitudes towards gay students,
5. Gay students as victims of sexual abuse,
6. Gay students as victims of verbal abuse,
7. Gay students' frequency of abuse,
8. Campus support
9. Gay students' rights at the college,
10. Religious impact,
11. The college without happiness
12. Living in my community.
13. Academic performance

The data is taken from participants' responses from semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and visual methodology.

Pertaining to the above themes, participants reported about how they are being treated by their fellow students, heterosexual and homosexual students, by the lecturers, family members, and community members. They also explained how they become the victim of sexual abuse and verbal abuse. They also indicate the frequency in which they receive abuse in their respective spaces of comfort. They also revealed that there is no support at the college and their rights are not protected. They also reflected that religion also plays a huge role in suppressing their sexual orientation and also commented on living in the campus and in the community. Lastly, they provide the data on how the derogatory words lowers their academic performance.

#### 5.4.7. Students' attitudes towards gay students

On the side of students' attitudes towards gay students, the participants reported different stories. There are participants who receive compassion from heterosexual students, especially male heterosexual students and those who are undermined by other students because of their sexual orientation. Some participants revealed that they do not accept each other as a gay community because of the categories they belong to in the gay community.

TL reflected why heterosexual males prefer to stay with her. TL clarifies:

*Mostly the heterosexual males understand my sexual identity. They know that I am smoking. So it will be easy for them to get a cigarette (DIN 1).*

She also revealed negative comments that are made by heterosexual females about her. This is what she said:

*If I'm staying with heterosexual females, they speak negative words...Especially, when we talk about dating our lovers, they laugh at me not understanding that a female may date another female. They also ask how I do sex with partner (DIN 1).*

She also commented why she likes to stay with male gay students. She reported:

*I prefer to stay with the male gay students. We talk same language. I don't understand whether straight students like me or not. If I have visited my friends who are heterosexuals in their room, some of them you would find them excusing me in their room if they are washing their bodies. They say that they would not wash their bodies in front of a boy. I should wait outside until they finish (DIN 1).*

MG revealed how straight students treat him when he is at the college. He explained:

*The straight students do not like me more especially the male students. There are those who speak with me as friends and others don't like to speak with me, maybe they are scared that they would be judged by others (DIN 2).*

He also reflected on how he is being treated by other gay students. He stated:

*Gays are friendly; we speak same language compared to heterosexual students (DIN 2).*

AG specified his situation when he is at the college. He said:

*Since I'm the centre of attention, I know where I go I get attention. In my college there is that thing when I enter the school premises, I notice that some of the students who are heterosexuals make fun of me, making jokes about me when I'm passing by saying "Yes Girl". So if I don't give them attention, they turn against me and becoming angry. It is just because I know that they are not truly saying that. When it comes to heterosexual guys, they always say negative words calling me "Isitabane" and others do understand that I'm a gay (DIN 8).*

He also highlighted how societal beliefs play a vital role in discriminating them from other students. He affirmed:

*Some students who grew up in cities or towns understand that there is a LGBT community. Unlike to students who come from rural areas, where there are firm rules, they become confused. They become negative because they have been taught that a gay person is a sin, is a demon and is madness. They treat me different unlike those who understand my personality. I know the treatment that I get in my school years is bad or good every day and I have to accept it on daily basis (DIN 8).*

AG also reflected on how he had lost friends because of his sexual identity. This what he explained:

*Treatment will never be the same. Ok, fine.....a person who is straight if he may found out that you are not like them especially guys will not continue to be your friend. My friends feel unsafe if I'm with them and sometimes acting in a violent way. They tend to dislike me and be furious when they see me; I don't know why they act like this because I'm a human being. I suspect that they feel tempted because every human being has that 20% of being gay. So the different is that a gay person knows how to treat other gay people. So the straight person treats me differently because he is not a gay (DIN 8).*

He also explained how he feels when he uses the male toilets. He affirmed:

*When I go to male toilets I see that some of the boys are scared of me, they run away, feeling uncomfortable and others are teasing me. Same applies to me, I also feel uncomfortable suspecting that they would sexually abuse me. I see some of them becoming interested in me (DIN 8).*

He highlighted how it is easy to make friends with heterosexual girls. He reported:

*It is easy to make friends with girls, we chat and I also change clothes in front of them. I make friendship with gay people (DIN 8).*

ZL commented on how she is comfortable to hang around with heterosexual boys and how is being treated by heterosexual girls. She explained:

*Students like me even the boys. I chill with them. There is no one says discriminating words to me but I don't know in future. Heterosexual girls do not feel comfortable about us. For example, when I propose a heterosexual girls, they used to say they are straight as if I'm not straight.....maybe I'm twisted. This word to me is like an insult. I don't feel comfortable (DIN 3).*

She also appreciated the way gay students behave. This what she said:

*Homosexuals are behaving accordingly (DIN 3).*

VG reflected on the treatment he receives when he is in the college. He elucidated:

*They are fine and others are judgemental. I think they are coming mostly in deep rural areas and I see it is hard for them to understand that there are people who called themselves as gays. It is their first time to meet such people (Isitabane) in the campus. When I'm passing the heterosexual guys they call me and say "Wow! Woza la ngikushele" (come here so that I would propose you). To be gay is a pressure and you are a celebrity. You hate or you love it. Homosexuals understand and heterosexuals treat me badly. For example, if I come to them they keep quiet, but when I pass them they laugh unkindly (DIN 7)*

NL revealed that there is a lack of understanding on the side of heterosexual girl students because they do not see her as a boy but as an ordinary girl. She stated:

*Most of students don't understand and they don't accept it. For example, a girl who knows me very well that I'm a lesbian calling me for a boy.....saying that what I'm doing is not right. I have to get a boy that will do everything for me. Even if we chat with girls, I see that they don't understand it (DIN 5).*

NL also reflected the way gay students treat each other when they are together. She mentioned:

*Treatment is not even good in the side of homosexuals, we are undermining each other and there is no unity. Some of them are looking your background.....consequently they are not going with you if you don't have smart clothes. They also look the brand stores, categorizing*

*Mr Price Store for those who are poor. Even if you are wearing the sandals with a brand name "Power" bought from the undermined stores, you are undermined. If we see each other as lesbians in town I feel not accepted. Mmmhh....there is no unity and we are not really a family. I don't know whether they are scared to be known by the people. For example, it might happen when a lesbian going with her friends or sisters, she says she is not a lesbian even if I know that she is a lesbian. Most of the time there is discrimination but there are lesbians who are my friends whom I speak with (DIN 5).*

TEL reported that she does not have a problem with heterosexual students, but she has a challenge with gay students. She explained:

*They treat me normal. Guys like me because I propose girls for them. We hurt each other as homosexuals. I like to hang around boys all the times but you find some of us who are not hanging around the boys saying to us, we are sleeping with boys. I notice that they don't accept bisexuals. We treat each other badly. They don't comprehend that it is her feeling to sleep with homosexuals and heterosexuals (DIN 4).*

Although they date other girls, TEL reported that they are fully conscious about sexually transmitted diseases. She affirmed:

*Sometimes it is bad to date a lesbian and heterosexual guy because she will bring diseases because I don't know whom they do sexual intercourse. Heterosexual girls are nice because they don't discriminate (DIN 4).*

When she reflected on the issue of gay students, she laughed. This is what she commented:

*Hahaha.....dress code is the issue. I got at the college that a dress code is an issue. I used to tell my lesbian friends that if you are a "butch" it doesn't mean that you have to wear like guys. Those who do that they want to be visible or identifiable. Gays are labelling, name painting and saying bad words about each other in social media. I like old "fem" because they treat me well than small "fem" they are the virgins. At the college they analyse the dress code and you get discriminated if you don't wear according to their expectations (DIN 4).*

LL expressed how she is being called by heterosexual students and how she is being treated when she has been seen going with the "butch". She said:

*There is that rejection. Some students see us as "Ibhas' egcwele" (means full of males or a girl who likes man). I don't understand that is me or the life that I live. If I'm in the class heterosexual students see me going with the "butch" .....I see....they hate me. Consequently*

*there is no one who is straight, who wants to go with me. We study together but we don't go together because there is "that". Mmmh...negative attitudes towards lesbians. There are some challenges. Heterosexuals insult us. We don't care about that. I told myself that I will never change my life. They have to accept me as I am (DIN 6).*

She also revealed the treatment she gets on the side of gay students. She commented:

*Homosexuals have no problem; we give each other a support. But there are those who are rude want to be bossy (DIN 6).*

SL revealed how the heterosexual students comment about gay identity. She expressed:

*Some students don't understand. Other students say, "Wuh! You won't see me dating lesbian or becoming a lesbian bla....bla....bla. These students are saying negative words to us. Homosexuals respect each other. Heterosexuals are undermining us, saying that God never created us like this (means a gay or lesbian). They say we are the girls and we are abnormal (DIN 9).*

The theme revealed that some participants are not happy the way the gay community treat each other. They do not perceive themselves as brothers and sisters. Although some do not have a problem with heterosexual students, there are those who feel undermined and labelled with names. They also indicated the stereotypes that the rural heterosexual students have about gay the community.

#### **5.4.8. Treatment of gay students by lecturers**

Participants shared their experiences regarding the treatment exhibited by the lecturers towards the gay students. The treatment they got varied. The majority of participants reported that some lecturers undermined their sexual orientation, consequently, other participants received a cold shoulder when they reported their cases.

TL reported her experiences regarding the treatment directed to her as an individual by her lecturers. She explained:

*At the college sometimes lecturers do not accept lesbians as they are. They have plenty of questions about my sexual identity. For example, what happened and what made to be a lesbian? How do I cope? Why I behave like a boy? (DIN 1)*



To make them to understand more deeply, she continued to say:

*I told them that I have been a lesbian long ago and I discovered myself while I was young. Some of the lecturers requested to see me privately to clarify some issues relating to my sexual identity (DIN 1).*

MG, on the other hand revealed that some lecturers viewed homosexuality negatively, especially male lecturers while others are not. This is what he explained:

*Some female lecturers are friendly but male lecturers are not. Those who don't understand about my personality speak about me; laugh at me and making jokes about me which is not a good thing to internalize (DIN 2).*

AG commented that he is treated with dignity by lecturers. He elucidated:

*Some of the lecturers treat me with respect. I never experience ill-treatment from lecturers because I'm not hanging around them (DIN 8).*

ZL also reflected on her relationship with lecturers. She explained:

*I'm not used to hang around them; I do what they told us to do in class. There some lecturers who love me.....I could not speak about other lecturers because I don't have relationship with them. I haven't seen any bad behaviour towards me (DIN 3).*

The data revealed that the lecturers are not the same when it comes to handle the gay students, VG shared the way he was treated by the lecturers when he reported incidents or cases. This is what he explained:

*Some of the lecturers don't understand us. They think we are changing ourselves to be what we are. Sometimes when I report if I'm being abused by heterosexual student maybe saying negative words to me, some lecturers say I must act like a man which means I must fight back. I feel not protected because I don't have that energy (DIN 7).*

NL reported during the interview that some lecturers articulate deleterious words when she visited them in their offices and they are not represented by class representatives. She commented:

*There are lecturers who always say negative words to me when I visit them in their office. They say I'm making myself 'uMjitha' means a boy and I surprised them by doing that. Even if there is an election of class representative, they do not choose us as lesbians because they consider*

*lesbians as females. If it might happen that students chose a lesbian and heterosexual girl, the lecturers say the class could not be led by two girls. One of us must be replaced by a male although they see a lesbian is behaving like a male. We feel like we are males (DIN 5).*

TEL reported exclusively that some lecturers are accommodative to her. She explained:

*They treat me well. They like me. Sometimes I used to date lecturers (DIN 4).*

LL articulated that there are some lecturers who support gay students but other do not. She elaborated by saying she is invisible in the college which, allows her to be treated equal with other students. This is what she explicated:

*As a “fem” I’m treated well since my identity is invisible. We have lesbian “butch” in my class. One of the lecturers has a negative attitude against this “butch” (male lesbian). This lesbian is very clever but this lecturer does not like this “butch”. She treated her badly in the class. I notice that this lecturer does not like lesbians; I see her attitude towards the visible lesbians she does not give attention to lesbians and gays and concentrate to heterosexuals. She gives lesbians and gays the cold shoulder. Some lecturers support LGBT community but others don’t. I think they like us to live the normal life, the heterosexual life (DIN 6).*

SL also commented on the way lecturers considered the gay community in the college. She mentioned:

*Lecturers don’t treat us well. We should be treated as normal students by lecturers and must leave us to live our life. They should understand that we don’t do this as if we like to do it but it is our feelings (DIN 9).*

#### **5.4.9. Family attitudes towards gay students**

In this theme, the participants revealed how their families treat them after they discovered themselves. Some participants reported that they continue to hide their sexual identity because they fear that their parents will not support them. TL is one of the participants who had been unfairly treated by her parents.

TL indicated how she had been treated by her parents when she told them about her sexual identity. This is what she said:

*My parents do not understand my sexual identity. They think I joke when I say I have feeling of the same gender. They disapprove it. As a result, they do not buy me clothes; I have to find my own way if I need clothes. My father use to tell me that he is not going to buy clothes for me if I still behave like a man. He said he would buy skirts for me, not trousers. I don't even get pads from my mom if I am menstruating like other girls (DIN 1).*

TL also revealed that even if she was ill-treated by her parents she received sympathy from her aunt and her siblings. She explained:

*My aunt and my siblings understand my sexual orientation. They also help me if I need clothes and other staff. My aunt is educated and is trying by all means to make parents to understand me (DIN 1).*

TL also elaborated that she was being forced to find a job so that she could be independent. She elucidated:

*The day that I will never forget is when my parents told me that I have to go to search for work. It was 2016 after I have finished my Matric. I asked them why they treat me like this, and then they said that I'm making myself a man (lesbian). I have to go and learn to be independent. Surprisingly, my siblings who were older than me were not told to find work. Consequently, I went to Durban, and then I struggled a lot trying to find a job. I stayed there one year and I came back (DIN 1).*

TL also stated that she had to suppress her feelings so that he could be accepted at her home. She explained:

*When I arrived at home I apologized to my parents that I will never make myself a man (lesbian) in their house. My parents do not like my sexual identity at all but I do it although I know their side about it. Sometimes they use to say negative words to me. They give me the boys' duties like chopping the woods, cleaning the yard, and fixing fencing (DIN 1).*

MG revealed that his parents are very supportive although there are some members of the extended family who do not feel well about his sexual identity. He affirmed:

*My parents are very positive. My mother used to talk with me about gay issues. My father is silent, doesn't say anything. He is even scared to go with me. My aunt and my siblings are very positive but the brother of my father hates me; he doesn't want to speak with me. He keeps quiet if I greet him (DIN 2).*

AG reported that he was supported by his mother at an early age after he had come out but his father remained hesitant until he realized and accepted him at a later stage. He stated:

*The time my Mom was still alive, she knew me from the word go, in my early stages. I used to wear her shoes, puffing her make-up, wearing her weave. She ended accepted me and she did comprehend that she does not have a boy, she has a daughter. She actually protected me and I grew up differently. My daddy had issues about my personality; he believed that I could change. Sometimes he had to avoid me and he made me felt uncomfortable. So now he treats me well, he loves me even more because he understands that I'm his baby, I'm both a girl and boy to him and I'm different to other children (DIN 8).*

ZL reflected on the way she struggled to convince her mother about her sexual identity. She revealed:

*My parents were against even my mother specifically was against. When I was in high school, I used to date girls. Boys complained to my brother that I took their girls. They used tell my mother and then my mother would reprimand me. She said I'm disgusting the community and the surrounding people. When the time went on I explained to her that is the way I feel. So my mother at a later stage accepted me and she buys clothes for me (DIN 3).*

She also explained how difficult for her to let her father know about her sexual identity. She elucidated:

*I didn't speak about my sexual identity to my father. But she suspects me that I'm a lesbian because one day I was told by mother that my father has questions about my sexual identity (DIN 3).*

VG stipulated that he has been accepted by his mother except his brother. He commented:

*My daddy is late, may his soul rest in peace. I don't know how he could have reacted but my mom was so cool for the first time when she heard about this. My brothers don't understand (DIN 7).*

NL reported that she is scared to reveal her sexual identity because her mother used to tell her that she would kick her out of the house if she may find out. She stated:

*Since my parents are living in a deep rural area, they don't know about my sexual identity but they hear the rumours from people, getting information the way I dress and my walking styles. Sometimes my mom asks me why I wear colourful clothes and on other hand insisting that girls*

*don't wear such clothes that have same colour like boys. My mother used to tell me if I am really a lesbian I must quit it immediately before she may found out and she will conflict with me. I disgust her in the community. She said she has born me as a girl not as a boy. My father had died long ago.....she used to say I do this because my father had passed away. I am showing her as a failure to the public.....I must leave this thing (DIN 5).*

NL also reported that she hides her sexual identity:

*When I'm at home I stay behind doors because I don't feel comfortable and I do all the housework (DIN 5).*

She added:

*Few of them try to understand but the majority of family members have negative attitude towards gay identity. I notice when we are watching the movies or drama if there is a gay character, I hear their comments.....sometimes they shut the TV or change to another channel. So I decided not to tell anyone because of their attitude. They will only know if I have my on site where I would live my own life. They are stereotyped (DIN 5).*

NL also continued to say her mother is anti-gay and expected marriage. She said:

*Mmmmmhh.....I try to walk like a girl because she is insisting that she needs cows (ilobolo). I must let my boyfriend to be known so that they could arrange "ilobolo" (bride price, traditionally paid with cattle) for him. To me it becomes hard to explain to my mom about my sexual identity. For example, when we are watching television if she sees a girl kissing another girl or a boy kissing another boy.....she says the world is demonic (DIN 5).*

TEL reflected on how she got support from her parents. She affirmed:

*Maybe I'm lucky I have never been treated badly at home. They saw me growing up. Everything is right at home. They understand me and my brothers also know me. They call me "Bafo" which means my brother (DIN 4).*

LL reflected on her story how she had been forced to marry someone she did not love. She commented:

*I don't have parents. They both died long ago. Before my mother died knew that there is something happening to my life although she did not know exactly. I was forced to marry someone in my village because of societal customs. My mother noticed when I divorced with*

*my husband that there is something fishy in my life. Now I'm living with my grandmother and my siblings. They do not know my sexual identity (DIN 6).*

SL revealed that there is no one who knows her, knows her sexual identity. She explained:

*My parents don't know me that I am lesbian since I am "fem", the invisible lesbian (DIN 9)*

Regarding the responses, four participants revealed that they came out to their parents and got support. One of these participants indicated that his father was doubtful to accept him as a gay. Two participants reported how it was difficult to convince their mothers to understand their sexual identity. The last two mentioned that they are still closeted gays because they understand they would not be accepted. The data also indicated that heterosexual males are the one who have the most negative attitudes towards the gay community.

#### **5.4.10. Community attitudes towards gay students**

The participants revealed how they are being welcomed or treated badly by the community members. They also report on the role the gay individuals play to convince the community members about their sexual identity.

NL revealed how she is being treated by the community members due to lack of knowledge about the gay community. She explained:

*The treatment is negative because you are expected as female to get a man that will marry you. If you are male you are also expected to get a lady that you will marry. In my community they don't accept that there are lesbians and gays. They lack knowledge about LGBT community. They force girls to marry as results some of the girls who don't like to be married commit suicide (DIN 5).*

SL reported that community members adhere to the societal norms and beliefs and that is why she got poor treatment. She stated:

*It is negative. Adults do not accept lesbians and gays. I remember one day when I was talking with my neighbour telling her about my sexual identity, she said she expects "ilobolo" since I was born as a girl. She said, "What would other people say if I behave like this?" (DIN 9)*

LL reflected on the story about the grandfather who was not accepted by the community as a gay and how community members perceive the gay community. She clarified:

*The treatment is negative in my community more especially the adults. I remember the day when we were watching the TV shows. One of the shows it was “Daily Theta”. Most of the prominent gays and lesbian were there. My parents said I must switch off that channel. They don’t want to listen on it and they don’t want hear the word “Izitabane” (being gay). It is true that gays and lesbians were there long ago. For example, in my community there was a grandfather who was wearing female’s clothes but he was not accepted in the community. Since he was not welcomed as a gay person in the village, he ended up being disappeared. There is no one who knows where he is. People are suspecting that he had died because he disappeared in the community long ago. Those who are trying to exhibit themselves in the community are treated badly (DIN 6).*

TEL pointed out the way how she tried to convince the community members to understand the gay community since there are people who do not accept them. She affirmed:

*In my community there are those who like us and those who don’t. What helped me is to be accepted at home. First person who accepted me is my uncle. He started to buy me boy’s clothes with the help of his wife. His wife accepted me before he accepted me. She was the one who understand my sexual identity. In my village there are few lesbians and gays. To make our community to understand, we created a drama titled “Guys versus Lesbians”. We played it in the local halls and also wrote a book that has same title. Then we sold it to different communities. There are those who heard us and those who ignore our message (DIN 4).*

TL reflected the way she has been isolated in the community when there are cultural activities and other social norms. She explicated:

*It is too difficult to be accepted in the community if you are not accepted at home. One my aunt speaks about me to my mother, but her response was that “Ngiyamdina” which means she does not like my sexual identity and she is angry with it. In my community there are cultural activities that are done like virginity testing, I don’t go there because I don’t feel comfortable. If males are playing sticks, a game of fighting with sticks to show who is a real man, I don’t belong to them. In all villages that are nearby my village, we don’t have a place of belonging. In my community I’m the only lesbian and I feel as if I do not exist. No one supports me. I don’t even go to church because in church they want a girl to wear a skirt; I’m not going funerals, weddings and cultural activities (DIN 1).*

ZL revealed how the community labels their homosexuality and how she is being treated by the boys in the community. She illuminated:

*There is a lot of stigma that I found where I go. I know that I'm beautiful and boys will propose me even if I told them that I'm gay. The boys always tell me that this is wrong what I am doing. I just keep quiet to avoid conflict even if they call me with words. I don't want to hang around boys because I know that I am a girl anything may happen, the boys may rape me. In my community homosexuality is regarded as witch. There is no support in my home and I don't blame them because they don't know what is happening to my life. Grandparents do not know. My parents are expecting me to be married and they don't know that I'm the one who is going to pay "Ilobolo" (bride price, traditionally paid cows). I was the first gay person in my community that came out and I see some come out as I am a presenter in the radio, my family and the people in the community used to listen my show; they argue that there is no female that can have sex with other female (DIN 3).*

AG reported that he is getting support at home but not in the community. He explained:

*I grew up in a place where gay people are known. In my community there are two different groups of people, first those who do not understand my sexual orientation and secondly those who do not understand the gay person. If I am in town meeting rural people, you find them laughing because they do not understand what is happening in my life. I assume that they do not understand that there are gay people. I give them time to understand but if they continue saying abusive words I end up responding to them because I have to fight for who I am. At home, they support me, for instance, if I become teased by the member of the community, they defend me. There is no one who wants to know about my life. If there is a ceremony I find myself discriminated because there are those who don't accept my sexuality as it is. As a Coloured person, I know that the Coloured people describe homosexuality as sin. Sometimes, I find local boy attracted to me by mere look but fails to approach me; he becomes angry to me because he fails to tell how he feels about me. Instead of approaching me, he ends up saying negative words and trying to make other boys to feel negative about me because he is scared of them (DIN 8).*

MG revealed the treatment he receives when he is out of his home. He affirmed:

*Sometimes the treatment becomes very bad, more especially if I go to the shop. I meet different people and they say different words to me (DIN 2).*

All participants agreed that they receive bad treatment from the community members. They revealed that there are deleterious words that are mentioned by the community directed to them. One of the participants reported that in her community people labelled a gay as a witch. Some



participants revealed that although they get negative comments in the community but they still get support from their families. One of the participants reported how she tried to be creative by introducing drama which revealed the livelihood of gays. One of the gay students also revealed that the gays existed long ago. She narrated the difficulty the old man encountered when he tried to come out. Participants all agreed that societal norms also play a vital role to suppress their sexual identity.

#### **5.4.11. Gay students as victims of sexual abuse**

Participants shared their experiences on how they are being sexually abused within and outside the institution.

ZL revealed how she had been raped by a boy whom she thought had loved her. She affirmed:

*I tried to date a boy since I had thought that there was a demon entered to me. That boy was a brother of my friend (girl). One day when I visited my friend I found my boyfriend. We stayed together. In the meantime, my friend excused herself that she was going to wash the dishes. We were both left in the same room. On that time I felt nothing and I didn't think my boyfriend was intending to sleep with me. I felt that I don't love this guy since my feelings were on the same gender. My mind was not there. I asked my boyfriend to release me, he denied. I told him that at home the gate is closed at 5:00 pm and he also denied because he had intention. When I went to the door I found it locked with nails. He caught me and defeated with power. He pushed me into the bed. He raped me. I allowed him to rape me so that he could release me before the closing time. The rape happened the time I was promised by my parents to study at Pietermaritzburg, Grade 10. I had no feeling and I became pregnant (DIN 3).*

ZL also reported how rape affected her and what ways she tried to use to mitigate the pain. She explained:

*I thought to kill myself. At home there was a pill which I wanted to use and this pill was used for poisoning the maize bacteria. I searched it but I didn't find it. I asked to my grandfather and he replied that he had thrown it away because it was old. Unfortunately, I failed to kill myself (DIN 3).*

She also revealed that she continued to get sexually abusive words after she had a baby from teachers who did not understand her situation. She affirmed:

*After that I went to PMB. When I was there I was discriminated. Teachers were asking me how I became pregnant because I'm so young. Teachers repeatedly said negative words like "Uyalesaba uswazi kodwa uyakwazi ukuvula amathanga" (you scare the corporal punishment but you are able to do sex with boys). I asked myself why the teachers didn't ask me what happened before I had baby. All that was said, was not right to me and I also asked myself why teachers became talkative like that. That caused me to misbehave, I started to develop anger and I started to disrespect an adult and losing respect even at home. There was a teacher who took me to counselling. Before counselling, she asked me how I had got a baby.....I told her the whole story. I was counselled and I started to love my baby. They told me if you are a lesbian, doesn't mean that you won't become pregnant. I have everything that a female has. It was only that time I had a different feeling unlike heterosexuals. They said that I must continue to be the way I am and forget that I have a baby (DIN 3).*

VG reported how his friend was hurt and stabbed to death by the perpetrators who wanted to sleep with him. This is what he clarified:

*My friend is a perfect gay. One day he went to the nearest tuck-shop to buy some food items where he found two guys who wanted to rape him. It was dark around 7 O'clock. When he went back to his room, he was blocked by these guys saying he must allow them to taste what he is used to give his boyfriend.....they wanted sex. He denied.....the two boys stabbed him at his buttocks and thighs.....bleeding to die. He was taken to hospital. After he was discharged he said he was going to quit the school because he doesn't enjoy being at school. He did not see the guys. He was found lying on the ground by his roommates. A case was opened but no one arrested (DIN 7).*

LL explained how she became the victim of rape when she came from evening studies. She stated:

*Yes I was abused in the college. But that person didn't know that I'm gay as I'm wearing like a heterosexual girl..... I was raped when I was coming from evening studies. They took me as gang but one of them slept with me. I tried to commit suicide because I thought there is no such that I shall make to live. I don't think the person raped me because he knows my identity. I'm invisible. I have a short hair. I was hurt because I know who I am. I am lesbian and I don't date heterosexual guys, only the same gender. Case was opened (DIN 6).*

SL reflected on the story where her friend was sexually abused by her stepfather. This is what she said:

*My friend was once sexually abused by her stepfather. She told me because she trusts me as her friend. Her stepfather wanted to sleep with her. She fought and fought. They were going to Pietermaritzburg. She was sitting on the passenger seat; her brother was at back seat in a private car. My friend takes her real stepfather as her father. So the stepfather saw her as a pretty, young and fresh. The stepfather robbed her that she would teach her how to drive a car. On their way to PMB, he called my friend to sit on him while he was driving. Her stepfather brushed her thighs. When she arrived at home she told her mother what happened but her mother did not believe that. She did not speak to my friend for almost one week. One day my friend was washing her body in front of a 10 year old boy..... her stepfather came in a while she was splashing. He tried to rape her but he did not succeed. His stepfather had noticed that my friend is a lesbian. She told me that his intention was to change her behaviour so that she could be straight. My friend told me that her stepfather is always against homosexuals, for instance, if they talk generally or watching stories acting gay people. She told her mother again and this time believed her. Their relationship was broken (DIN 9).*

TL revealed how her friend was gang raped by heterosexual boys in her room. She explicated:

*This year my friend who is a lesbian told me that she was gang raped by her heterosexual friends in her room. Students are renting rooms around the town since there is no accommodation inside the college. They were coming from group discussion. The two guys accompanied her as usually but on that day things had changed. When they arrived in the room, these guys started to seduce her. She tried to tell them that she wanted to sleep but they didn't want to go. They caught her and raped for the whole night. She never told anybody scaring that the matter would spread and on other side they threatened to kill her. It was her first time talk about it to me (DIN 1).*

In their stories, the participants revealed that the gay group is sexually abused because of their sexual identity. The data presented revealed that most of the sexual abuse occurred in their rooms since the campus does the participants do not have residential homes, except one victim who was sexually harassed by her stepfather in the car and her home. Four participants agreed that the perpetrators knew the victims were gay. The data also revealed that perpetrators wanted to “taste” the gay. One participant reported that she is not sure whether the perpetrators knew her sexual identity or not.

#### 5.4.12. Gay students as victim of verbal abuse

The participants revealed how they are being verbally abused at the college, in the community, and family

TL revealed how she was verbally abused in front of students. She explained:

*I get verbal abuse. I remember when I was doing Grade 12 in a rural school and one of the teachers, a female teacher didn't understand that I am a lesbian. She said "I must walk like a girl". In other day she called me "Isitabane". I became angry. I packed my books and went home. I tried to commit suicide. I wrote a letter to my parents to make them to understand what happened if they found me dead. I mixed all the pills that were there in the house and drank all of them. In a moment my stomach was aching and my grandmother asked what happened. Then I told her that she would find everything in the letter and she read immediately. She took me to hospital. I stayed in the hospital for three days. The nurses also wanted to know what happened, I told them as a result they said that they would talk with the teacher who called me "Isitabane". I was only lesbian in the whole school. They called a social worker and the social worker also asked me whether I still like to learn in that high school. I said yes because I wanted to finish my matric. But I failed to cope. Consequently, I failed matric in that year. It was difficult for me to look that teacher and also to face other learners. I thought they knew the story (DIN 1).*

AG reported that how he feels not welcomed by heterosexual people. He affirmed:

*I've been too. I experience verbal abuse. The words people describe me and the way they say those words like.....Ayiii.... 'Isitabane'. I am like this and that.....especially when it is said by my family members even hurts me. The anger that I have I put like love and trust to other people. Even these people turn against me, they know that I'm not part of their family; they don't care about me just because I'm different. There comes a point that I don't see a reason of living, I rather commit suicide because runaway is like escape and change identity. I feel more comfortable dressing like girls, and making my hair. I feel most that people don't know me whether ...Mmmh...I am girl or a boy although it puts more pressure to me to explain my sexual identity to that person that I'm like this (DIN 8).*

AG also revealed that he is not pleased with the way male heterosexual people treat him. He explained:

*They become judgemental and tend to physical abuse me like hitting me especially the heterosexual guys saying that I didn't tell them that..... "Ngu Mjita" which means a boy. Sometimes when I go to functions or party, maybe going with my friends who are girls, the girls won't tell the guys that they are going with a gay, knowing deep in their heart that males will be attracted to me because of my personality. As gays, we are loud and flying in an ointment. When the heterosexual guy find out that he is speaking with a gay, he ended up beating me. He has that anger because he was tempted but failing that it is difficult to explain my sexual identity. At home there is no physical abuse but there is mental abuse when it comes to my guy siblings. Nxa...(angry).....they say I can't be like this bla..bla..bla..What people would say? I have to change up and ending to sporty things that I don't like. They take me into places with the intention of changing my personality. It ends up being an abuse in anyway making me to be what they like (DIN 8).*

VG revealed how he gets insults from different people daily. He stated:

*Most of the time, I experience verbal abuse because people who are straight insult me. When I'm passing them, they used to say "Rha ....Sitabane" (Vulgar language in Isixhosa). Those words destroy my confidence. As I grow up, I try to remove this sentiment in my mind and try to continue with my life. People are calling me with "Sis Bhuti" (having female characteristics) or "isitabane" I feel like I'm not a person. All these words are said because of my sexual identity (DIN 7).*

NL reported the way people disrespect her sexual identity by calling her with names. She explained:

*I have not been physically abused. I'm used to verbal abuse. For example, guys use to say "I will change and I don't know what I do. I need a guy that will catch me, hold me, and kiss me by force. They believe that my sexual identity will change. I also get negative words from heterosexual guys saying I am wasting my parents' money when I buy boy's clothes, I don't see that I'm a girl. They insult me by calling me "Isitabane" "Msunu kanyoko (insulting a person with mother's private part) and they also say I teach other girls to become "Isitabane". I damage their lives and I take their girls.....I must leave this thing (DIN 5).*

TEL indicated how the boys intimidate her intentionally while they know that she is a lesbian. She said:

*I only got verbal abuse more especially when boys try to propose me although they see me that I'm a lesbian. But I tried to tell them very fast to let them know that I'm a lesbian. Even my brothers used to tell other males who try to propose me. You make me your friend or you leave me, it is my principle. (DIN 4)*

ZL also revealed how she was insulted by the teacher in front of the class. She explained:

*Teachers were asking me how I became pregnant because I'm so young. Teachers repeatedly said negative words like "Uyalesaba uswazi kodwa uyakwazi ukuvula amathanga" (you scare the corporal punishment but you do sex with boys). I asked myself why the teachers didn't ask me what happened before I had baby. All that was said was not right to me and I also asked myself why teachers became talkative like that. That caused me to misbehave, I started to develop anger and I started to disrespect an adult and loosing respect even at home (DIN 3).*

Two participants reported that they were abused by the teachers when they were in high schools. Teachers insulted them with abusive words which the participants did not like. Both participants lost their temper and they ended up not respecting teachers.

#### **5.4.13. Gay students' frequency of verbal abuse**

The participants exhibited how they are frequently abused in those places of discomfort.

TL reported that she experiences verbal abuse when she is being proposed by male heterosexual people and it happens often. She stated:

*Abuse happens often more especially when the heterosexual males see me on the way to school or after school. They propose me even if they notice my appearance. I don't know why they propose me because my looks tell them that I am a lesbian. Their intention is to harass me. Sometimes others ask personal questions, for example, how do I do sex with my girlfriend (DIN 1).*

MG revealed that he is the victim of verbal abuse once a week. He affirmed:

*I only experience an abuse once a week (DIN 2).*

AG reflected how people verbally abused him daily when he is out of his home. He explained:

*I can say it happens on daily basis because other people don't understand that they abuse me mentally. They don't understand that small things they say they hurt. For example, if I pass*

*them, they would say.....I am guy and I have to go back home and change my clothes. I like to wear like girls. They have questions like “Why have I done the hairstyle? These things are abusing me in a slightly way. I know if I come out from home there would be those negative words. As gay person I just shield my face, when they continue saying these words, I model and make it worse. But when I’m alone I ask myself why people don’t allow me to pass them peacefully because they know me. Even children have that but I do know that they don’t understand (DIN 8).*

ZL reported that she does not experience verbal abuse at the college. She said:

*No abuse that I get at school, I feel relaxed. Even the boys “Bangithatha njengo lova wabo” which means they take me like their friends. Nothing I have observed which turns against me. But in public there is that verbal abuse (DIN 3).*

VG stated he is being abused daily when he wears his clothes that makes him appear like a girl. He elucidated:

*Every day.....it happens when I have worn my clothes and I know that I’m beautiful. When I go outside the yard, they called me “Sitabane, spilling the saliva on the ground. It happens consistently, and it’s like a nightmare..... “Yho!.....Nxiii!” (Showing angry).....shame (DIN 7).*

NL revealed that she gets abuse daily. She affirmed:

*I experience verbal abuse daily (DIN 5).*

TEL affirmed that she gets abused when someone persists to propose to her even if she revealed her sexual identity. This is what she explained:

*It is a verbal abuse. It occurs when someone undermines me. Maybe he sees “Intombi” a girl.....when I turn against him, physical fight starts. But I try to stop the boy when he starts to talk or trying to propose me. Immediately I update him about my sexual identity. If he touches me, I touch him back. Then I explain to him “Angikho laphe shesh’ uphume (which means I’m not there, don’t say anything relating to relationship) (DIN 4).*

SL reported that she feels abuse when people starting to frown upon her choice of dates. She explicated:

*I’m slightly getting verbal abuse. People are blaming me that I’m dating other girls. They say maybe boys don’t like me as result I decided to date girls. Sometimes I feel guilty.....Oh my*

*God! How people consider me. They think that boys don't propose me because they don't like me (DIN 9).*

LL also reported that she does not encounter verbal abuse. She reflected:

*No abuse I experience at the college, maybe I don't experience because I am a 'fem' (DIN 6).*

Two participants indicated that they do not get abuse in the college. The majority of participants revealed that they receive abuse almost daily. It is just because the heterosexual people ignore their sexual identity. Being catcalled is a matter of daily abuse within and outside the college. TEL also indicated that boys undermine their sexual orientation because they propose them intentionally to see how the lesbians would react to their proposals.

#### **5.4.14. Campus support**

The following participants reported that they do not get support from the college. This is what TL had said:

*There is no support and no support group at my college (DIN 1).*

MG echoed:

*I haven't seen a support group in the campus (DIN 2).*

ZL added:

*I haven't seen support at the college (DIN 3).*

VG articulates:

*We don't get support from the college (DIN 7).*

VG explained where he gets support. He said:

*I get lot of support from friends especially gay friends, they support me. Another support I get from my mom, she buys me girls' clothes or she gives me money to buy clothes for myself (DIN 7).*

NL shares the same sentiment:

*There is no support (DIN 5).*

TEL also imparted the same sentiment. This is what TEL explained:



*There is no support. You only become famous if you date someone who is a target to boys. The guys used to come to face you if you take his target girl (DIN 4).*

Instead of getting support, TEL emphasised how she is being treated. She said:

*Sometimes I feel hurt if a guy comes to ask me although he sees I'm going with my girlfriend. His intention is to hurt me because most of them who are doing this, know that I'm a lesbian (DIN 4).*

SL further added:

*Friends give us support but lecturers don't. They undermine us like other parents. They speak negative words indirectly. Sometimes call us "izitabane". They call it as demon (DIN 9).*

Contrary to the above participants, VG states that he receives a little support and LL says there is support.

AG illuminates:

*I see support from some lecturers who know us, they act as parents. If I experience something I go to a lecturer. They make me feel comfortable especially in class. For example, when we are given life orientation topic, he gives me an opportunity to explain in class. I think as he gives me an opportunity in class to express myself, he wants me to make him and the rest of the class to understand about homosexuals, how a gay person feels or to be treated. The support for all LGBT students at college is not there. There are certain times where we should be involved in activities like soccer and others but we feel discriminated because of our sexual identity. Some gays have talents. Students have questions like "How can I play soccer as I'm gay. In conclusion LGBT support is not there. We don't even have LGBT meetings once a year where the lecturers could hear our concerns. Since there is an issue of toilets, they do not ask how we feel if we in males toilets. It might happen that the male students feel uncomfortable if I found them in the toilets. We don't communicate with these things (DIN 8).*

LL added:

*There is a support among the LGBT group. Complications occur when the opposite group do not exhibit support. We start to feel small, thinking that we are making ourselves something else since we don't live the real gender. Some students understand unlike in rural areas (DIN 6).*

The majority of participants shared that they do not receive support, instead they get support outside the college especially from their family members and their friends. Two participants revealed that there is little support exhibited by the college staff. They also agreed that there are times where they experience negativity from heterosexual students and staff.

#### **5.4.15. Gay students' right at the college**

The participants reflected on how their rights are violated at the college.

TL reported that she feels unprotected because there is no privacy at college. She commented:

*I don't see our rights being protected. There is no privacy at the college. I don't feel comfortable if I go to toilets because other straight students want to watch me when I'm releasing myself. I prefer to go to male toilets because they respect me, they don't come in the toilet when I'm busy. They understand (DIN 1).*

MG stated that he feels vulnerable, oppressed and discriminated at the college. He described how he is unfairly treated:

*I found myself vulnerable, not protected in the college. I feel oppressed because there is no place where I could lay my problems relating my sexual identity. If there is a topic relating gays in one of my subject, I use this platform to express myself and educate those who don't understand it. In sport I end up not participating because they judge me. I like sport. I found myself not belonging anywhere because in sport there are ladies sport codes and males sport codes, no gays' sport codes (DIN 2).*

AG reflected on how the gay students' right are violated at the college. This is what he explained:

*Our rights are violated at the college; we don't have a right to express ourselves. We are not chosen as class representatives and even there is an SRC election. I also feel that our rights are violated when it comes to facilities like toilets. We are judged and we find ourselves belonging nowhere. The campus should have to accommodate us in all spheres (DIN 8).*

Contrary to the above participants, ZL reported that she feels her rights are protected. She affirmed:

*I'm treated equally with heterosexuals. No my right is suppressed at the college (DIN 3).*

VG reported how their cases as gay students are being handled by lecturers. He stated:

*No, our rights are not protected. If I'm beaten by a male student, some of the lecturers say I'm must try to act like a man is like "Haybo" people don't understand us and we feel not respected. When they see a gay person they see a demonic spirit or something else (DIN 7).*

NL also revealed how their rights are not protected by the college since they do not have toilets designated for them. She elucidated:

*No, our rights are not protected. We need privacy and we need to have our private toilets. If I want to release to female's toilets, the girls don't trust me.....Yhaa.....they would wait outside until I finish. If I go to male's toilets, the boys touch me trying to seduce me. In that way we are not protected they have to build our own toilets. We feel discriminated (DIN 5).*

TEL reported that she enjoys her rights. She commented:

*The rights are protected. The lesbians are not discriminated except the guys who are busy proposing lesbians (DIN 4).*

SL reflected on how a 'butch' (lesbian male) is undermined by male heterosexual students. She explained:

*Our rights are not protected. For example, if a 'butch' is dating a bisexual who sis dating heterosexual guy, the guy will be jealous .....Sometimes beat a "butch". We don't report because lecturers are not taking us serious (DIN 9).*

LL also agreed that their rights are protected although gay students undermine each other. She affirmed:

*Yes our rights are protected although we are undermining each other. There are lesbians who are bossy then you feel inferior (DIN 6).*

In this theme, majority of participants reported that their rights are not protected at the college. Toilets are not inclusive and they feel as if they are the victims of abuse. They are not represented in college structures and are not allowed to play soccer and other sport codes since they are different to other students.

#### **5.4.16. Religious impact**

NL revealed how religion plays a vital role in suppressing gay's sexual identity. This is what she explained:

*A church's law says a girl is grown up to find a man that would marry her, not a girl to marry another girl. According to religious belief it is a sin to God....it is not right. She forces me to go to church. She also asks people in the church to pray for me. Another is that homosexuals are not there in my community. In church I am not allowed to wear a trouser as I am a girl (DIN 5).*

The participant reported that the adults do not observe what the church expects of people regarding conflicts with their way of life. Lesbian and gay people feel ostracized by the laws initiated by the church.

#### **5.4.17. The college without happiness**

The participants reflected on how they feel when they are in the college.

College



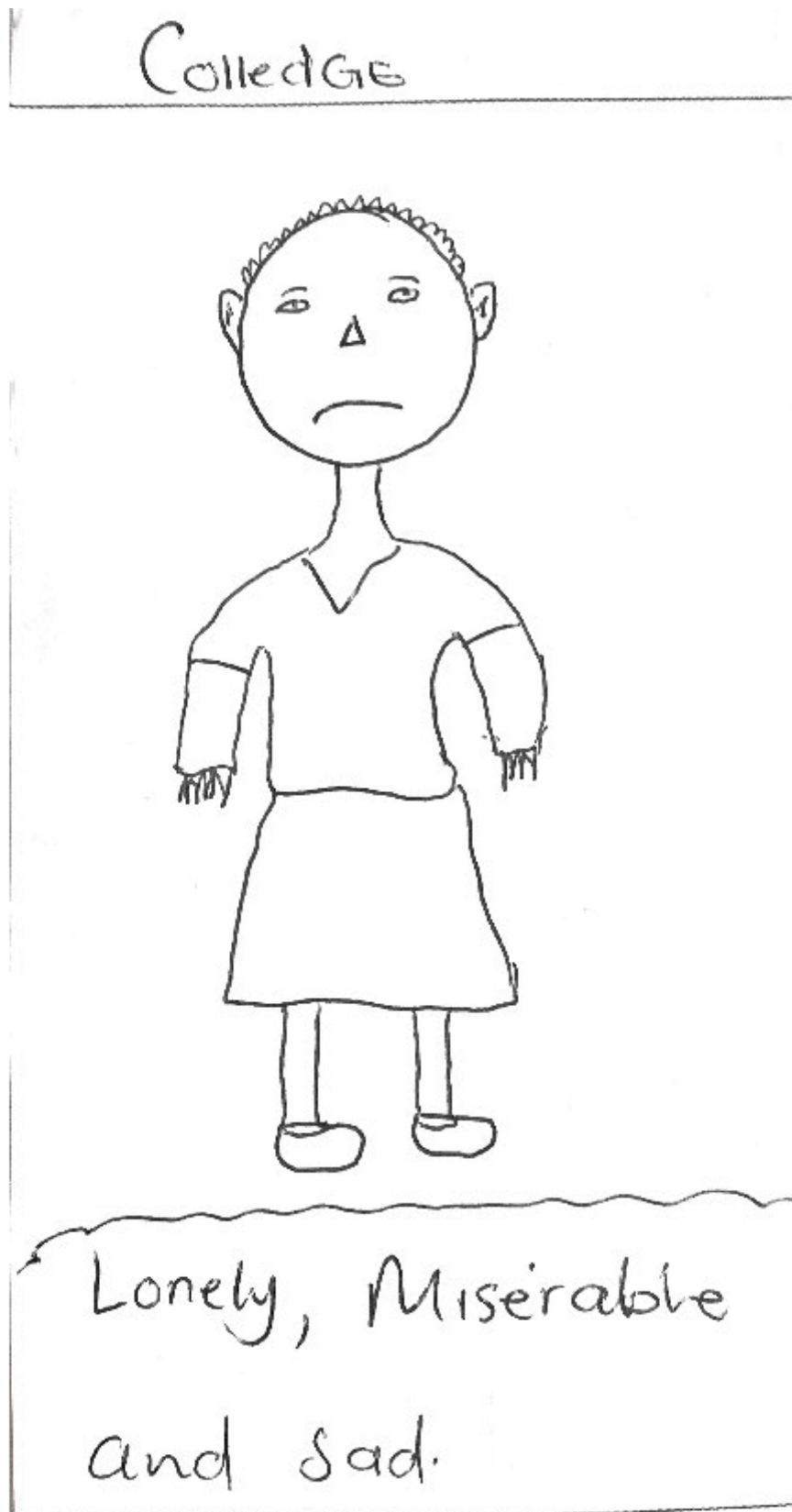
- I'm lonely with no friends
- Always shy
- Always sad because everyone is asking about my sexuality
- Always sitting in a class because everyone is laughing me

Figure 4

MG's drawing reflecting on how he feels when he is in the college

MG drew himself as a lonely person, having no friends. MG reported that he does not feel good because he has no friends at the college. He explained:

*I feel sad, shy and lonely. I don't have friends because everyone is asking me about my sexuality. I'm staying in class alone because everyone laughs at me. I will try to communicate with other students with the intention of educating them (DIN 2).*

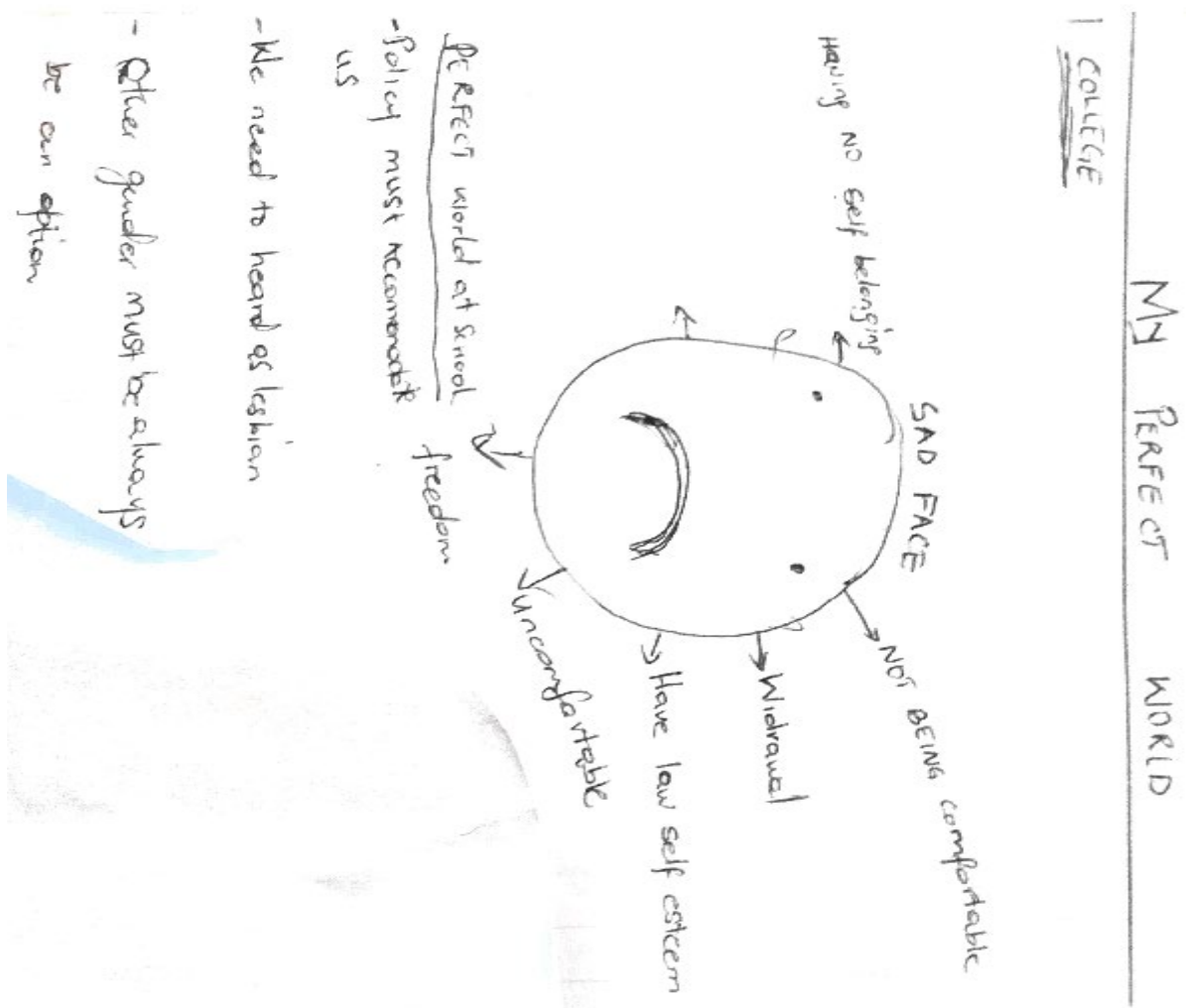


**Figure 5**

**LL's drawing indicating how she feels when she is in the college**

LL has a sad face, is not happy being at the college because she has stood alone having no friends. LL reflected how she keeps her secrets because she feels lonely. She explicated:

*I'm lonely, miserable and sad. I'm scared to stay with other students because I don't know whether they will judge me. Sometimes you feel scared to talk to people about yourself. Instead, I keep my secrets to me. Maybe the death of my parents also plays a vital role to feel lonely. I don't know whom I supposed to speak with. I wish high profile people to be reached so that I can be able to report if I'm abused (DIN 6).*



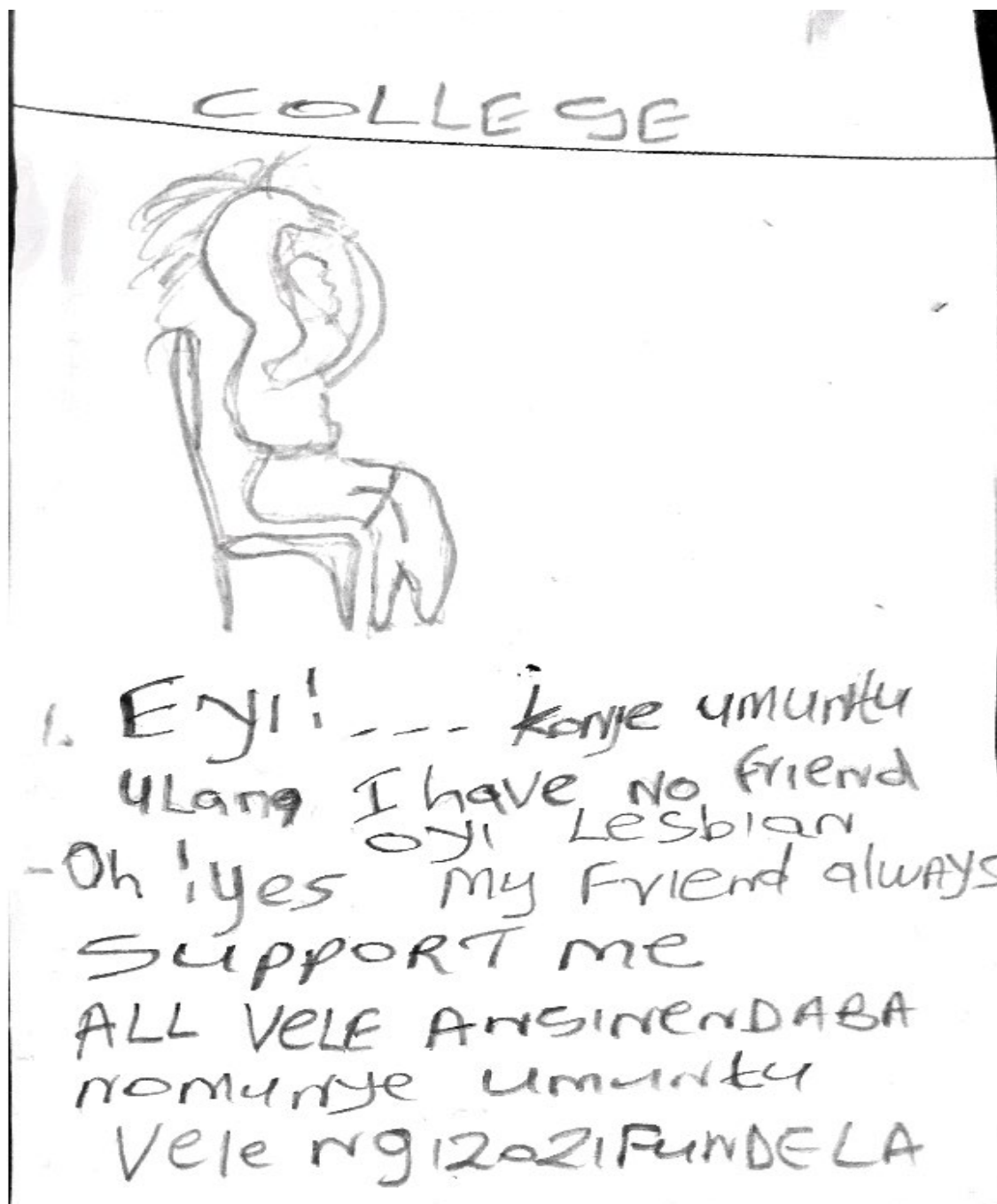
**Figure 6**



**TL's drawing reflecting on how she feels when she is in the college**

TL has a sad face and she feels uncomfortable. TL revealed how she feels uncomfortable in the class when she sees that she does not belong to any heterosexual group, boy or girl. She stated:

*I'm not happy. I feel uncomfortable and I always reserve myself because I'm the only lesbian in the class. I do not participate in discussion relating to love affairs. Girls have their own language and boys have their own language. I'm not fitting anywhere. I stay alone, busy with my phone. I have a low self-esteem and I lose confident. Policy should be inclusive. We need to have a voice to express ourselves about what we feel. There should boys, girls and other gender in the form (DIN 1).*



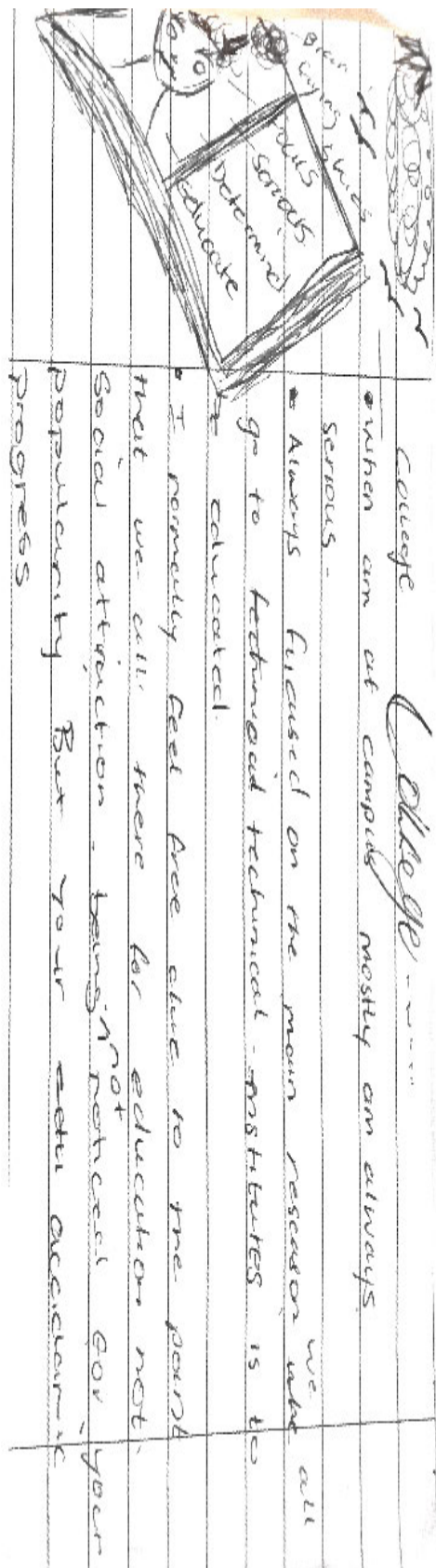
**Figure 7**

**ZL's drawing indicating how she feels when she is in the college**

ZL drew herself sitting on the chair, lifted up her hands and holding her head. She is not happy, no friends around her, sitting alone. ZL reported that she feels as if she is lonely because she does not have friends to share her experiences. She commented:

*I have a tense face, not in good mood. I don't have a friend. Those who are lesbian do not talk to me and don't ask me anything. I get support from my friend who is not schooling. I stay and*

*talk with my friend. Then I make my mind and tell myself that I'm not here to make friends with lesbians but get education. Once I finish I will go back home to do what I want. So I wish gay and lesbian to stop negative attitudes towards other students who wear cheap clothes. We should do away of undermining each other. Gay students get hurt by words you say to him or her. We need to be united because we don't know the future, maybe you will need help (DIN 3).*



**Figure 8**

**AG's drawing reflecting how he feels when he is in the college.**

AG drew himself as an unhappy person who looks serious, focused and determined. AG indicated that he feels unwell because students talk and pass comments. He explained:

*I'm crying, focus and determined. I know when I am at school I need education. I do not care whether a person likes me or not. I will do campaigns until gay students have a right to speak. They should allow gay students raise their voices so that students could understand their challenges they encounter day by day (DIN 8).*

#### **5.4.18. Living in my community**

The participants revealed how they are being treated by the community.



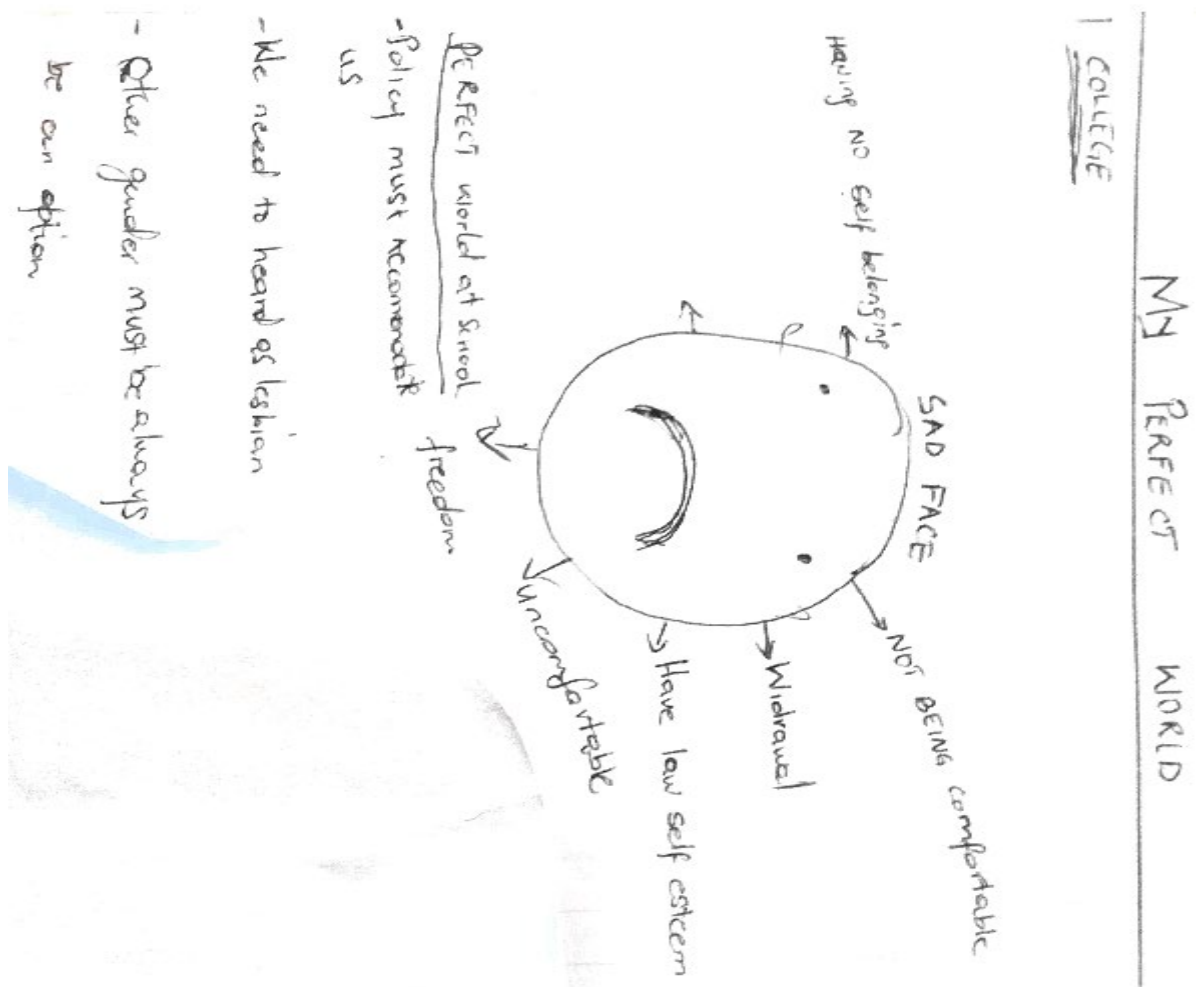
**Figure 9**

**LL's drawing reflecting on how she feels when she is in the community**

LL drew herself as unhappy person. She is crying. She is tired of being controlled. LL feels as if she is rejected by the community. She explained:

*I'm rejected, crying, tired, controlled and not happy at all. I want freedom. I want to express myself even in my family or in my community. I want to be accepted. I want them to know who*

*I am. It does mean that I will change my behaviour but I need support. I don't want to be treated unfairly because they know my sexual orientation (DIN 6).*



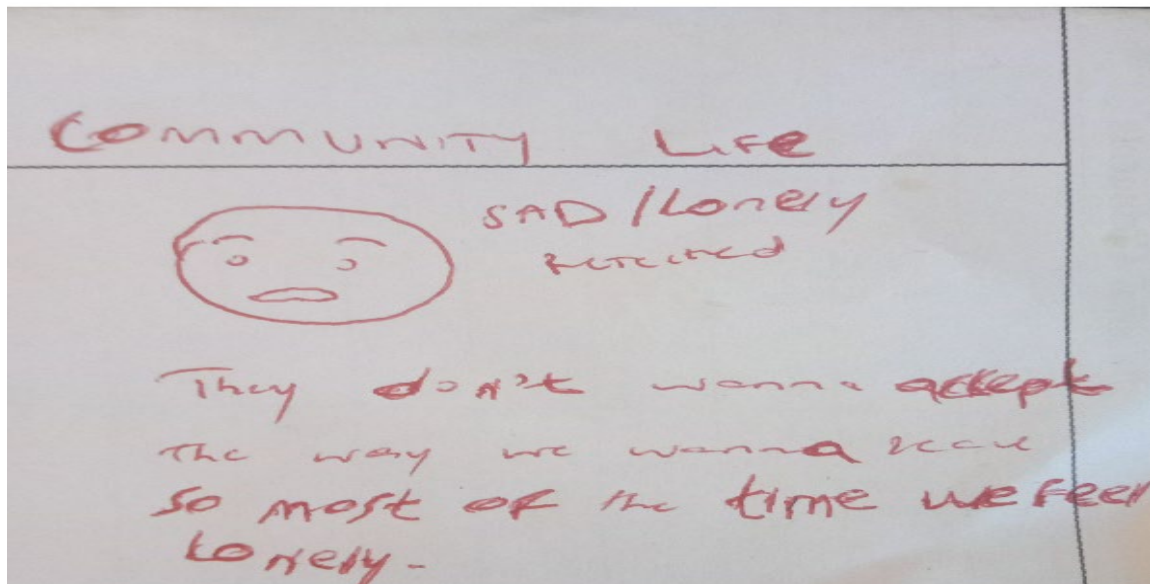
**Figure 10**

#### **TL's drawing indicating on how she feels when she is in the community**

TL has a sad face, feels lonely and has no friends. TL revealed that she does not attend societal cultural activities. She affirmed:

*I'm lonely. The family criticizes me. I don't get love at home especially from my mother. Religion also suppresses me. I don't have friends in the community. I also feel lonely. I don't attend societal activities where a girl has to participate. I feel unaccepted. If your parents do*

*not accept you is too difficult, the community to accept you. But I don't blame her because she was raised in this way. She is a traditional woman. I would behave like an ordinary girl. Campaigns should be introduced to educate people (DIN 1).*



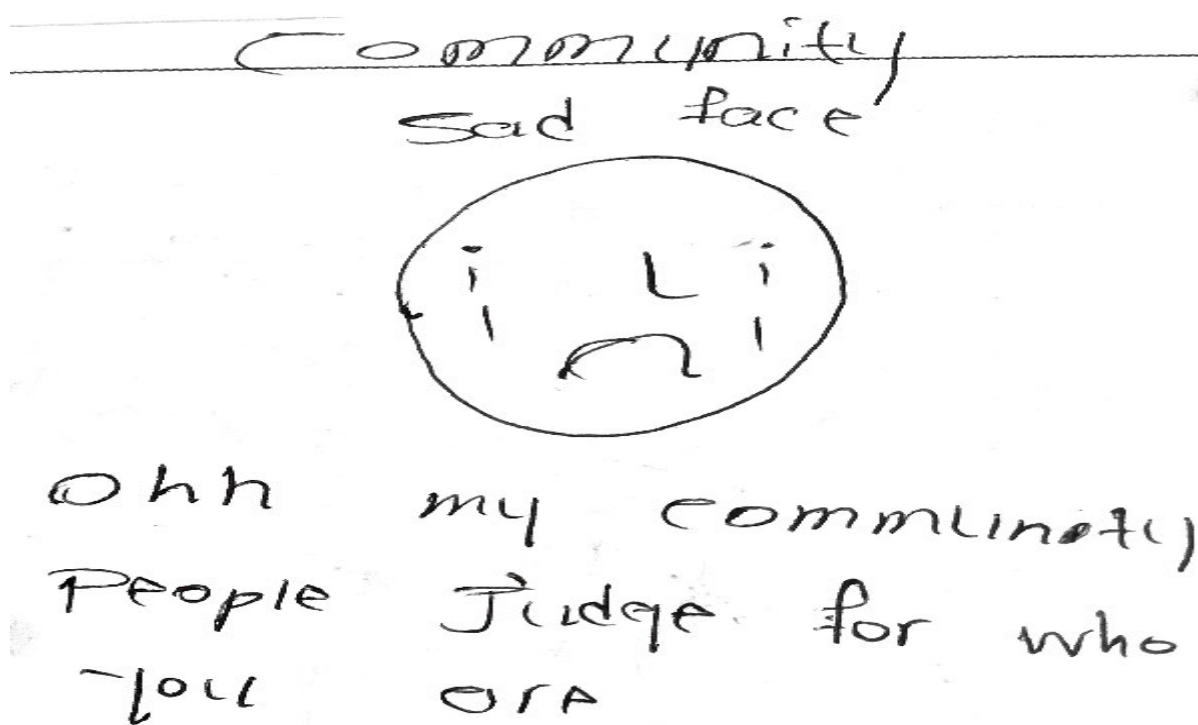
**Figure 11**

**NL's drawing reflecting on how she feels when she is in the community**

NL drew herself as happy person. She feels relaxed and accepted. NL revealed how her sexual identity is questioned by the community members. This is what she articulated:

*People don't want to accept and understand my life. They don't like my life at all. It seems to them I bring something new to them. Even the youth also have that about me. They ask questions, for example, where I grow up? There is no such in this community. What happened to me? I would like parents to understand and also to get education about gay community. There should be a knowledgeable expert who understands about gay group that may teach the community (DIN 5).*



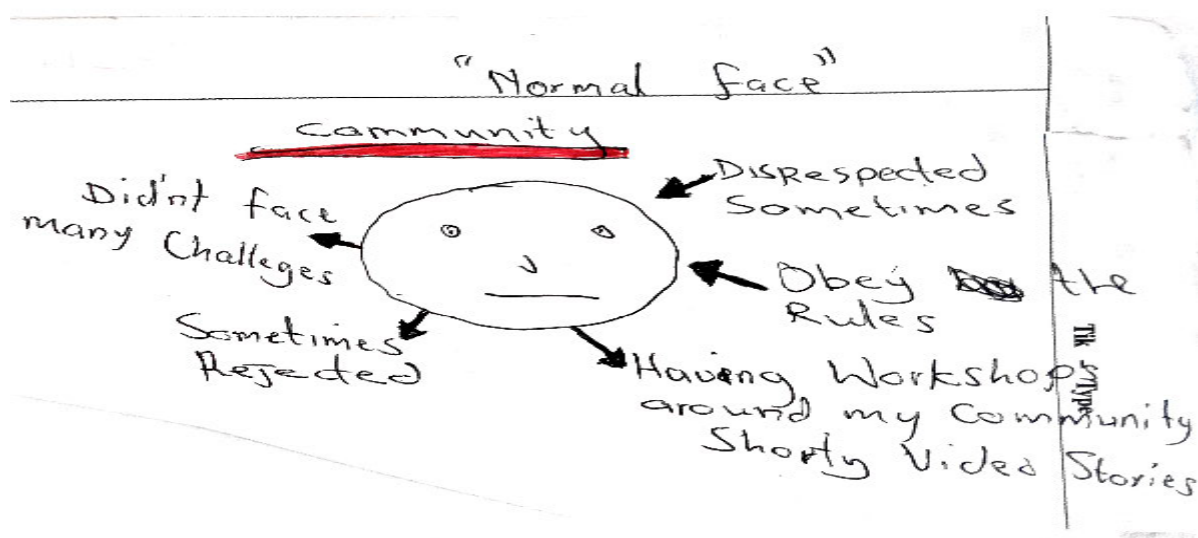


**Figure 12**

**SL's drawing reflecting on she feels when she is in the community**

SL is crying, has sad face because people do not like her. SL on the other hand is worried about the negativity the community has about gay students. She explained:

*People like to talk, to judge us. I don't know what to do (DIN 9).*

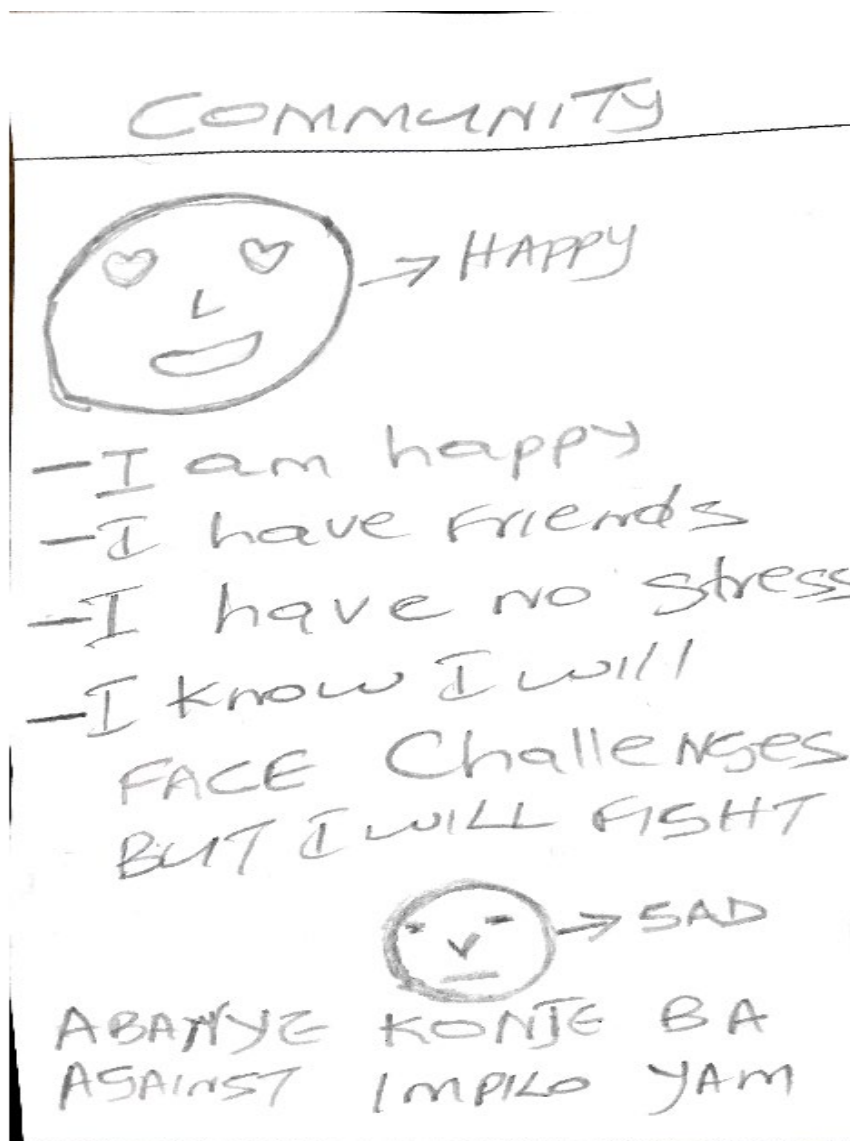


**Figure 13**

**TEL's drawing indicating on how she feels when she is in the community**

TEL drew the sad face because she feels disrespected by the community and faces many challenges. TEL reported that she is frustrated and how she is handling herself in the community at large. She articulated:

*I'm normal. I'm in between. I'm happy and I'm not happy. Sometimes I become disrespected. I know who I am in the community. If there is a function at home I wear skirt to respect my parents. I would like gay community to be welcomed in the community. There should be no one who should be rejected. I will introduce workshops to educate my community. I also created a drama book to educate people. They can watch while dramatizing and read the book (DIN 4).*



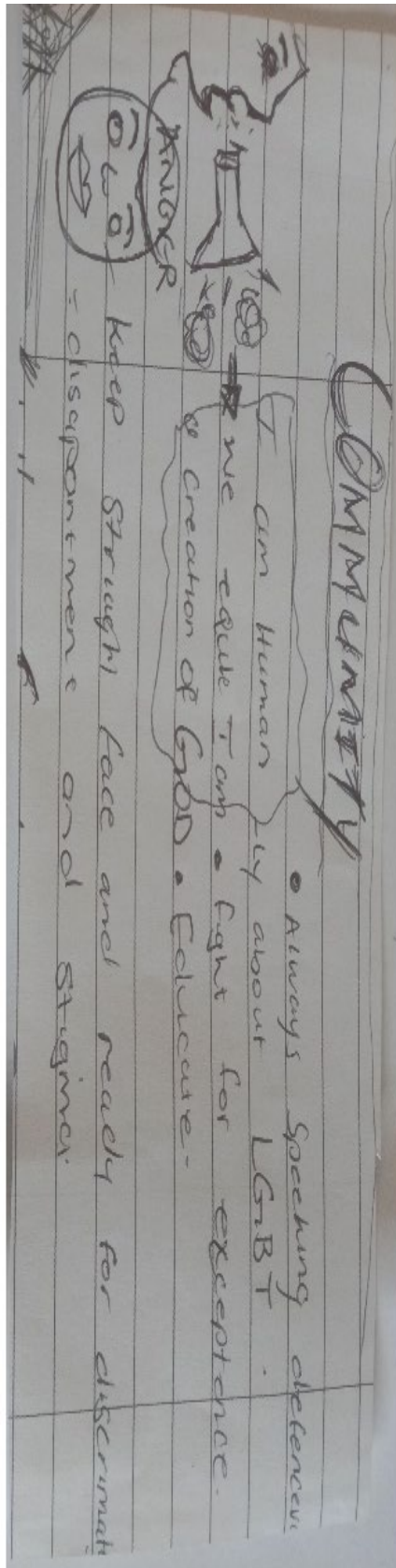
**Figure 14**

**ZL's drawing reflecting on how she feels when she is in the community.**

In one of the drawings she drew happy face because she has friends. In another drawing she drew a sad face and she wrote in IsiXhosa "Abanye konje ba against impilo yam" which means there are people who are against her life. ZL reflected on how she feels when she is in the community and what strategies she will take to educate the community. She affirmed:

*I'm happy. I have no stress and I have friends but there are lot of challenges. There are people who against my life.....mmmmhfff..... My heart becomes down which leads me not becoming happy. I know that there is one person who always hurt me. I will use radio stations to talk about gay community, educate people. I will support other lesbians who are discriminated. I would like to get how they are being handled in the society. So it is not easy for the families to*

*accept gays and lesbians because these families expect girls to be married and boys to be men in their houses. This is not happening because of our sexual orientation. I would teach gay males because they have stigma on how to tolerate the intolerable situation. The main problem is heterosexual males, you won't find female insulting lesbians but males do so (DIN 3).*



**Figure 15**

**AG's drawing reflecting on he feels when he is in the community**

AG is angry and is making a fuss because he is not treated as a human being. AG revealed that he is angry with the community. This is what he said:

*I'm making noise and I'm fighting. People must be educated about the life of gay students and must accept us. We have differences in life and we are not the same. I keep straight face so if you don't understand, fight start. Gay people should be treated with care (DIN 8).*

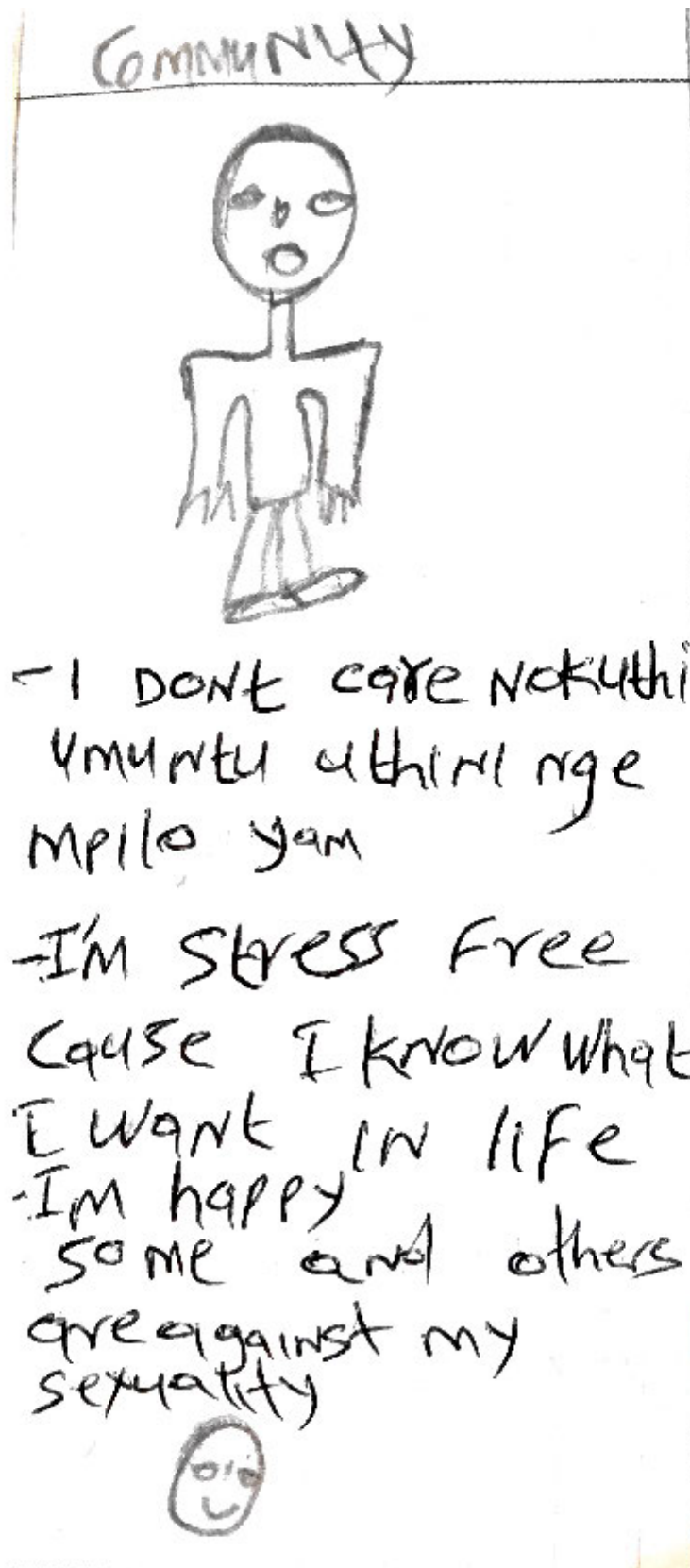


Figure 16

MG's drawing indicating on how he feels when he is in the community

MG used IsiXhosa to express his feeling. For example, I don't care "ukuthi abantu bathini ngempilo yami" which means he does not care what people are saying about his life. MG drew himself as a happy person in one of the drawing and as sad person in another drawing because some people turned against him when he revealed his sexual identity.

MG also indicated that he does not care about what people say about his sexual identity. He commented:

*I'm just myself. I don't care what people say. I'm stress free and I know what I want in my life. I'm always happy. I will try to talk with the community to organize group or structure to educate people about gay community. I will also come out so that people could understand my sexual orientation (DIN 2).*

#### **5.4.19. Academic performance**

Some participants revealed that the bad treatment also contributes to poor performance. While others reported that they do not experience negative treatment.

TL revealed that she has performed poorly in previous years because of the attitude portrayed by the lecturer. TL explains:

*It is true that the treatment that you get worsens the performance. There is a lecturer who has a negative attitude towards my sexual identity. Consequently I failed his subject. I was not doing well in his subject and I ended up hating him it was not that I did not know his subject but it was his attitude towards my sexual identity. When I was in Level 2 I failed his subject but I passed well in Level 4 because it was taught by someone else. Even in Level 3, he taught me but I did not pass well and I also developed hate (DIN 1).*

MG reflected how he is disappointed by the way the non-teaching staff treat him in the college. MG clarifies:

*Sometimes, I became disgusted by cleaners, security about my sexual orientation in public, and then all eyes turn on me. So when I'm alone my mind rewind everything that happen which leads me to ask myself questions. Instead of studying I end up thinking what happened at school (DIN 2).*

Contrary, LL reported that she performs well. She expressed:



*Since I am invisible, I don't want to lie, I do not get bad treatment. The lecturers and students do not say bad words that hurt me. I stay together with students, studying together and there is no one hurting each other. My performance is good (DIN 6).*

In congruent with LL, TEL expressed that she is not discriminated by the lecturers and she performs well. She articulated:

*I never got discrimination. Lecturers like me. They are willing to know deep about us (DIN 4).*

Similarly, ZL revealed that she does not encounter adversities in the college and her performance is satisfactory. ZL illuminates:

*I don't experience any problem academically (DIN 3).*

NL revealed that she studies well with her friends. NL explains:

*I never got discrimination. Even those whom I'm studying with never discriminated me except to say "Hola mjita" (greeting as their brother) (DIN 5).*

AG reported that he works hard and that the bad treatment in the college gives him a courage. AG expressed:

*Treatment gives me courage. I decided to work hard and stand out for myself. I work hard so that they could see that this person is intending to learn and I am very optimistic about education. Socially and mentally, I become affected because when there is LGBT topic they always point at me. They don't regard me as a student (DIN 8).*

SL expressed that the bad treatment lowers her performance at the college. She said:

*Students don't judge me as much but there are those individuals who have that and those who want to know about our lifestyle. The treatment really lowers the performance because all the time I used to think what would happen in the class day by day (DIN 9).*

Half of the participants revealed that they perform poorly because of the treatment they receive at the college. The half of the participants reported that they perform well.

The following data emerged from my last research question: *What strategies do they use to navigate these risk factors, if any?* The data is taken from participants' responses from semi-structured interview, focus group interview and visual method. The following themes emerged from the data presented:

1. Gay students' response on abuse,

2. Management of stress,
3. Seeking advice,
4. Responses to community attitudes,
5. Making a college a better place
6. Envisioning the future.

#### **5.4.20. Gay students' responses to abuse.**

The participants reflected on how they respond to those situations they feel intimidated by.

MG revealed that he remains silent and does not report his abuse to anyone. He explained:

*I fail to react. Sometimes I sleep thinking why some students and lecturers behave like that. I asked why they are saying this word "Diva" it becomes abusive to me. I see as if it is the end of the world. I end up being silent, not reporting the incidents to anyone. I feel disgusted (DIN 2).*

AG shared different sentiments that he simply fights back if the perpetrator hurts him. He stated:

*If a guy has to beat me up obvious it will come to a point that I have to fight back as self-defence because if I allow that situation he will come to me repeatedly. There comes a point where I have to fight back. I show him up that I am human being and I am still a guy in terms of gender. If I'm in love with guys there is nothing shown that I'm not a guy. I have never been a girl. It is just I accept myself as the way I am regarding my feelings. So I do fight back if they say negative words to me. I grew in Christian family, there are certain things that I was taught how I should deal with verbal abuse. I simply keep calm, turn away, walk away to avoid conflict. So if it may come to a point where I'm physically abused, I simply fight back because he may hurt me (DIN 8).*

ZL indicates that she uses all the counselling skills to deal with verbal abuse. She affirmed:

*So when I go in public, I know that I will be insulted verbally. I just tell myself that I'm a lesbian and I'm a gay. I'm proud of myself and I'm waiting anything that may be said by people because my life is different to theirs. They may take it in their own way. I know they don't understand homosexuals.....so it doesn't hurt me since I have undergone counselling. I was taught and told everything and my duty is to accept whatever people may say to me. I have to*

*take it as if people don't talk to me. I don't put it to my mind because it would hurt me. I should not listen to hurting statements coming from any person. I have to be quiet even if I see his or her statements are hurting. The best way is to leave him because to keep quiet helps a lot (DIN 3).*

VG revealed that he does not fight back when the perpetrator attack him. He explained:

*I just keep quiet; I know that I'm vulnerable. So if he bits me, I don't fight him because I don't have power to fight back. Most of the time I remain silent whereas I'm dying inside if a person insults me. When I arrive at my home I just write in my journal (diary book) where I state what I felt on that particular time (DIN 7).*

NL also stated that she has to internalize and accept negative comments to avoid conflict. She elucidated:

*To tell the truth, I feel ashamed the way people speak to me. I know who I am and I know that what they are talking doesn't disturb me. But it becomes painful when they say "Do you see lesi tabane?" which means "do you see this lesbian". They also say they would stab me but I continue to be a person who I am because I understand that it doesn't come from space. It is internal in my life. I try to be strong; I accept what they are saying to avoid conflict (DIN 5).*

TEL reported that she just reveals her sexual identity and fights back if the boy fights. She explained:

*I just tell him that I date other girls. If he persistently continues, fight starts (DIN 4).*

TL revealed that she becomes passive if she is treated badly in the class. She stated:

*After that incident, I was very passive in the class and it was difficult for me to bond with other learners (DIN 1).*

SL articulated that she does not engage with what they say to her. She affirmed:

*I don't entertain them and I don't pay attention to what they say (DIN 9).*

Due to incidents that have happened, LL reported that she keeps quiet and lets them blame her. This is what she said:

*I didn't tell any person; I kept quiet. I thought it was my mistake to go that time coming from the library. I remembered what I have been told at home that I should stay in the residence, not going at night. I felt ashamed of me (DIN 6).*

The data revealed that two participants say they fight back if they are physically abused by heterosexual people. Some participants also reported that they remain silent and others become passive and do not entertain the perpetrators.

#### **5.4.21. Management of stress**

The participants revealed how they cope when they encounter bad treatment.

TL revealed that she speaks to various people. She stated:

*If I have a stress, I speak to my girlfriend. I also connect to social media to search people who are lesbians, asking for an advice (DIN 1).*

MG reported that he only speaks about his problems to his friend. He affirmed:

*If I have a problem I speak it to my friend. I don't want share my problems relating my sexual identity with parents, I don't feel comfort (DIN 2).*

Contrary to the above participants, AG revealed that he uses substance abuse to suppress stress. He explained:

*Sometimes I used to take drugs to repress my feelings and in some instances I smoke. In other times I drink a lot. But now I focus on spiritual things. So I pray and write music songs. I put every feeling in my music so that it could have served as an escape. If I go to "taverns and shebeens" I get people that call me "Isitabane" and other negative words like "Asuphapha la" don't fly here or seek attention. I end up being violent and physically fight. So I have seen music as the only way to deal with my stress (DIN 8).*

ZL affirmed that she only speaks to the people who are close to her. She said:

*When I have a stress I speak to someone whom I trust because the intention is tell her all my problems so that she could give me an advice. It is good to get help from a different person, get different ideas so that I could learn to manage such problems. I speak out to my aunt and my friend. I choose what to talk to my aunt and to my friend. I can't control my anger since I was raped and discriminated at high school. When I speak to someone I try to reduce anger (DIN 3).*

VG stated that he just listens to music to suppress stress. He confirmed:

*I like music. I keep my personal things to myself but if they are beyond my shoulders I report to my mom (DIN 7).*

NL revealed she cries or speaks to her friends. She affirmed:

*I cry. Sometimes I speak to my friends who are lesbians or my friends who are straight. I use to tell them what happened. They are the ones who encourage me not to internalize what the people are saying. They say these things are happening and people in rural areas don't recognize this (DIN 5).*

TEL revealed that she locks herself in her room and smokes. She clarified:

*I keep quiet in my room. I smoke and drink. I don't speak to any person at home. I only share my stress with someone whom I find in the social media (DIN 4).*

LL stated that she speaks to her siblings. She illuminated:

*I communicate with my siblings, they used to tell me I must unwind and I should deal with the problem. They give me advice (DIN 6).*

SL revealed that she keeps it a secret. She affirmed:

*I hide myself.....you won't see me if I'm with people. I stay away from people. I don't talk with it. I stay alone (DIN 9).*

Some participants do not talk about their problems and others look for advice from their friends. One participant preferred to use alcohol to suppress stress and the other participant preferred to look for advice from social media. VG prefers to listen to music to calm down from stress and the other participant preferred to cry.

#### **5.4.22. Seeking advice**

The participants revealed how they get advice.

AG revealed that he seeks advice from his friends and also conveys advice to the young ones. He stated:

*I do speak to different groups, mostly my friends that are in LGBT community, especially those who care about me and not too far in my age and the young ones who have recently come out. I speak to young ones because they are seeking an advice. I used tell them that I have been in*

*the same situation. In my case, I speak to LGBT guys. Since I believe in God, I also communicate with God through prayer, it is much easier because he is the only one and what I speak to God is confidential between me and Him. I pray and sing. Music takes me very far (DIN 8).*

ZL reported that she keeps quiet but gives advice to those who seek it. She affirmed:

*I don't speak about my problems. But my friends used to come to me to get advice. I used to tell them that we are on earth, people like to speak and they must learn to accept any treatment they get from people. People don't understand our life. My friends has to accept and internalize that they will be discriminated all the times (DIN 3).*

VG also revealed that he speaks to his gay friends. He clarified:

*I usually consult my gay friends because they have undergone these experiences. I used to tell them everything if there is someone in the college or in town verbally abused me. I also have a question in my mind "when will heterosexual people accept the homosexuals? (DIN 7)*

NL affirmed that she seeks advice to her friends. She said:

*I speak to my friends not to my parents. I tell them what happened and how people are calling me with bad names. Truly some of them are supportive to me. They advise me that I should not worry about boys because I know how they behave.....there is no need to panic. Some my heterosexual friends blame me about my sexual identity saying that I became a fool to choose this sexual orientation. I have to go to the doctor to fix it so that I could become a girl. The reason I don't speak to my parents is that they would not accept it because they know me as a girl (DIN 5).*

TEL reported that she asks help from her brothers and friends. She commented:

*I speak to my friend who is a lesbian if I go with her. She calms me and also talks to the person who abuses me. Sometimes I speak to my brothers and they know me that I'm short-tempered. My brothers also go to that particular person if he abuses me. I know that I'm a woman a boy can beat, stab and hurt me but through anger I found myself beating him (DIN 4).*

LL revealed that she only speaks to a person who has a similar experience. She explained:

*I do speak to my friend "a fem". I spoke to her because she had same experience then I became free to talk and tell her what happened to me. She also told me that she was raped and then she became pregnant and aborted the child (DIN 6).*

SL also revealed that she speaks to her friend only. She affirmed:

*I speak to my best friend with the hope that she will give me good advice. I take all the advice (DIN 9).*

#### **5.4.23. Responses to community attitudes**

The participants reflected on how they react when they get treated badly in the community.

NL revealed that she honours the societal beliefs. She affirmed:

*I do obey the societal law and my parents' beliefs. If they say I must wear a skirt; I do so. If they say we have to go to church; I also do so. But I don't feel good (DIN 5).*

SL also reported that she obeys adults. She explained:

*I don't argue with my parents. Biblically if you argue with adults your days are numbered. So I respect the adults (DIN 9).*

LL revealed that she does what other girls do at their homes. She said:

*To me is not difficult, I do all the girls chores. So the conflict between me and my parents will happen when they start to know about my sexual identity. I want my relationship to end up in marriage. I know that they would not like it but on that day my word will be a final. I respect them in all spheres (DIN 6).*

Contrary to the above participants, TL affirmed that she cries and works alone to prevent negative comments. She clarified:

*I just do things alone at home to avoid negative words from my siblings. If I suppose to fetch water, I go alone. I cry if they talk negative words, but these words strengthen me. I also take my books and read (DIN 1).*

TEL stated that she does what a girl normally does and posts her pictures wearing a dress. She articulated:

*I'm strong they know me. I do all the girls chores. But the difference is that I date girls. If there is a function at home I wear my skirt to respect. When I go to the church I wear my dress and I take picture and post to face book wearing a dress (DIN 4).*

ZL revealed that she dresses like a heterosexual girl at her home. She clarified:

*If there is a ceremony, I dress a skirt or cover myself with a blanket because I know very well that there will be many people. I respect customs and if there is no ceremony I wear my trouser (DIN 3).*

AG reported that he respects everybody. He uttered:

*I respect all members of the family but I don't change my sexual orientation. I avoid people who say negative words about me (DIN 8).*

MG also reported that he does not entertain any teasing comments. He expressed:

*I keep calm and become sad, saying nothing (DIN 2).*

#### **5.4.24. Making college a better place**

The participants reported on how they wish to change the college.

NL reported she wants to ensure that there is a congenial environment for everybody. She expressed:

*I would like to build the toilets for gay students and heterosexuals. I will make the college to be conducive to everybody and let them to comprehend that we need each other regardless there should be disciplinary committee (DIN 5).*

She added:

*We should be treated equally, not discriminated and not make us to feel lonely. In sport, they must allow us to play soccer and netball. If I play a drama and I feel to play a male character, they must allow me because I feel comfortable to be a man (DIN 5).*

LL revealed that she wishes to organize prominent gay members to visit the campus and also to improve the toilets. She explained:

*I agree with the previous speaker that toilets are problematic issue at the college. I shall build the toilets for gay and lesbians and heterosexuals. If there are events at the college, I shall make sure that all prominent gay people like Somizi and Selby and other prominent gays attend all these events so that the lesbians and gays feel accommodated. If there is Miss and Mr Campus, lesbian and gay students are not accommodated even if they tried to participate instead they are howled by the heterosexual students to influence judges. There should be a workshop that will cater for LGBT group and heterosexual people so that the two groups could*



*understand each other. I shall make sure that lesbian and gay students feel accommodated in the college (DIN 6).*

She added:

*I should make students to educate themselves, learn how others live their lifestyle. There should be something that will involve both homosexuals and heterosexuals. Lecturers should be included and engaged in discussions so that we could understand each other because we are human beings. I think the gays should be treated equally. They should not feel as if they are limited or coming behind (DIN 6).*

ZL reported that there should be rules and appropriate infrastructure. She affirmed:

*I will build toilets because lesbians and gays feel uncomfortable. There are lesbians who are transgender who feel that they are not accommodative in toilet facilities. We shall set rules that will ensure that there is no discrimination to avoid conflict among students (DIN 3).*

She also expressed:

*I will try to bring together all the gay students together to develop unity from them.....avoid splitting groups. If we are together we can talk about our life and our problems. We must be treated equally like others. In the campus we do not get that opportunity of staying, going together and sharing experiences. There should be a movement that will voice out our concerns (DIN 3).*

SL expressed that there should be an introduction of inclusive activities at the college. She elucidated:

*I would allow gays students to be part of all activities taking place at school. I shall make sure that the college policy is understood by all stakeholders.*

She also explained:

*The campus must make sure that those who are straight do understand the human categories. LGBT group should understand that we are all human beings and we should treat each other equal. We should be treated as normal students and we should live a life that would not hurt other students. Heterosexual students should not say negative words to us like calling us “Isitabane” all the times. If we are together they should act as if we are all straight.....not talking something that would hurt us. They should understand that we don’t do this as if we like to do it but it is our feelings (DIN 9).*

TEL reported she would organize workshops and emphasize the improvements of toilets. She expressed:

*I have no clue what I could do to make the college better. I am treated well in the campus. Maybe these days everything is alright, we are in a democracy. I would say lesbian must respect herself first. If I don't respect myself they would not respect me. There is nothing special about me (DIN 4).*

She added:

*I shall educate students about lesbians and gays. Toilets are an issue, even in public. We experience same problem that we experience at the college. For example, when you go to the male toilets, they direct you to the female toilets. When you go to the female toilets females scream because they are scared of us (DIN 4).*

TL revealed that policies should be changed and awareness campaigns should be introduced. She explained:

*I shall introduce the awareness campaign for LGBT community to make other students and officials understand that there is an LGBT group in the campus. I shall introduce Miss Gay and Miss Lesbian. I want to make students to know that there is an LGBT group and how we shall be treated. I will change the college policy. It should accommodate all genders. At point it says nothing about us (DIN 1).*

AG stated that the support system should be in place. He explicated:

*I will build toilets and gay should have their own toilets. Heterosexual feel uncomfortable if they see lesbians in the male toilets or gays in female toilets. I will open the support group that will help LGBT in school. A gay student has got a talent to play soccer, but you may find the gay student scares to participate because of her or his sexual orientation. So if we have a support systems I think everybody we will get support and it will be the duty of that structure to help gay students if they are determined that they are good in sport.....that identified gay should be placed in that particular sport. Education is important. People must be educated about gay community be given an opportunity to tell heterosexual students who we are, what they don't like about us and what we don't like about them so that we could be able to work together (DIN 8).*

AG also added:

*I can create LGBT organisation at the college. I will educate students about gays, how they should be treated and who we are. We end hating each other because we, as students, discriminate each other. With education everything will be possible. People will get knowledge and once they use that knowledge, they will understand and treat us as their friends. They will feel comfortable to be around us....."Yhaaa" (DIN 8).*

AG also made a strong emphasis. He said:

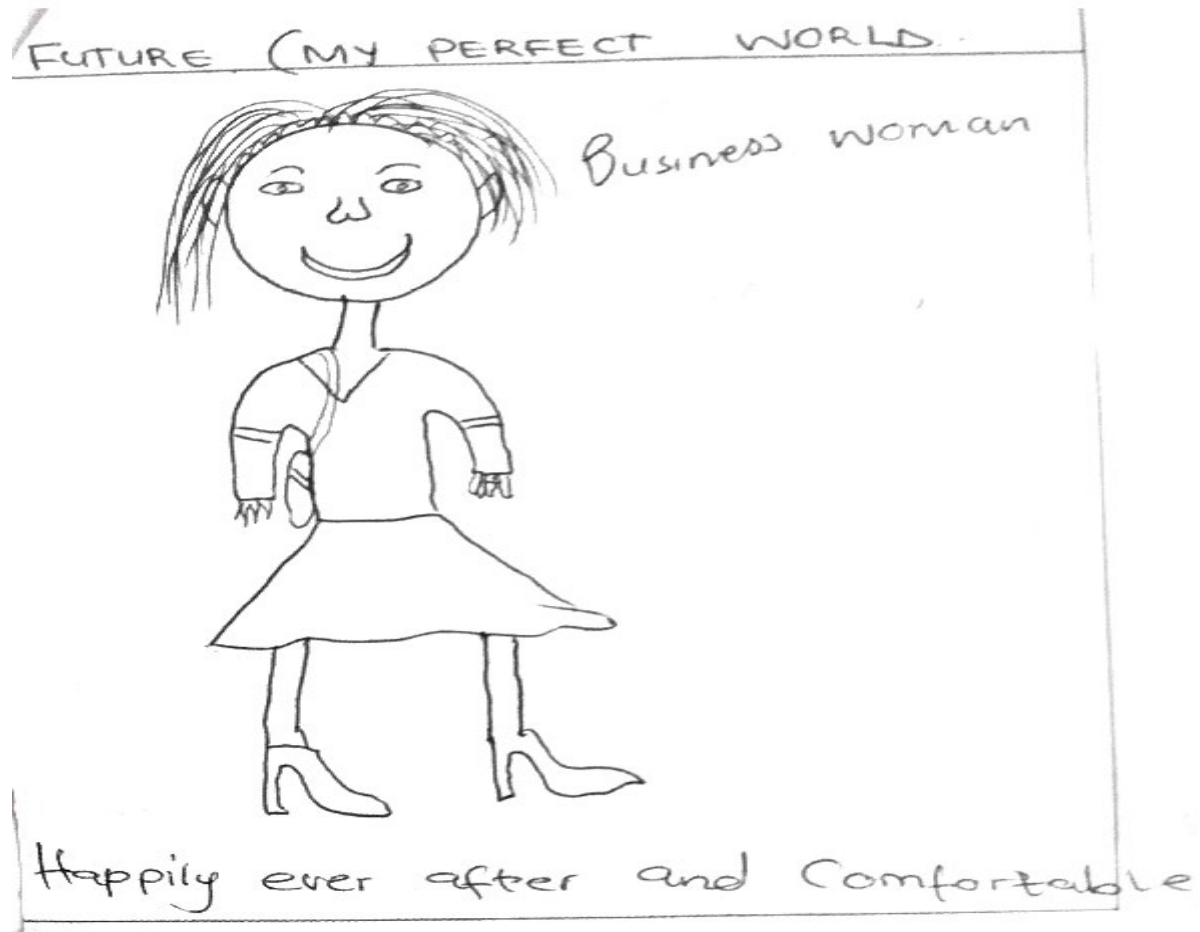
*We should be treated equally and realized that we are same like other people and we are normal. It is just our sexual orientation that is different. For example, if you see that lesbian is wearing like a guy but she is a girl, she must be greeted like a guy like "Hola, Mjitha", a lesbian feel comfortable when she sees that is accepted. But if you say "Dudlu Ntombi" (traditional word which is said when you greet a girl in a traditional way) whereas you see that she is lesbian, you hurt her. You do the opposite, you discriminate her. The smaller things you do make a big different in someone's life (DIN 8).*

MG affirmed that he may organize campus competitions to make campus a warm environment for everybody. He explained:

*I will organize events like modelling for straight students and gay students. I will also fix toilets so that they could accommodate everybody in the college, heterosexuals and homosexuals (DIN 2).*

#### **5.4.25. Envisioning the future**

All participants have revealed how they wished their lives would look like.

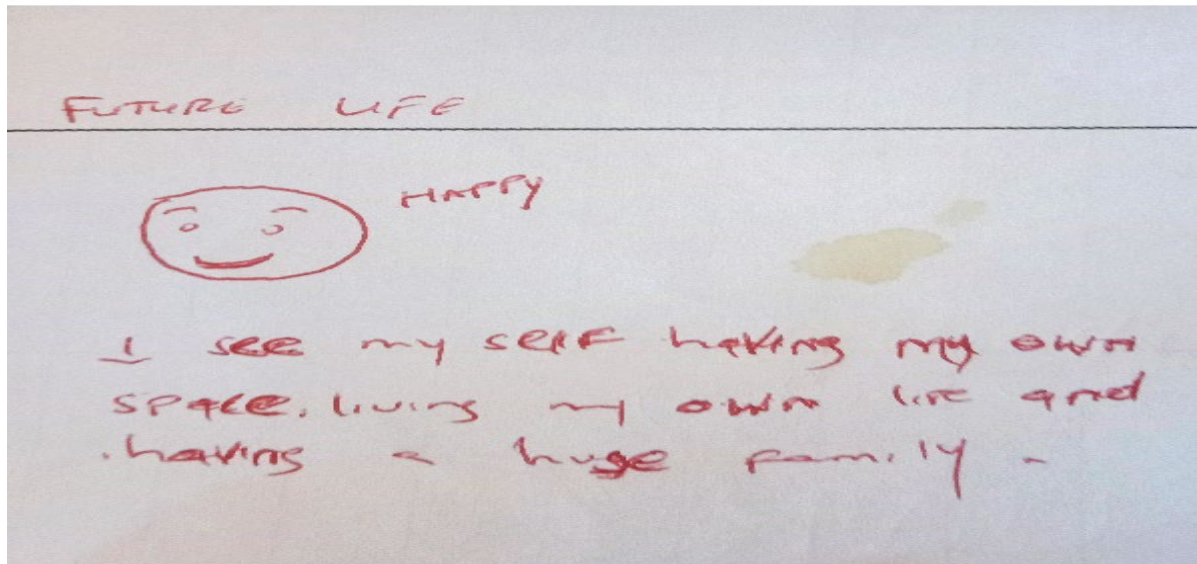


**Figure 17**

**LL's drawing reflecting on how she feels about the future**

In her drawing, she looks happy. She sees herself as successful business woman and living comfortable. This is what LL said:

*I want to be happy, be a business woman and have a right future. I want to build my own luxury life and live comfortable (DIN 6).*

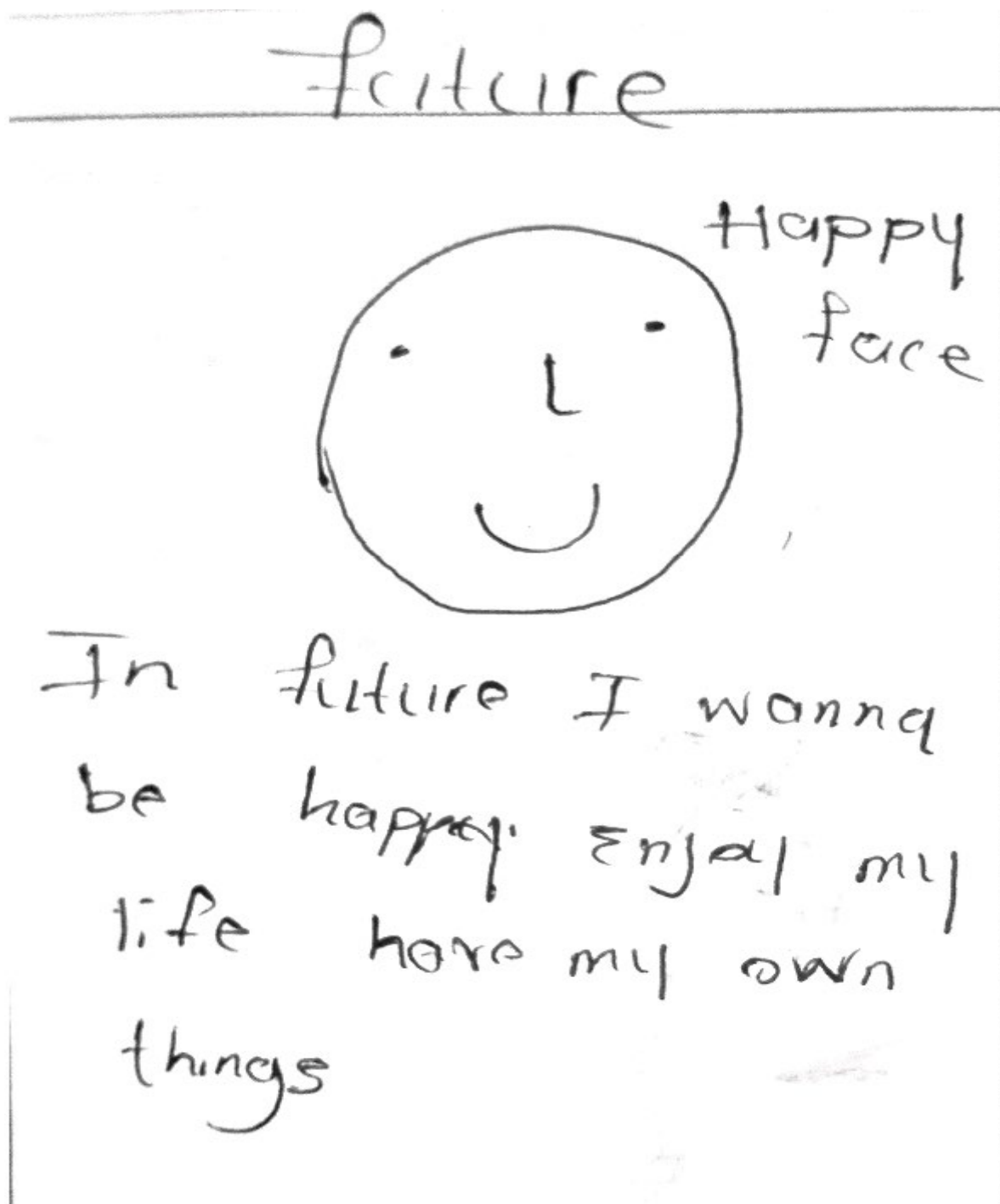


**Figure 18**

**NL's drawing indicating on how she feels about the future**

NL is happy and is seeing her living comfortable life. NL also explained:

*I'm happy. I'm a business woman driving my own car and having a big family (DIN 5).*

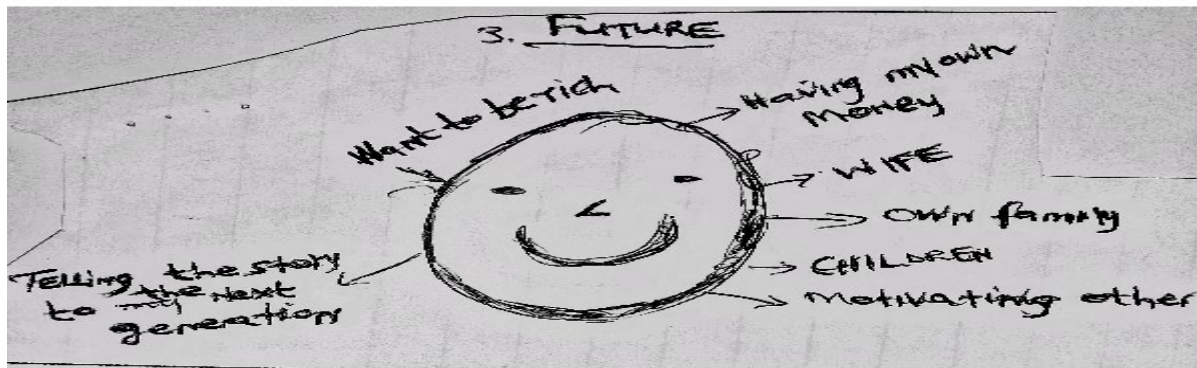


**Figure 19**

**SL's drawing envisioning her future**

In her drawing, she has a happy face seeing her enjoying her life. SL also reported how she wanted her life to look like. She said:

*I'm happy. I live my own life having my own things. I have a family (DIN 9).*

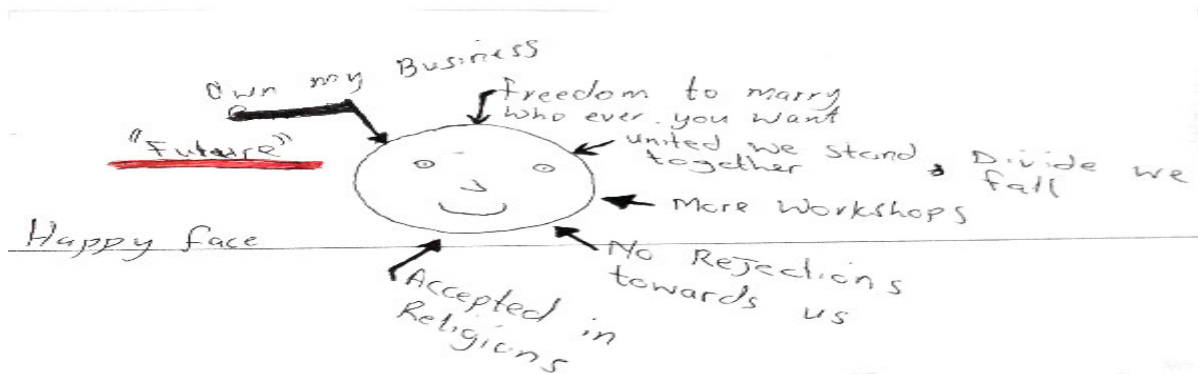


**Figure 20**

#### **TL's drawing envisioning her future**

TL is happy and sees herself as independent and having her own things. TL revealed that she also wants to educate young children about LGBT community. She affirmed:

*I'm happy. I don't want to leave my community. I want to develop until they could see and understand lesbians. I want to have my own money and family. I see myself as top achiever. I would like to make young people to recognize the LGBT community (DIN 1).*



**Figure 21**

**TEL's drawing reflecting how she sees her future**

TEL drew herself as happy person enjoying her own freedom. TEL revealed that she wants to organize educational campaigns. This is what she explained:

*I would marry whoever I want. I organize workshops. Religious denominations must respect and accept us. I will run my business (DIN 4).*



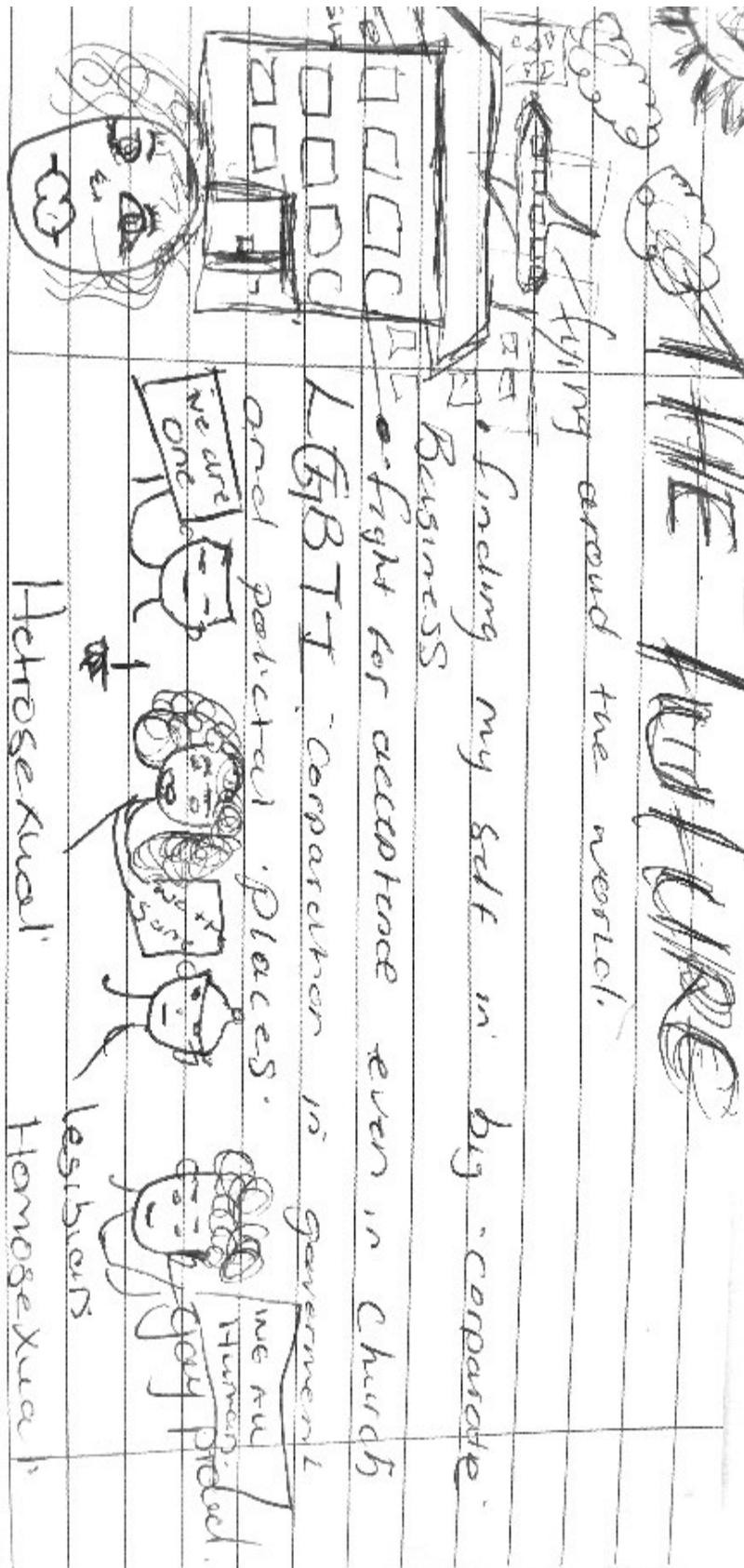
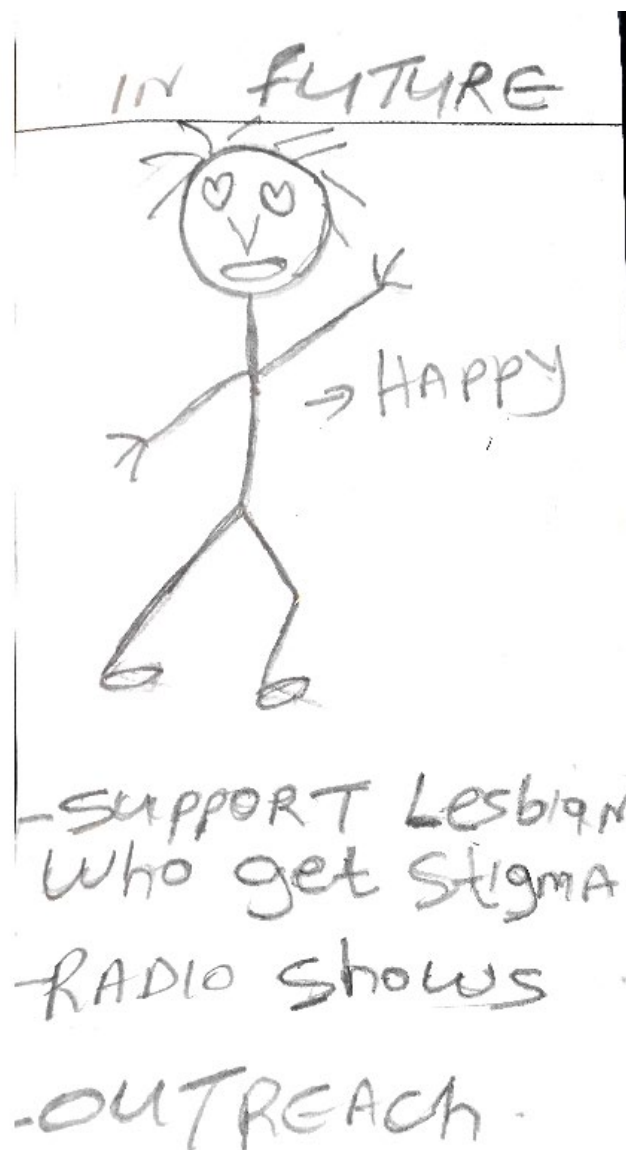


Figure 22

AG's drawing envisioning his future

AG is happy and by drawing other drawings is trying to emphasize that heterosexuals and homosexuals are both human beings. AG stated that he wants to join politics so that the LGBT voice could be heard. He explicated:

*I see myself flying and owning big corporation business. I will fight for the LGBT community in communities, in church and government. We need to join politics and occupy high positions. The government will work easily if we work close with him to fight those who discriminate us. I think gay people will be able to come out easily if their rights are protected (DIN 8).*



**Figure 23**

**ZL's drawing envisioning about her future**

ZL has a happy face because she wishes to support gay students. ZL observed the radio station as tool to educate local communities. She commented:

*I'm happy. I will support lesbians who have stigma. I will use radio station to reach out the community (DIN 3).*

## IN Future



Create a Support group  
of Gays and lesbians

Do events like pride  
to show people that  
Gays & Lesbians are  
humans and they need  
to be treated equal

## Figure 24

### MG's drawing envisioning the future

MG is happy in his drawing and wishes to support lesbians and gays. MG reported he would like to see gay students have a support group. This is what he said:

*I will create a support group for lesbian and gay students. I can organize events inviting the different people so that who attended could see how lesbians and gays live their own life. I would encourage them not undermining others (DIN 2).*

All participants drew themselves as happy people. They visualize themselves living comfortable lives, having their own families and working as businessman or earning a good salary. They have different views on how the college and community might improve in order to accommodate the gay community. One of the participants also thought that if the gay students may also join politics their voice will be heard and respected.

### 5.4.26. Conclusion

This chapter addressed the overview of the study, the themes that emerged from the raw data presented by participants. The visual drawings were provided with explanations. Where the participants used her or his own language it was translated into English. The data presented was in response to the four research questions.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS**

#### **6.1. Introduction**

The preceding chapter was the first round of analysis. In Chapter 5, I presented the data that emerged from semi-structured, focus and visual methodology interviews. In this chapter, I used thick descriptions drawn from semi-structured interviews, focus group and visual methodologies in the form of drawings. I supported my interpretation of the data by verbatim quotations from the oral responses of the participants and visual images in the form of drawings. Neuman (2000) suggests that qualitative data analysis includes:

- a) Dividing the data into units of meaning
- b) Classifying and grouping of meanings
- c) Including new units of data into these groups
- d) Searching for categories that are similar and which can be merged into a single category
- e) Reviewing categories that contain large amounts of data to see if they can be split into smaller categories.
- f) Checking that categories include all data and are mutually exclusive and
- g) Looking for linkages, contrasts and comparisons between the categories.

Neuman (2000) also provides a seven stage model for making sense of qualitative data:

Stage 1: Immersion in the data

Stage 2: Reflecting, standing back

Stage 3: Analysing

Stage 4: Synthesizing, re-combing the data

Stage 5: Relating to other work locating data

Stage 6: Reflecting back

Stage 7: Presenting, disseminating, and sharing the findings.

This section provides an in-depth interpretation, analysis and synthesis of results or findings. Thematic analysis was extrapolated from responses to the four research questions.

1 A) How do lesbian and gay students experience being homosexual at a TVET College?

B) Why do they hold these views?

2. What are the risks factors arising from their sexual orientation at a TVET College, if any?

3. What strategies do they use to navigate these risk factors, if any?

In the process of coding the following categories emerged:

1. Perception of what it means to be gay
2. Discovering of self
3. Coming out
4. Positive about the college
5. College as home
6. Gay students' attitudes towards sticking together
7. Students' attitudes towards gay students
8. Treatment of gay students by lecturers
9. Family attitudes towards gay students
10. Community attitudes towards gay students
11. Gay students as victims of sexual abuse
12. Gay students as victims of verbal abuse
13. Gay students' frequency of abuse
14. Campus support
15. Gay students rights at the college
16. Religious impact
17. The college without happiness
18. Living in my community
19. Academic performance
20. Gay students' responses on abuse
21. Management of stress
22. Seeking advice
23. Responses to community attitudes
24. Making a college a better place
25. Envisioning the future

Then I proceeded with thematic analysis of the data as it is indicated in the categories above.

## 6.2. Perceptions of what it means to be gay

There is no standard definition of being gay. Participants gave their perceptions and understanding of being gay in their own spaces and this included their experiences and emotional encounters. All nine participants agreed that being gay means to be attracted to the same gender, it is normal and it is not that a gay male or gay female has changed his or her identity. Mwanawina (2016) confirmed that a gay person is one whose enduring physical romantic and emotional attraction is to people of the same sex and a lesbian is a woman whose enduring physical, romantic and emotional attraction is to other woman. Lesbian and gay people feel that they were gay from their first sexual stirrings (Sharpe & Uchendu, 2014). Mann & Patterson (2016) described lesbianism as a political choice when woman feels attracted to other woman for political, emotional, physical and economic support. Some women prefer the word lesbian instead of woman. The term has been used to describe women who have sex with women, either exclusively or in addition to sex with men. The foregoing is supported and justified by concurring utterances from the participants as they indicated when they were asked, ‘What do you understand of being gay?’ This is how one of the participants (TL) defines gay:

*Being a gay means when someone is felt attracted to the same gender by means of love (DIN 1).*

The definition was also echoed by AG:

*A gay person is someone who is different and unique in the same way as human. But the problem is that their sexual orientation determines whether you are straight or homosexual or transgender. People used to say a gay person is making himself a girl, they don't understand who you really are. If you are a gay, you only feel to love someone with the same sex. You won't change your gender (DIN 8).*

Nowadays, the terms ‘lesbian’ and ‘gay’ are used to refer to people who experience attraction to members of the same sex (Healey, 2014). A gay person’s sexual orientation determines who she or he is and his or her feelings determine who to love or not to love. Although they understand themselves, the data shows that the gay participants are vulnerable and defenseless because people still have negative attitudes towards gay students. People believe that gay students are changing their gender and also believe that they deviate from societal expectation. Truly, the participants feel love for the same gender and their feelings motivate them to have relationships with the same gender. Although participants showed their understanding, they are painfully worried about the people who do not understand their sexual identity.

### 6.3. Discovering of self

Berzonsky (1986) states that self-discovery implies the pre-existence of a true self that can be discovered and known. Waterman (1984) adds that to discover is to find, uncover, detect, locate, or unearth something about reality or oneself that already exists. Schlegel, Vess, & Arndt (2012) postulated that there is something inside each person that is inherent and unchanging. According to the presented data, it is apparent that all participants agreed that they discovered themselves at an early stage of their lives. Without doubt, the participants acquired their sexual identities differently. For instance, boys found themselves being attracted to other boys when they played together, while girls felt a similar attraction during the menstrual stage. Actually, they began to understand their sexual feelings, and who they are attracted to and an understanding of themselves.

According to Jang, Livesley, & Vernon (1996) and McCrae & Costa, 1994) people have an inborn, ontologically real, true self that can be known, and is, or should be the standard for making life choices and decisions. Referring to the data, some participants agreed that being gay is not a choice or something that occurs overnight, but it is something that they were born with. Coleman (2013) confirms that sexual orientation is likely predisposed before birth due to several biological processes such as genes and sex hormones exposure. Although processes and environmental interactions including experiences for development also play a part. Goldberg (1992) also insists that people do not become gay or straight because of certain childhood experiences and that there is no convincing evidence that all sexual orientation can be changed through treatment. Hunter (2006) also agrees that most medical experts believe that sexual orientation is not something that a person voluntarily chooses, instead, sexual orientation is just a natural part of what a person is.

Schlegel et al. (2012) equated the discovery metaphor with the essentialist view that “each person has an inherent something that makes him or her different from each other person” (p. 973). As Schlegel et al. (2013) stated: “The belief that the self is discovered is important to the perceived validity of the true self because it implies that an underlying true self exists and simply is waiting to be found” (p. 217). Although the participants discovered themselves, but they all became confused and did not understand what happened in their lives. For example, boys discovered that they do not have certain characteristics or features that characterize them as men like growing beards and also noticed their voices are too soft.



Since some girls had discovered themselves, it is clear that they ended up being engaged in relationships with boys for different reasons. For instance, some girls were not certain about their sexual feelings and others wanted to satisfy the community members who held negative attitudes about their sexual identities. One of the girl participants stated that she had engaged in relationship because she was scared of an abusive boy. The following utterances are extracted from participants who commented about their engagement in sexual relationships with boys. TEL stated:

*I also dated a boy because I was scared of him, since boys are abusive in rural areas. When we met, there was nothing happening between us like kissing, hugging and other things. I discovered that I don't have love for boys (DIN 4).*

ZL also added how she had become engaged in sexual relationship with a boy. She explained:

*So the boys on other hand were busy proposing me and I decided to date one of the boys to satisfy people in the society since they are talking too much about my personality. We dated but when we were two, I didn't feel well (DIN 3).*

Pertaining to the above responses, Savin-Williams (2005) insists that gay students may engage in sexual behaviour and have different sex partners before adopting a gay or lesbian identity. Maslow (1965) indicates that the ending lies and misconceptions a person tells publicly about him or herself is an important part of actually discovering who one is as a person and becoming self-actualized.

Although they have fully discovered themselves, the majority of participants experience difficulties to be accepted by the community members since they live in deep rural areas. Even their families do not give them support. According to the data, it is apparent that they live in communities where gay groups are not accepted or respected. Moreover, the negative talks by the community led them to be hesitant about their sexual identities; consequently, some of the participants had doubts about themselves thinking that demons had entered into their lives. ZL explains:

*When I continued dating my girl, people said I sleep my girlfriend with a snake (a snake used for bewitching) which means I'm bewitching and it had never happened. I asked myself what happened to me, what type of demon entered to me. I have never seen a girl dating another girl (DIN 3).*

With regard to the data, negative attitudes towards minority groups such as homosexuals, are likely to have profoundly negative effects on the people involved and this in turn can lead to depression, anxiety, suicide attempts, loss of self-esteem and fear (Traeen & Stigum, 2010). Smith (1993) says that lesbians and gays are the only oppressed group that was born and raised by our oppressors. Not all lesbian and gay participants who discovered themselves revealed their sexual status, consequently they decided to hide. They saw that it was the best option to keep their sexual orientation secret. Oetjen & Rothblum (2001) indicate that lesbians and gays, who hide their sexual orientation, isolate themselves from heterosexual communities. Furthermore, their isolation stems from fear, to reduced social support, loneliness and increased risk of depression. But one of the participants enjoyed the fact that she discovered herself and is proud of who she is. Mayock, Bryan & Kitching (2009) assert that the final stage of discovering is when an individual is able to live openly and comfortably with this aspect of identity.

#### **6.4. Coming out**

Coming out is a life long journey of understanding, acknowledging and sharing one's gender identity or sexual orientation with others (Ryan, Lagate & Weinstein, 2015). The participants have come out in various ways, for example, some to their families, college and in the community whereas others came out at college and in the community, not to their families. One of the participants (AG) who came out to their family said:

*At home they know. I mean the broad family like my grandfather, uncle and the different relatives also know that I'm a gay (DIN 8).*

TEL also added that it is known everywhere that she is gay. This is what she said:

*People know about my sexual identity, everywhere in Durban and other places (DIN 4).*

Higgins, Doyle, Downes & Murphy (2016) indicate that the level of support available to young people from family, friends and schools is a major determinant of how easy or difficult it is for them to navigate this process. The data shows that there are some participants who are completely accepted by their families and society at large. It appears that these participants revealed their sexual identities with ease to their parents and in the community although it was not clear to them at that time of discovery what the feelings meant to them. Perceptibly, parents comprehend that they are the only ones who have to provide a lot of support and devise

different ways to help their children continue to feel a sense of being cared for and accepted. It looks like their parents understand and accept them right from the beginning. Apparently they feel happy that their children chose to confide in them and are proud of their children for having the courage to tell them. On the other hand, it might happen that they thought that their feelings will change over time because they believed that they were young and whatever they were doing was just because of their stage of development.

For TEL to be popular she built her confidence to expose her sexual identity in her community. Coming out to others can be a liberating experience especially for those who are embraced by their communities and families. This notion is supported by the study conducted by Wall & Evans (1999) who investigated the coming out process of 20 lesbian, gay and bisexual students in the residence halls of Pennsylvania State University. The results highlight the important role played by the environment during the coming out process, where perceived support was more conducive to coming out.

The other participants have come out at college but not in their families. This is what one of the participants (NL) said to explain how she came out:

*Yes at school but at home, my parents and people in the community don't know (DIN 5).*

Gay students see universities as a space of intellectual freedom and believe these institutions are progressive and inclusive spaces unlike their communities back home (Nduna & Kiguwa, 2017). It seems that the participants feel scared or anxious to tell their parents about their sexual identities. In this instance, it might happen that they thought they would be given a hard time or may be thrown out for being different from their families. As a researcher, I understand that parents need time to deal with the news and they also need their own support to help them to understand and cope with their own difficult emotions and concerns during a child's coming out. Additionally, the students try to suppress their feelings to meet societal expectations to fit in and to avoid upsetting their parents.

Nduna & Kiguwa (2017) also confirms that young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex are more likely to hide their sexual orientation until they graduate from high school and leave home to study at university or college. Leaving their homes before coming out, these people hope their orientation would be less conspicuous in urban cities and people will be more tolerant. In this way they will be able to express their non-heteronormative identities as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender or intersex. It might happen that those who know their sexual identities are those who are close friends. It is difficult for students to expose

their sexual orientation because they avoid derogatory words and non-acceptance by heterosexuals. Other students try to avert stigma by avoiding the public spaces and classes thus why it becomes difficult for them to come out. Vare & Norton (1998) share same sentiment that lesbian and gay youth who are stigmatized may use various strategies to cope such as denying their gay identities, withdrawing from peers, developing health difficulties and abusing substances.

Gay students realizing their gender and sharing information with their family and friends are often a gradual process that can unfold over a series of years. Since they are scared to come to parents, they find college to be a safer space to be open about her sexuality. Gortmaker & Brown (2006) state that many lesbian and gay college students remain hiding their sexual identity while others take their step out on campus. They also explain that outness has been conceptualized as disclosure of sexual orientation to family members, friends and co-workers and coming out involves a complicated process of self-realization of one's sexuality, then disclosing one's realization to others.

### **6.5. Positive attitudes about the college**

Some participants found college as the first place to explore their sexual identities and develop their own identities away from their families and community in which they grew up. They enjoy going in all places without limitation and wearing what they like without being questioned by authorities. Some of them got support from lecturers. Participants also see equal treatment from both heterosexual and gay students. They feel pleased because they are not expelled at the college due to their sexual orientation. College campuses have played a vital role in creating change and promoting diversity. Milem, Umbach, & Liang (2004) found that greater exposure to diverse information in college plays an important role in increased diversity related activities outside the classroom. Having positive attitudes about homosexuals most likely implies that a person has knowledge and understanding about the lifestyles of gay and lesbian persons and furthermore, these positive attitudes lead to greater acceptance (Kim, D'Andrea, Gaughen & Sahu, 1998).

Active support to all students limits the number of incidents of bullying. This is in line with Department of Education recommendations, that bullying should be addressed at a school-level, codes of conduct and in Life Orientation curriculum. Some participants agree that some lecturers integrate topics related to gay students in the classroom with the purpose of educating

other students. Lesbian and gay students use that opportunity to express their view pertaining to the treatment that gay students receive in the college. Lecturers provide an inclusive curriculum so that all students can have an authentic understanding of the world around them. It is clear that some lecturers work tirelessly to educate all students about diversity because they do not encounter discrimination. In this case, lecturers ensure that there is peace and harmony among gay students. It appears that these lecturers offer students the best chance to achieve their potential and thrive.

## **6.6. College as home**

Few participants feel very pleased to be at college. It is understood that they feel at home because they do not experience exclusion or discrimination. They see it as a safe place to come out. Beemyn & Eliason (1996) describe a safe space as a place where bigotry and discrimination against gender and sexually diverse individuals are not tolerated. These contexts provide places where supporting and understanding the challenges of sexual minorities are important in redressing campus contexts that leave lesbian and gay students fearing for their safety, keeping their identities undisclosed, experiencing harassment and feeling that their institutions do not accommodate gender and sexual minorities.

The creation of such spaces provides a sense of communal belonging, safety and visibility for these students which could contribute to de-mystifying stereotypes (Beemyn & Eliason, 2016). Colleges in certain areas of nation have taken steps to create healthier and more accepting environments for LGBT students. It is apparent that colleges do so by updating their anti-bullying guidelines and creating gay straight students alliance. They found the college as a welcoming place where homophobic acts are discouraged.

One of the participants does not want other lesbian students to internalize negative things so that they could feel at home. This is what NL articulated:

*I don't want them to look the past and internalize negative things (DIN 5).*

In order to make the place healthier and conducive for lesbian and gay students, TEL suggested:

*There should be rules that will govern us, for example, if there is someone who abuses other students. The person should appear before disciplinary committee (DIN 4).*

In fact, this means that the participant wants to see all gay students enjoying freedom, be more comfortable and also not dwell in the past. They also believe that if there are rules that are used to govern the students, there will be no judgement and discrimination in the college. Transforming college campuses into environments in which LGBT students could reach their full capacity requires not just a reactive strategy. It is apparent that they found the college as a place of negotiating their sexual orientation. Clearly, their friends and other students have accepted them and they feel like they have a new family. It seems that people in the college love them for who they are.

Apparently, the LGBT groups, and the welcoming environment they create also play an important role in improving the college climate for all LGBT students whether they participate in such groups or not (Hughes, 2022) and they inspire many students to engage in activism both within and outside the confines of the college. The participants, were able for the first time, to really live without fear and associate with other students in the college. Unlike in high schools where the lesbian and gay students were not allowed to wear the clothes they wanted to wear and had no restrooms that they could use. College is a life affirming new world where these students can date who they want and dress as they please. So being away from home, college becomes a life line for many lesbian and gay students. Hames & Written Symposium (2007) agrees that students come to the college and university with various sexual identities and their environment offers them an opportunity to experiment more openly with these identities.

### **6.7. Gay students' attitudes towards sticking together**

Referring to the data presented in a focus group, two participants indicated that they stay with other gay students. The first participant (AG) confirmed the above statement:

*Yes there are times where we stick together during free lessons talking about our experiences (DIN 8).*

MG also added:

*It depends how you feel about yourself. We stick together sometimes (DIN 2).*

With regard to the data, the gay students stick together as a means of coping with adversity and also for social recreation. It is apparent that they only talk to other lesbian and gay students as

their friends who face similar issues. The reason is to find a way to deal with any peer pressure, harassment and bullying. According to Reid, (2003), minority groups of people need each other in order to cope and try to combat oppressions. In addition, the lack of gay night clubs, no gay support groups in the community and lack of recognition by the entire community, made it very difficult for an LGBT person living in this community to express their sexuality freely because of the oppressive structures and lack of support.

Some participants do not like to stay with other gay students because they believe that they are portraying negative attitudes towards each other. One participant (ZL) said:

*I don't hang around gay students because you see somebody who needs you and the one who does not accept or welcome you. There is an issue of dress code among us; you feel that the person undermines you because he or she wears expensive clothes (DIN 3).*

Some lesbians reported that lesbians discriminate against each other because of their class and status. They compete among themselves. It seems that before lesbian students associate with other students they have to consider their social status and the background and that is extremely worrying. In this case, some lesbians prefer to stay with heterosexual students to avoid conflict and they feel as if they do not have a place of belonging. It is explicit that those lesbians who hang around heterosexual students get support and also heterosexual students learn about lesbian and gay people. With regard to a dress code, lesbians who wear male clothing and gay men who wear female clothing are subject to bullying. Clothing choice is intensely personal for all students. They made it clear that bullying occurs among them. There are also reported instances of gay members of a group undermining each other.

One of the participants also reported that some of the lesbians are bossy. This is what LL explained:

*Lesbians are bossy, judgemental, self-egocentric and have pride. They force life and they wish life could go on their own way (DIN 6).*

SL also added:

*They think that they are real men whereas there are not men. They have tattoos. To me it seems as if there are required characteristics (DIN 9).*

According to the data, the “butch” faces criticism from other lesbian students. Some lesbians are not happy with the way they handle themselves if they are with them. Instead of keeping

close to “butch”, they decided to stay with heterosexual students. They do not care whether the heterosexuals question their sexuality; they prefer to stay with them than with those who are “butch”. It is perceptibly that they see the butch as a person who wants to dominate and also to be listened to when she or he is talking. Participants believe that there are no requirements to be gay. It is just a feeling.

### **6.8. Students’ attitudes towards gay students**

Attitudes, according to Rodgers (2016), can be formed through direct experience with the attitude object which can elicit either an instinctive, cognitive or behavioural response. Attitudes can influence people’s behaviour directly when attitudes unconsciously shape how people view and define a situation (Herek, 2004). Negative attitudes towards lesbians and gay men, therefore, do not always predict specific behaviours; in general, negative attitudes towards these minorities are likely to elicit more negative and discriminatory behaviours than those who have little or no sexual prejudice (Herek & Society for the Psychological study of Lesbian and Gay Issues, 1998). According to the data, it is apparent that gay students feel happy when they stay with female heterosexual students while lesbian students are happy when they hang around male heterosexual students. There is an element of negativity shown by heterosexual males towards gay students and negativity shown by female heterosexual towards lesbian students. This is what the gay students said about their treatment that they received from heterosexual males:

MG explains:

*The straight students do not like me more especially the male students. There are those who speak with me as friends and others don’t like to speak with me, maybe they are scared that they would be judged by others (DIN 2).*

AG echoed:

*When it comes to heterosexual guys, they always say negative words calling me “Isitabane” and others do understand that I’m a gay (DIN 8).*

VG added:

*When I’m passing the heterosexual guys they call me and say “Wow! Woza la ngikushele” (come here so that I would propose you) (DIN 7).*



Lesbian and gay students typically face higher rates of harassment, assault and intimidation than heterosexual students (Herek & Society for the Psychological study of Lesbian and Gay Issues, 1998). As a researcher, I observed that there is a lack of knowledge, especially the heterosexual students regarding sexual orientation. Instead of getting deeper information they tend to be judgemental. Gay students' freedom is suppressed by negative words made by heterosexual male students. In this instance, they view gay students as sexual objects, which means they have to agree.

A study by the Page (2018) indicates that outside home, colleges are the primary vehicles for educating, socializing and providing services to young people but sometimes can be difficult environments for students regardless of their sexual orientation on gender identity. On the other side, they are often especially unwelcoming for LGBT youth. In addition there is a lack of policies and practices that affirms and support LGBT youth and a failure to implement protections that do exist. Regarding the data, the gay students do not find peace when they enter the college gate because some heterosexual students make fun and joke about them. To call them "Isitabane" shows that heterosexual students do that purposefully and there is an element of bullying that prevails if they do not respond to their call.

Rural students also contribute to the discrimination of gay students at the college because they are socialised in this particular way. They do not know that there are different types of human categories. It might happen that they have been taught that to be gay is a sin, to be possessed by a demon and is madness unlike with those who had grown up in a town. Wells & Loiusé (2006) also found homophobia to be especially prevalent in black communities because of the fact that many black South Africans view homosexuality as "un-African" and as a Western import, which results in harsher judgments by their own communities. Page (2018) reveals that the colleges are reluctant to record incidents of bullying against LGBT to avoid negative image of high bullying figures and this leads to a lack of data which hamper efforts to more effectively tackle homophobic bullying.

With regard to heterosexual friends who distance themselves from homosexual friends, it appears that those who do not want to speak with them are scared that they would be taken as if they are attracted to gay students. That is why they decided to distance themselves from their friends after they discovered that they are gay. Their friends become shy to go with them and they end up acting violently, since they feel unsafe by being labelled when they are with their gay friends. AG, a gay student, assumed that there is temptation among his friends because he

says there is about 20% of them who are gay. Arndt & Bruin (2006) also agree that male students held more negative attitudes to both lesbian and gay students than did female students. Contrary, a study conducted in the Western Cape by Mwaba (2009) found no significant differences in male and female attitudes towards homosexuality.

Male heterosexual students do accept lesbian students. Lesbian students feel comfortable if they hang around with boys because they feel welcomed. It is clear that heterosexual boys use that as an opportunity to benefit, for instance, when they want cigarettes and girls. They know the appropriate place to get cigarettes if they do not have any. As a researcher, I observe a fake relationship that has been established by the boys in order to earn something. D'Augelli (1992) argues that a positive reaction could mean an accepting and supporting relationship which may enhance or foster her sexual identity by not putting any restrictions, constraints, thoughts or behaviours. What is problematic is the lesbians engage with female heterosexual students. It appears that female heterosexual students are stereotyped and they have negative attitudes towards lesbians.

According to the data, heterosexual girls do not trust lesbians. By excusing lesbians when they bath, it indicates an element of discrimination. It is explicit that they became hesitant about their sexual identity and do not trust them at all. They assume they would sexually harass them while they were bathing. Aleksandrs (2019) indicates that many LGBT youth who are questioned about their identity feel like they have to hide who they are to avoid being rejected. It is explicit that female heterosexuals do not comprehend that a female can date other females. Nduna & Kiguwa (2017) confirmed that their dormitories are hostile with heterosexual students, often violently attacking, ridiculing and forcing them out of residences.

Seemingly, lesbians are undermined by their best friends. For instance, they call boys to propose their lesbian friends. This means that the coming out has a negative impact as well and is considered a very difficult process due to the potential risks of harassment, victimization and increase in suicide (D'Augelli, 2003). In fact, they believe that when time goes on, the gay students will change and maybe they regard this as a stage. They do not recognize that lesbians are created by God and they are not abnormal. It is clear that they do not comprehend what is going on with lesbian and gay students. Consequently, the heterosexual students ended up saying they do not foresee themselves dating lesbian students because they are changing their sexual identity. A study conducted by Henderson (2010) found that homophobia is experienced at school, home and in the community and this continues to tertiary educational level where

they are insulted by others for not conforming to gender norms. Gortmaker & Brown (2006) also added that the peer hostility toward lesbian and gay students may prevent students from disclosing their sexual identity.

On the side of lesbian and gay students, it appears that life is not normal as we think but they have issues among themselves. Although they support each other on difficult situations, they become rude and bossy. They want to act as real man if they are in real relationship. It is evident that there is no trust among each other and they tend to judge each other. They also understand that there are two categories of sexual orientation under gay community that is lesbian and gay. So if the lesbian hangs around with boys, they conclude that she sleeps with boys. It is clear that some lesbians do not like bisexuals. They assume that a person who lives that life is faking her sexual orientation. This becomes an insult to the people who live this type of life, the bisexuals. In most cases, the peer pressure to be heterosexual, and fear about identifying as lesbian or bisexual, make the female students postpone embracing a sexual identity until they leave the academy (Whitehead & Baker, 2012). Whitehead & Baker (2012) found that it is not unreasonable for these girls to be secretive about their sexual preferences and identities because of their fear of being attacked, raped or beaten up. It seems that lesbian students do not understand that it is their sexual orientation that makes them feel and accommodate both genders. The LGBT students suffer constant models of marginalization, exclusion and isolation that make the school environment hostile. Most LGBT students report being regularly disheartened from starting relationship, lacking adequate resources that are associated with their challenges and hearing slurs now and then which make their school life considerably harsh (Cochran, Bandeira & Mays, 2013).

Moreover, there is also much interpersonal conflict within the gay community. Dress code becomes an issue. Healey (2014) mentioned that society treats non-heterosexual people differently, some of them end up trying to look different from everyone else who includes their dress code, hairstyle and sense of fashion. This was because they had been made to believe that they did not belong in the community and by so doing, they are proving that they have accepted the exclusion. With regard to the data, there are those who believe that to be a gay, you need to be identifiable by clothes. If the gay students are in clothing in brands that are labelled or considered as 'for poor people', those lesbian and gay students are undermined by other lesbian and gay students. In this regard, lesbian and gay students do not support each other.

Privacy is another issue for lesbian and gay students. Richardson (2011) defines privacy as the desire by each of us for physical space where we can be free of interpretation, intrusion, embarrassment or accountability and attempt to control the time and manner of disclosures of personal information about ourselves. Actually, lesbian and gay students are scared that they could be harassed by heterosexual male students. In this instance, it seems there is no trust because both heterosexual students and gay students do not feel comfortable if one of them is in the toilet.

### **6.9. Treatment of gay students by lecturers**

There are students who feel welcomed by the lecturers at the college. Woods & Unitec (2013) states that tertiary students need to feel safe from harm, to feel emotionally respected by their peers and academic staff in order to interact fully and securely and to engage with a tertiary learning environment. It might happen that they meet those lecturers who have an understanding about gay students' sexual orientation. Truly, the positive attitude displays by lecturers make the gay students feel safe at the college. A study conducted by Vincent & Minyuki (2017) found that some participants report experiences of comfort, security and freedom to be themselves for the first time in their lives, while others experience discomfort, alienation, ostracism and non-belonging. In addition, if the lesbian and gay students do not hang around with lecturers or distance themselves they do not get negative comments from lecturers. It appears that they trust lecturers because they do not have queries about them. What assists them, is that they do what the lecturers have instructed them to do. In all, some lecturers do respect the existence of gay students. Kortegast & Van de Toorn (2018) state that the supportive environment at their institution allows lesbian and gay students to feel comfortable.

Although there are some lesbian and gay students who feel welcomed, but there are those who feel neglected. According to Francis & Le Roux, (2011) and Lees (2017) lecturers and teachers are social agents, bearing the mark of culture, religion, sexuality and gender. Evidently in the data, some lecturers do not welcome gay students as they are in the college. It is explicit that they do not understand that one of their core duties is to accommodate diversity, not to discriminate students. The lesbian and gay students have to find ways to navigate from these spaces of abuse. Lecturers are the ones who supposed to give support and act as parents to all students regardless of their sexual orientation or gender. The lesbian and gay students found themselves gloomy when they are asked questions related to their sexual orientation. Vincent

& Minyuki (2017) added that campus can be difficult environments for students who do not identify as heterosexual and who may be recognized, judged and ostracized by peers and the staff. The responses that the lecturers make about lesbian and gay students make them lose hope and trust in lecturers and also feel small, weak and not protected. This is what VG said in an individual interview:

*Sometimes when I report if I'm being abused by heterosexual student maybe saying negative words to me, some lecturers say I must act like a man which means I must fight back. I feel not protected because I don't have that energy (DIN 7).*

Hall & ECU (2010) explains that homophobic discrimination occurs through ignorance, a lack of understanding about the issues and barriers LGBT students face and some homophobic behaviour goes unchallenged. The data shows that some lecturers do not act responsibly when they receive complaints from lesbian and gay students at the college. Instead of attending their cases, some lecturers ignore them. The lesbian and gay students are also not represented due to anti-gay campaign by heterosexuals. NL explained:

*If it might happen that students chose a lesbian and heterosexual girl, the lecturers say the class could not be led by two girls. One of us must be replaced by a male although they see lesbian is behaving like a male. We feel like we are males (DIN 5).*

It is clear that there are no accommodative rules or policy they follow when they elect. There is an element of discrimination. Discrimination involves active negative behaviour towards that group, denying individuals or groups' equality of treatment and biased behaviour towards that group, which includes actions that directly harm or disadvantage them while favouring one's own group (Lestoalo, 2016). Woods & Unitec (2013) affirms that gay students experience a lack of visibility and experience conflict in the classrooms related to their sexual identity. This is not in line with Department of Education which identifies social transformation, human rights and equality as important principles in education transformation (Lees, 2017). As a researcher, I observed the repudiation of homosexuality and the constitution of heterosexuality as the norm during lessons by some lecturers. It appears that some of the lecturers do not understand that lesbian and gay students do not make themselves be gay; it is how they feel about themselves.

### **6.10. Family attitudes towards gay students**

Some lesbian and gay students are accepted in their families and others are not. There are those lesbian and gay students who came out to their parents but are not accepted and those that are. Some receive full support and others do not. Although they came out, they did not reveal their sexual status to everybody. Reactions, whether positive or negative to coming out may have long lasting impacts on lesbian and gay person's well-being, so the decision to conceal or to come out tends to be a stressful one (Ryan, Legate & Weinstein, 2015). Some individuals receive positive feedback from family and friends when they come out, unfortunately, some do not and are rejected by family and friends (D'Augelli, 2003). For the latter reason, many lesbian and gay students choose to conceal their identities from others.

It is clear that some parents show a great acceptance to their children from the onset. This happens when a parent has noticed something fishy about their children. For instance, when a boy exhibits female characteristics and a girl portrays male characteristics. Referring to the data, the parents did not abandon their children but gave them support. This means there is a close connection between the children and their parents, more especially their mother figure. Families and caregivers have to build an alliance to support children who come out (Siwela, Mutshaeni & Sikhwari, 2018).

Parental acceptance consists of parental continued affirmations and expressions of warmth and affection toward their lesbian or gay child, after the child has informed them about their sexuality (Freedman, 2008). It is apparent that some parents have knowledge about the diversity of sexuality as coexisting with diversity in gender. Families with accepting attitudes may avoid young lesbian and gay students' recourse to substance abuse (Freedman, 2008). In this case, lesbian and gay students' lives becomes easier for them since they get full support.

So those lesbian and gay students who do not receive secure attachment may have a difficult time in navigating and coping with challenges if their parents are inaccessible and unresponsive. It is true that sometimes gay students feel insecure in their early stages of discovery when their fathers as parent figures have some issues with their sexual identities. Their life becomes difficult more especially when their fathers tried to avoid them, sometimes they do not want to go out with them in public, feeling ashamed to be stigmatized by the public. Marmo (2017) affirms that family reactions to their lesbian and gay adolescents range from highly rejecting to highly accepting. This notion is also supported by AG when he became excited when his father started to accept, love and understand that he is a boy and a girl to him.

In fact, there are lesbian and gay students who came out but whose parents did not accept them as they are, and others fail to disclose their sexual orientation. To those who disclose their sexual identities, it is evident that their parents became disgusted when they were informed by their children about their sexual orientation. TL explicated:

*My parents do not understand my sexual identity. They think I joke when I say I have feeling of the same gender. They disapprove it. As a result, they do not buy me clothes; I have to find my own way if I need clothes (DIN 1).*

As a researcher, I assume that parents do not get a thorough explanation about the idea of being gay. It is apparent that parents do not care about them as long their children act like men. Coming out to family members is often considered one of the most difficult processes due to their potential loss of support and possible homelessness (Durso & Gates, 2012). This indicates an element of abandonment. TL became the victim since her parents denied her rights to get what she is compulsory to get as a girl. Lesbians feel deserted by their families when they do not get support from their families. This exhibits that some families hate lesbian and gay community. By allocating boys' duties to TL, it is obvious that it was a punishment. This is what TL had said:

*When I arrived at home I apologized to my parents that I will never make myself a man (lesbian) in their house. They give me the boys' duties like chopping the woods, cleaning the yard, and fixing fencing (DIN 1).*

In fact, her parents wanted to maintain the gender belief system that exists in the community. Kite & Deaux (1987) defines gender belief system as a set of beliefs and opinions about males and females and about purported qualities of being male and female. This belief system includes factors such as stereotypes about men and women, attitudes towards appropriate roles for women's and men's perceptions of those who presumably violate the traditional pattern of gender roles, including lesbians and gays. So when she made an apology after she struggled, it is clear that she did that in order to be accepted at her home. Intentionally, she wanted to have shelter. In this way, lesbians end up living fake lives by pretending as if they have changed or seemed as if they were passing the stage. Lesbians only feel pleased if they have people in their extended families that understand and give support to them. They end up trusting the extended family members rather than real parents.

When the lesbian and gay students reveal their sexual identities they thought that their parents are the ones they could give support. They thought they could be accepted with ease by their

parents but that was not the case. Fisher & Komosa-Hawkins (2013) assert that most families lack understanding of normative development of sexual orientation and gender identity in children and adolescents. These families talk about this in a disparaging way. Referring to the data, other lesbians did not reveal their sexual identities and they remain closeted. They were scared that their parents might not accept them. In fact, they understand that their parents are living in deep rural areas and they have firm societal rules where they understand two genders, a girl or a boy. Parents take this as a failure to raise their children well in an accepted or expected way. It is evident that some parents are confused and do not understand how their children become lesbian because they had been born either as girls or boys.

Parents still believe in forced marriage. LL reflected on how she got married:

*I was forced to marry someone in my village because of societal customs. My mother noticed when I divorced with my husband that there is something fishy in my life (DIN 6).*

Toy-Cronin (2010) defines forced marriage as occurring where one or both parties are coerced into a marriage against their will and under duress. Duress includes either physical and/or emotional pressure. It is very different from arranged marriage, where both parties give their full and free consent to the marriage. The tradition of arranged marriages has operated successfully within many communities and many countries for a long time (Toy-Cronin, 2006). It is explicit that parents do not check how their daughters feel about marriage. Lesbians experience emotional pressure to get married by being made to feel their sexual identities or gender brings shame in the family. Forced marriage is against their will and without their permission. It is an abuse of human rights and a form of domestic violence, sometimes it can be also identified as child abuse. Families who are conflicted about their children's gay orientation believe that the best way to help their children survive and thrive in the world is to help them fit in with their heterosexual peers (Ryan, Huebner, Diaz & Sanchez, 2009). They elaborated that when these families block access to their child's gay friends or LGBT resources, they act out of care and concern. The lack of communication between parents and gay children increases family conflict. According to the data, LL became the victim because she had to live the opposite life. To her, it was a matter of choosing family or her sexuality. This action forces many lesbians to remain closeted. Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez (2010) concur that lesbian and gay students experience massive rejection and verbal harassment. To avoid such threats, violence and degradation from the community or family and, they are forced to suppress their lesbian and gay's inclination by involving themselves in heterosexual relationships.



Television also plays a vital role in educating people or deteriorates the situation in the family. LL explained:

*I notice when we are watching the movies or drama if there is a gay character, I hear their comments.....sometimes they shut the TV or change to another channel. So I decided not to tell anyone because of their attitude. They will only know if I have my own place where I would live my own life. They are stereotyped (DIN 6).*

The data suggests that some parents hate the gay community. Consequently, LL assumes that her life would be as she wishes if she might have her own place. This means she wants to live her own life and to forget about people who are stereotyping her.

### **6.11. Community attitudes towards lesbian and gay students**

The gay students in their communities receive negative attitudes which leaves them in a dilemma. It seems that they do not enjoy their rights. Although it is permitted by the constitution but it becomes difficult for the parents to accept it. For instance, when LL was watching television “Daily Thetha”, the parents did not feel comfortable when they see that the show is about gays and lesbians. This what the LL said:

*I remember the day when we were watching the TV shows. One of the shows it was “Daily Thetha”. Most of the prominent gays and lesbian were there. My parents said I must switch off that channel. They don’t want to listen on it and they don’t want hear the word “Izitabane” (DIN 6).*

Instead of listening and learning, the parents instructed their daughter to change the channel which means they have not yet internalized the notion that there is a gay community. The data suggests that other parents feel upset, disappointed or unable to accept their daughters’ sexual orientation at first. Sadly, they react with anger, hostility and rejection. Epstein’s research (1994) articulates that such parental reactions put great stress on young lesbians, especially if they are still dependent in one way or another on their families.

The attitudes towards gay students in their communities are robustly related to beliefs about gender norms. TL explained:

*The treatment is negative because you are expected as female to get a man that will marry you. If you are male you are also expected to get a lady that you will marry (DIN 1).*

It is apparent that lesbians receive bad treatment from the community members because they expect them to find males that will marry them. So it becomes a form of suppression to them because the community expects marriage. Luirink (2000) states that there are various forms of punishment and victimization that homosexuals endure as a result of their families' negative attitudes and behaviour towards them and adds that such negative attitudes can cause family members to turn against each other, and often result in feelings of betrayal, rejection and shame on the part of gays and lesbians. If lesbians do not comply it would appear or seem as if they violate the gender norms. She added:

*They force girls to marry as results some of the girls who don't like to be married commit suicide (DIN 1).*

According to TL's perspective, it is not right to force a girl to marry a male because the community members want to benefit from the customs. They do not consider that lesbians may sometimes commit suicide if they are gay. Lesbians often get married because of pressure from parents' relatives and communities. Community members do not consider how girls feel about the whole situation. It seems that the community members do not want to listen even if they try to explain their sexual orientation because they believe they were born as girls and they would do all girls chores, and later be married. According to Adams, Blieszner & de Vries (2000) homophobia directed at lesbians is fixed in the deep religious and moral belief that women show by having children. The prevailing assumption is that to be a lesbian is unnatural because lesbians cannot participate in childbearing.

Lesbians feel excluded in cultural activities that are practiced in their rural communities. TL explicated:

*In my community there are cultural activities that are done like virginity testing, I don't go there because I don't feel comfortable. If males are playing sticks, a game of fighting with sticks to show who is a real man, I don't belong to them (DIN 1).*

Lesbians feel uncomfortable when they have to attend cultural activities like virginity testing. Virginity testing still poses more harm than good regardless of whether the girls or young women pass or fail the test. If a lesbian has to participate in the practices it cause emotional distress and generally, she becomes psychologically affected and failing a virginity test leads to enhanced stigmatisation, mocking and humiliation by the community members. In this regard, lesbians find themselves having no place to belong and there is no one who supports them. Adams, Blieszner & de Vries (2000) affirmed that the collusion on the part of

homosexuals in many societies further hinders the identification and elimination of oppression, but instead perpetuates the status quo of the dominance of heterosexuality. Collision serves to support and reinforce those beliefs and attitudes and encourage other homosexuals to behave in a way that is consistent with feeling of powerlessness, being inadequate and accepting a subordinate status in the community and society.

Lesbians are harassed by boys in their communities and also suffer lot of stigma if the lesbian has come out. It seems that the boys do not respect and value the lesbians in their communities. ZL illustrated in the data:

*The boys always tell me that this is wrong what I am doing. I just keep quiet to avoid conflict even if they call me with words. I don't want to hang around boys because I know that I am a girl anything may happen, the boys may rape me. In my community homosexuality is regarded as witch (DIN 3).*

Ramchunder (2012) outlines that boys' harassment is about achieving a certain status among their peers whereas for girls it is a matter of further domination by boys and boys see girls as less praiseworthy. It is clear that the boys always think that if they might sleep with the lesbians, their mind will change after they have agreed to have sexual intercourse. Due the problems she faces day by day, ZL decided not to hang around with boys to avoid conflict and possible rape since they always show interest to her. In these findings, it appears that lesbians are no longer living in harmony and peace in their spaces and they are emotionally disturbed by violent activities that happen to them. It seems that the community is not happy about the gay group as the community members call her a witch. Consequently, in these communities, the gay students do not get support from their families.

The gay students in their communities are endeavouring to convince the people about the existence of gay community. TEL explained:

*To make our community to understand, we created a drama titled "Guys versus Lesbians". We played it in the local halls and also wrote a book that has same title. Then we sold it to different communities. There are those who heard us and those who ignore our message (DIN 4).*

It is explicit that lesbian and gay students' intention is to educate the communities about gay communities. But they understand that there are those who might not take it into consideration. As a researcher, I refer to this activity of transforming people as transformative pedagogy. Transformative pedagogy has been defined as an educational philosophy that aims to teach society about sociocultural issues, to raise awareness of social ills through high levels of

reflection which has a focus on equity and diversity (Dyson, 2014; Lyle, 2019). Ngidi and Dlamini (2017) have also shown the value of using film and transformative pedagogy to address homophobia and destabilizing heteronormativity at Kwa-Zulu Natal Vocational College. Film and drama can provide a social message by means of a visual discourse that engaged and subverted narrow constructions of gender through documenting the experiences of queer people (Tyali, 2014).

The lesbian and gay people existed long ago. LL clarified:

*It is true that gays and lesbians were there long ago. For example, in my community there was a grandfather who was wearing female's clothes but he was not accepted in the community. Since he was not welcomed as a gay person in the village, he ended up being disappeared. There is no one who knows where he is. People are suspecting that he had died because he disappeared in the community long ago. Those who are trying to exhibit themselves in the community are treated badly (DIN 6).*

According to the data, it is apparent that people who possessed characteristics of being a gay in the community were not accepted. This means that they had to find their own way to survive which led him to disappear in the long run. If the community could have accepted that grandfather, he might not have left the village and disappeared. It seems that community members just need time to adjust to the news.

In addition, rural people still exhibit negative attitudes towards lesbian and gay students. AG clarifies:

*If I am in town meeting rural people, you find them laughing because they do not understand what is happening in my life (DIN 8).*

According to the data, it is clear that the lesbian and gay students do not feel comfortable because there are people from rural areas who still possess negative attitudes towards them, more especially when they meet them in town. It appears that they are rejected and neglected by the community members, yet sadly, they are part of the entire society. Adams, Blieszner & de Vries (2000) explains that empowerment of targeted groups is understandably scarce. Wherein members of the social group named and rendered subordinate, inferior, deviant and powerless. They refuse to accept the existing ideology of affirming another group's dominant status and accepting their own targeted and subordinate status and take action to redistribute social power equitably. As a researcher, I think these mentalities and attitudes are informed by

hegemonic beliefs which shape every human relationship and everyday practices that determine people's destinies (Leskosek & Sirec, 2009).

#### **6.12. Gay students as victims of sexual abuse**

Lesbian and gay students become the victims of sexual abuse. Hill & Kearn (2011) define sexual abuse as an unwelcomed conduct of a sexual nature which includes, for example, unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favours or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. De Wet & Van Wyk (2021) underscores sexual abuse as a common form of gender-based violence that ranges from sexual harassment, forcible insertion of objects into another's genital openings, sexual intercourse without consent, child defilement and forced prostitution. Among these forms of sexual abuse, rape is most prevalent. Some lesbians entered in relationships with boys because they do not know what happen in their lives. Others entered in relationships hesitantly so that they could heal the demon. ZL explained:

*I tried to date a boy since I had thought that there was a demon entered to me. That boy was a brother of my friend (girl)..... He caught me and defeated me with power. He pushed me into the bed. He raped me. I allowed to rape so that he could release me before the closing time..... I had no feeling and I became pregnant. I thought to kill myself (DIN 3).*

The data revealed that the victim (ZL) ended being raped by a person whom she trusted a lot and thought that he loves her. The rape caused the victim to lose hope when she found out she was pregnant as a result, she decided to commit suicide by poisoning herself. Ramchunder (2012) explains that the boys' sexual harassment is about achieving a certain status among their peers whereas for girls it is a matter of further domination by boys and boys see girls as less adept and praiseworthy. Girl's subordinated status with regard to boys and men is a critical factor influencing sexual abuse (Jewkes, 2014). Boys tend to force girls to have sex because boys believe that girls are sex objects and at any time should agree to sex if the men so desire. Jewkes (2014) state that boys see sex as their right and forced sex is legitimate. Girls found it difficult to escape from violent relationships because of the status attached to being in relationships and fear of reprisals.

Gay students are also vulnerable to sexual abuse. VG clarified:

*My friend is a perfect gay. One day he went to the nearest tuck-shop to buy some food items where he found two guys who wanted to rape him. It was dark around 7 O'clock. When he went back to his room, he was blocked by these guys saying he must allow them to taste what he is used to give his boyfriend.....they wanted sex. He denied.....the two boys stabbed him at his buttocks and thighs.....bleeding to die. He was taken to hospital. After he was discharged he said he was going to quit the school because he doesn't enjoy being at school. He did not see the guys. He was found lying on the ground by his roommates. A case was opened but no one arrested (DIN 7).*

In fact, the perpetrators use any opportunity to rape the victims, more especially when the victims are vulnerable and will not be able to defend and protect themselves. It is noticeable that it is not only the girls or lesbian people that are being raped or vulnerable. Gay male rape is also found though not as frequently as lesbian rape (Kiguwa & Nduna, 2017). This could be due to the fact that gay men are very unlikely to report abuse for fear of re-victimization by the police (Kiguwa & Nduna, 2017). According to the data, it is explicit that the perpetrators were interested in the victim but they failed to impress the victim in terms of love, instead they resorted to use force. The victims perceive this as violent attempt to oppress those who are challenging social norms around gender and sexuality (Fhumulani & Mukwevho, 2018). The victim experienced trauma and fear because a gay person was stabbed to death by the perpetrators. In fact, he did not enjoy being in the college since the perpetrators were not found and arrested. Basile, Black, Breiding, Smith, Walters, Merrick, Chen, Stevens & National Center of Injury Prevention Control (2011) assert that sexual abuse in South Africa and in around the world has been seen a usual phenomenon but in reality it is a serious crime and infringement of human rights and dignity. This phenomenon is common in most societies, schools, institutions and different social groups around the world.

Although one of the participants was raped, she still developed a high self-esteem. She is now proud of herself and proud to be a lesbian. In a study conducted by the Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW), Judge & Nel (2008) 46 black lesbians were interviewed and they found that 41% had been raped, 9% were survivors of attempted rape, and 37% were verbally abused, mostly by perpetrators known to them. Bekele & Universiteit Utrecht (2012) also elaborates that young women with low self-esteem are more likely to be vulnerable to male behavior than those who feel better about themselves. It is apparent that the perpetrators had intentions to rape the victims. The victims became defenseless because of loneliness in the house. If the college has an accommodation inside the premises, the victims could not have

been raped. Some of the victims have been raped the whole night and they did not talk about these issues to their parents and lecturers. Instead they decided to keep these problems to themselves.

Some lesbian students are being raped by their trusted people. Dintwe & Masilo (2019) concurs that perpetrators of sexual violence are men of all age who are known or unknown to the child. SL stated:

*My friend was once sexually abused by her stepfather. She told me because she trusts me as her friend. Her stepfather wanted to sleep with her. She fought and fought. They were going to Pietermaritzburg. She was sitting on the passenger seat; her brother was at back seat in a private car. My friend takes her real stepfather as her father. So the stepfather saw her as a pretty, young and fresh. The stepfather robbed her that she would teach her how to drive a car. On their way to PMB, he called my friend to sit on him while he was driving. Her stepfather brushed her thighs. When she arrived at home she told her mother what happened but her mother did not believe that. She did not speak to my friend for almost one week (DIN 9).*

Drawing from the data, it is clear that her stepfather used resources he had to seduce and bribe the victim so that he could sleep with her. Abusers may use tactics based on sexual orientation or gender history, such as outing someone as lesbian and gay to control them (Ard & Makadon, 2011). If the victim did not fight, she would have been raped by the perpetrator. Truly, the victim took the perpetrator as a real father but her stepfather did not see that, he only saw a young and fresh girl. Although she reported the matter to her mother, her mother did not take it seriously instead she decided not to speak to her daughter for almost a week. She could not believe that her intimate partner could do that. The abuser may seek to isolate the victim who may contribute to fears of being alone (Donovan, 2001). It has been noted that girls who identify as lesbians experience higher rates of sexual abuse, possibly due to their sexual orientation and their gender (Fhumulani & Mukwevho, 2018). Sexual abuse can be used as a weapon against people who identify as or are thought to be LGBT. Regarding the above case, Kiguwa & Nduna (2017) explored central issues faced by the LGBT people in urban communities around Johannesburg. They found that many lesbian and bisexual women reported rape, or attempted rape, as well as gang rape which were most committed by people known to them. The intention of the perpetrators were to show her that she is a girl, not a boy.

### 6.13. Gay students as victim of verbal abuse

Verbal abuse is a type of psychological or mental abuse that involves the use of oral language, gestured language, and written language directed to a victim (Sigauke, 2015). Verbal abuse can include the act of harassing, labelling, insulting, scolding, rebuking, excessive yelling towards as individual (Rosenthal, Byerly, Taylor & Martinovich, 2018). It can include the use of derogatory terms, delivery of statements intended to frighten, humiliate, denigrate or belittle a person (Lawson-Ross, Waehler & University of Akron, 2013).

Lesbian and gay students sometimes face hostility at their schools because teachers do not understand their sexual orientation. Since the lesbian and gay students are still struggling to cope, teachers worsen the situation by articulating negative words. Attacks on gay students may take many forms including verbal, physical and indirect abuse (Hunter & Woest, 2006). Referring to the data from ZL and TL's stories, participants find themselves excluded since they felt that they were treated differently. They develop anger since they are treated unkindly and embarrassed in front of the class.

Participants also felt hurt when they were being labeled by their teachers. This suggests that some teachers hate the gay community. The teachers are regarded as the second parent who understands the diversity at school. Instead of getting support, they were intimidated in front of students. This made one of the participants decide to commit suicide because she felt embarrassed and humiliated. They suffered emotionally, withdrew and felt lonely. Gay students attempt to become invisible to others by using coping mechanisms which are designed to minimize chances of victimization (Okanlawon, 2017).

In fact, some teachers insult lesbian and gay students when the incidents happened. ZL confirmed:

*Teachers repeatedly said negative words like “Uyalesaba uswazi kodwa uyakwazi ukuvula amathanga” (you scare the corporal punishment but you do sex with boys). I asked myself why the teachers didn’t ask me what happened before I had baby (DIN 3).*

This is IsiZulu and it means that she is scared to be beaten by a stick but she is able to sleep with boys. The treatment the lesbian and gay students receive shows insult and discrimination instead of receiving necessary support. Teachers are trusted people but participants became dismayed when teachers insult them.



Gay students see their personality as being damaged by the words the heterosexual people articulate day by day to them. Subsequently, they have internalized negative stereotypes and developed a severe degree of low self-esteem and confidence. They feel insecure because they feel as if they are not human beings. Research indicates that sexual minorities who continue to go through stressful, growth enhancing process may increase their ability to handle minority stress (Bowleg, Brooks & Ritz, 2008). Gay students feel ostracized by the community and see suicide as the best option to curb exclusion. Although AG is labeled in the community but AG feels happy when he dresses like a girl. He knows he has to explain his sexual orientation. Furthermore, he enjoys to be unknown to the public, whether he is a girl or a boy. It is clear that AG gets into trouble when heterosexual males begin to be tempted not knowing that he is a boy. Instead of excusing themselves, they tend to beat him.

On the other hand, lesbian and gay students are being bullied and abused by other students. The data shows clearly that gay students are disrespected by the heterosexual students because they are subject to insults every day. This is confirmed by Gortmaker & Brown (2006) that lesbian and gay students face chilly environments. Including experiences of discrimination along with the feelings of fear and face more harassment, assault and intimidation than do heterosexual students. Heterosexual students and other people believe that if a lesbian student can sleep with heterosexual guy, she will change indefinitely. It is apparent that boys propose them intentionally. So they try them so that they could be tempted and also make them to believe that their sexual orientation is not their true identity or gender. There is a misguided belief that lesbians view themselves as men (Kiguwa & Nduna, 2017).

#### **6.14. Gay students' frequency of verbal abuse**

There are lesbian and gay students who experience verbal abuse and those who do not. This is confirmed by LL in her explanation:

*No abuse I experience at the college, maybe I don't experience because I am a 'fem' (DIN 6).*

The data shows that lesbian students who are recognized as “fem” do not experience abuse because of their personality. It is clear that they only experience verbal abuse if the boys know their status. Aleksandrs (2019) states that lesbian youth hide so that she does not get hurt by her fellow students who believe that being gay is wrong or sinful.

The majority of lesbian and gay students reported that they experience verbal abuse daily or weekly. TL reported:

*Abuse happens often more especially when the heterosexual males see me on the way to school or after school. They propose me even if they notice my appearance. I don't know why they propose me because my looks tell that I am a lesbian. Their intention is to harass me (DIN 1).*

MG added:

*I only experience an abuse once a week (DIN 2).*

AG echoed:

*I can say it happens on daily basis because other people don't understand that they abuse me mentally (DIN 8).*

Heterosexual students undermine the gay community and end up being violent to lesbian and gay students if they inform them about their sexual orientation. In fact, they see gay identity as problematic and disordered. They believe that gay mentality has to be changed. Furthermore, the heterosexual students believe that it is a direct or indirect attack on a male right to access woman (Naidu & Mutumbara, 2017). Buijs, Duyvendak & Hekma (2008) added that community members, boys and young men, and in some instances related to hyper-masculinity, with perpetrators using victims' non-conformity to traditional gender roles as justification for their own violent behaviour, which may in turn (and perversely) reinforce their hyper-masculine status among peers. Long (1996) insisted that negative contact that the individual has with homosexuals reinforces the negative attitudes that the individual experiences.

Due to negative attacks by heterosexual students, lesbian and gay students are now scared to meet in public because they are afraid to receive insults and to be excluded in the community. Homophobic individuals feel that homosexuals are disgusting. Often homosexuals are victimized (verbally and physically) because of such attitudes by people who are concerned about their safety. Surveys done in the United States show that homosexuals are more likely to be victims of hate crimes than any other minority group (Nelson & Krieger, 1997). Victimization enables the individual to put his or her negative attitude into action. Lesbian and gay students feel humiliated and ridiculed. It seems that people have little knowledge about abuse. To substantiate, they do not understand whatever they say hurts lesbian and gay students. Lesbian and gay students are worried about these negative attitudes portrayed by heterosexual people. This notion is also articulated by Okanlawon (2017) that gay students internalize

negative stereotypes and develop severe degrees of low self-esteem. Some of the immediate psychological effects are loneliness, insecurity, feelings of humiliation, loss of self-esteem, fear of going to school, insomnia and mood swings.

Okanlawon (2017) confirm that many gay students attempt to become invisible to others by using coping mechanisms which are designed to minimize chances of victimization. Some of the lesbian and gay students remain indoors most of the time because they do not like to expose themselves since heterosexual people tend to be judgmental. Males have less negative attitudes towards female homosexuals and females' attitudes do not significantly differ according to the gender of a homosexual person, they evaluate male and female homosexuals the same (Dreyer, 2007; Nelson & Krieger, 1997). Heterosexual boys undermine the lesbian students and they do not care about their explanation. It is apparent that they recognize lesbians as girls and not as an "other" gender. The research project that was taken by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) on South African attitudes towards lesbians and gays, the results of this attitude survey from 2003 to 2007 consistently show that more than 80 % of the population over aged 16 view same sex relations as always wrong. Therefore homophobia seems to continue to be a deeply entrenched attitude in South Africa (Naidoo & Karels, 2012). Indirect, direct and emotional forms of bullying involve being made to feel uncomfortable, scared or pressured to do aversive things (Okanlawon, 2017). They also confirmed that some young lesbians are bullied relentlessly day in and day out.

### **6.15. Campus support**

Some lesbian and gay students reported that there is no support whereas others said there is a support. TL said:

*There is no support and no support group at my college (DIN 1).*

In contrary, LL explained:

*I see support from some lecturers who know us, they act as parents. If I experience something I go to a lecturer. They make me feel comfortable especially in class. For example, when we are given life orientation topic, he gives me an opportunity to explain in class. I think as he gives me an opportunity in class to express myself, he wants me to make him and the rest of the class to understand about homosexuals, how a gay person feels or to be treated (DIN 6).*

Support can be emotional, physical, emotional or spiritual when it comes to education and support in all its forms is one of the greatest influences of students' success. It might happen that the lecturers want to help; maybe they do not know how to help. Within the status of unknowing, some lecturers tend to ignore the bullying that is happening to gay students and simply walk away without resolving it. Instead of suppressing it, it seems that some lecturers are not comfortable intervening with bullying due to sexual orientation and gender identity. A lack of professional development on how to address gay students' issues and bullying has left lecturers ill-equipped to establish gay inclusive cultures or identify anti-gay behaviors and harassment. Kheswa (2016) indicates that South African Higher Education has done little if nothing. Derogatory names are still being used to degrade the human dignity of lesbians and gays since they are perceived as an impure sexual culture. He maintains that institutions which fail to protect lesbians and gays tend to maintain a breeding ground for stigma, discrimination, harassment, emotional abuse as well as violence. Kheswa (2016) added that lesbian and gay students experience massive rejection and verbal harassment and to avoid such threats. Violence and degrading treatment from college, community, dysfunctional or supportive families, they are forced to suppress their lesbian and gay's inclinations by being involved in heterosexual relationships.

Drawing from the data, it is evident that majority of participants indicated there is no support at the college for gay students. If there is support, it is clear that it is insufficient to cover all the grey areas where gay students encounter day to day abuse. No matter how other lecturers ignore the gay community, but there are lecturers who still act as parents to them. For instance, one of the lecturers accommodates AG in class to educate other students about sexual orientation or identity in Life Orientation. Thompson & Parry (2018) found that relationships with teachers play a leading role in explaining the school experiences of LGBT adolescents. Youth with positive feelings about teachers are significantly less likely than peers to experience challenges. But Butler & University of Port Elizabeth (2000) argues that school and college libraries very rarely have books on homosexuality and those that exist are outdated and biased. Information regarding homosexuality is not taught on par with other subjects. If all lecturers are able to give all gay students an opportunity could not have been in this situation of finding themselves in these difficulties.

Although AG gets little support, he finds out that gay students are not accommodated in different activities. Butler & University of Port Elizabeth (2000) asserts that there is a need to be accepted within diversity of student life, for example, college and school authorities have

waged bitter campaigns against lesbian and gay students when they attend social events, in recognition of lesbian and gay student organizations and the denial of access to school and college facilities and funds. Their sexual orientation curbs them in various ways which made them feel suppressed. The toilets are also inaccessible which makes them feel uncomfortable and also the heterosexual students do not feel comfortable if gay students use their toilets.

VG assumes that gay students are vulnerable since they do not get support in the college; instead they prefer their friends and parents who are always there in the time of adversities. LL, in addition, blames the opposite sex for the way they treat gay students in the college. It is clear that she thought gay students will get support from heterosexual students and administrators easily since they are the classmates and colleagues. In this view, gay students see universities and colleges as spaces of intellectual freedom and believe these institutions are progressive and are inclusive spaces unlike their communities back home. This view is supported by Valenshia & Thabo (2015) where he states that Higher Education residences are homes away from home in which students' different social and cultural backgrounds live together holding different norms, values and practices. Due to various diversities often present in higher education institutions, distances away from their communities, many lesbian, gay and bisexuals find space and freedom, and negotiate their same sex identities when they reach these institutions.

#### **6.16. Gay students' right at the college**

The participants indicated that their rights are not recognized and protected in the college. There is no structure that deals with lesbian and gay students' abuse and harassment. They prefer to use Life Orientation lessons to express their concerns, if there is a topic relating to gay issues. Lecturers do not use an inclusive curriculum that engages students about heterosexual and gay communities. Human right violations and continual social intolerance against LGBT people hints a gap in the South African education system to educate the ill-informed members of society against homophobia and unfair prejudice against sexual orientation (Fancis & Msibi, 2011).

According to the data, it appears that college administrators and lecturers do not know about how the law requires protecting lesbian and gay students. When they act against lesbian and gay students, they think they would not be questioned about their actions. Whether a student

or lecturer intentionally or inadvertently uses derogatory language, the impact on LGBT students is negative (Symons, O'Sullivan, Borkholes, Andersen & Polman, 2014).

In fact, their rights are denied because heterosexuals do not allow engaging in play with them. To be judgmental makes lesbian and gay students hesitant about their sexual orientation. This leads them not participating in any sport. Lack of participation in physical activities deprives LGBT students of the benefits which include positive impact on physical health, self-esteem, and connectedness to schools (Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2014). Gill, Morrow, Collins, Lecey & Schutz (2010) conducted a national survey of LGBT students where they examined the climate and experiences for LGBT in sport. Students reported hearing homophobic slurs in locker rooms and gymnasiums frequently, only being surpassed by the hallways. Regarding this statement, a few studies have also been conducted in South African universities (Kiguwa & Langa, 2017; Arndt & De Bruin, 2006) which took gender into account and showed that male students held more negative attitudes to both lesbians and gay men than did female students.

Furthermore, the participants do not enjoy the freedom of expression and non-discrimination as this is not practiced at the college. They do not exercise their rights because they are being suppressed when they elect their candidate as a member of the student representative council. They feel if the college is not accommodative since administrators and lecturers do not treat them equally. Prejudice and discrimination against lesbian and gay students is often intensified by a lack of knowledge and understanding between heterosexual and the LGBT community (Bergman & Tatum, 2008). Bergman & Tatum (2008) further states that if people begin to understand discrimination, they begin to recognize, acknowledge and confront their own biases.

One of the participants (VG) complained that when he is bullied and ostracized by other students, he does not get support; instead, he gets abusive words from lecturers. It appears that the lesbian and gay students are not respected and are not considered as human beings who have rights. Lecturers are not worried about the ill-treatment the gay students get in the college. They do not care whether participants are being bullied or beaten and it might happen that they believe those who are bullied can fight back with the perpetrators. A lack of professional development on how to address gay students' issues and bullying has left lecturers ill-equipped to establish gay inclusive cultures or identify anti-gay behaviors and harassment (Day, Russel & Snapp, 2016). Day, Russel & Snapp (2016) explain that punitive practices that do not deter bullying or create a safer campus reduce student connectedness.

Lesbian and gay students do not enjoy their right to privacy. The participants find themselves in a situation where they do not have privacy when they use toilets. They are touched and sexually harassed by boys if they use these gendered toilets. They see themselves as being vulnerable. Hargie, Mitchell & Somerville (2017) noted infrastructure to be the most important barrier to participation for LGBT students. Creating a safe environment sets expectations before students even enter the classroom. Providing all gender toilets and bathrooms and private changing spaces for students to utilize can remove this barrier.

Contrary, other participants seem to enjoy their rights in the college. This means that they stand for themselves which resulted in treated equally by lecturers and administrators. This means each coming out experiences allows the person to grow (Vaughan & Waehler, 2010). As a researcher I observed that it may depend on how each gay student has come out in the college which may lead to discrimination or acceptance.

### **6.17. Religious impact**

The churches play a vital role in suppressing the gay identity. NL explains:

*A church's law says a girl is grown up to find a man that would marry her, not a girl to marry another girl. According to religious belief it is a sin to God....it is not right. She forces me to go to church. She also asks people in the church to pray for me. Another is that homosexuals are not there in my community. In church I am not allowed to wear a trouser as I am a girl (DIN 5).*

The participants are scared to go to church because they do not feel comfortable to wear a skirt. According to church, a woman is not permitted to wear a trouser or to put on men's clothes. In this regard there is a debate around the issue of wearing trousers in the church.

It is apparent that a church's law also becomes an issue that affects lesbian and gay students' life. According to the data, parents believe that their girls should get men that will marry them. It seems that the church believers also believe that a woman should marry a man. The participants view that they are being coerced although their sexual orientation is known. Landman (2009) states that patriarchy promotes the idea that marriage according to the Bible is between dominant male and his subordinate female and in the church, the body of Christ is male and women are excluded from leadership roles, desire and sex are for production and

within the family and household, women are to be subordinate because it is God's will that men are to be the head.

The church believers refer to homosexuality as a sin. This view is supported in many evangelicals and other conservative Christians. Their interpretation is that same sex relationships are not able to reflect God's creative intent (Landman, 2009). According to the New Testament marriage is a primary symbol of love between Christ and his beloved "bride" the church. The same sex couples are uniquely excluded from participation in this symbol on the basis of a failure to perform one or more dimensions of a vague category referred to as gender complementarity. The gender is indeed rooted in passages from Genesis 1 and, God began by creating human beings of male and female sex.

In fact, parents believe that if the church goes and priest can pray for their girls, they will change. Parents see a prayer as the tool to reverse lesbian and gay sexual orientation since there is no one in the community referred to as gay.

#### **6.18. Lesbian and gay students' academic performance at the college**

Gay and lesbian youth who are stigmatised may sometimes fail to achieve academically (Vare & Norton, 1998). Some participants confirmed that bad treatment really lowers academic performance. It should be understandable that lecturers sometimes create hostility by calling gay students names and verbalizing hatred and disapproval of their sexual orientation. They experience bullying which is a huge problem in the college. It seems that the college does not recognize gay students as targets in terms of access and retention. Moreover, they fail to achieve expected standard because they always imagine what is happening to their life.

One of the participants (AG) uses bad treatment as a source of courage. He believes that God granted him serenity to accept things and he cannot change. Instead, he decided to work hard so that he could not lose focus and the goal he is targeting. It appears that some of the participants understand very well that they are there to earn their education, not change how people think, and behave towards gay students. They are very optimistic about their future and working hard to stand out for themselves.

Other participants indicate that they do not experience any problem academically. It seems that they possess the abilities to differentiate between what is appropriate and that less time



needed towards recreation and leisure activities, as well as possess positive thinking in terms of their schooling.

### **6.19. The college without happiness**

Referring to the data taken from visual methodology, some participants feel lonely, shy, tend to withdraw in class, hide their sexuality and have no friends. In all, they feel lonely and rejected. Joiner (1997) defines loneliness as feeling of interpersonal loss or deficit within an individual. Peplau & Perlman (1982) also defines it as a reaction to levels of social connection that fall below what is desired. The college environment of lesbian and gay students is often described as a strictly hetero-normative space that faces them hiding their feelings and sexuality. Bottoman (2021) points out that college space enforces gendered groupings and sexualizes the oppositional room spaces of girls and boys, while concurrently, discouraging sexual and loving emotional and physical interactions between persons of the same gender. Being determined and focussed helps them to concentrate on acquiring education and ignore the negative treatment they are exposed to daily. Participants also worried about the voiceless students and hope to change the negative attitudes the people have about gay community. As a researcher in this situation, I believe that knowledge is power and the college trainings should be organized to train staff, students and administrators. I observe that many students going to college are uneducated about LGBT problems.

Some participants reported that they have no friends. D'Augelli (2003) found that 39% of LGBT students had lost friends as a result of disclosing their sexual orientation. The conditions face by LGBT students tend to accumulate on daily basis and can collectively be referred to as minority stress and the effects of minority stress has been associated with an increased risk mental and physical illness, as well as negative self-esteem and concentration difficulties (Cress & Ikeda, 2003; Westefeld, Maples, Buford & Taylor, 2001). Due to discrimination and ill-treatment they ended up telling themselves that they do not take into consideration what the students say about their sexuality. Indeed, gay students are exploring their sexuality and what it means to them. Remember, they are also transitioning into adulthood and living their own life for their first time, possibly very far away from home.

Being lonely in the class, also affects some participants because they feel as if they are excluded from main stream society. Lonely people tend to be more shy, introverted and less willing to engage in social risk-taking than less lonely individuals (Peplau & Perlman, 1982). This led

some participants to withdraw or deter from any discussion relating to love affairs and sexual orientation in the class. LGBT students experience high level of stress when they face discrimination articulated by students who believe LGBT individuals are sick, sinful or unnatural (Lopez & Chism, 1993; Tierney, 1992). I refer to this as social isolation and I define social isolation as lack of social connection. In this case, they are not able to talk to anyone about their sexual orientation, are socially withdrawn and felt not motivated. They develop low self-esteem and ends up feeling hesitant in classroom.

#### **6.20. Living in my community**

Some participants are not happy and others are happy to live in their communities. Since some participants have identified themselves as gay, they are not happy to live in the community. The rejection by the community shows that they see themselves as being alienated. Life for lesbian and gay students in rural communities continues to be secretive, private and is characterized by an underlying themes of coercion and norms (Bell & Valentine, 1995). According to Pillay, Roberts & Rule (2006) geographic locations, have an influence on societal attitudes, are more prevalent in rural areas than in formal urban areas. They believe that they could have freedom and a platform to express their feelings so that the family and community could accept them easily. In this case, they wanted to be known and to be open to the community about their sexual orientation. Although they wanted to be accepted, people still hold the view that same sex relations are always wrong.

In the community, participants do not receive warmth, love and acceptance, because they believe the community members do not treat them like other children in the community. The lack of social recognition has an effect on the capacity of LGBT people to fully access and enjoy their rights as citizens and being part of the family especially if we accept the notion that full citizenship requires that one be recognized not in spite of one's unusual or minority characteristics but with those characteristics understood as part of valid possibility for the conduct of life (Phelan, 2001).

Other participants reported that religion plays a vital role in suppressing their sexual orientation, subsequent they do not go to church. The traditional position of churches on homosexuality has been condemnation, judgement and discrimination. It appears that culture and religion are often used to defend anti-LGBT agenda. This violence further puts young people at a crossroad between having to choose between lives of secrecy or face discrimination

(Page, 2018). This situation creates a climate of hostility and fear. Page (2018) stressed that the religious institution can act as barriers to the promotion of the LGBT equality, for example, some officials in France and Netherland also reported that interpretations of Islam can have a negative impact on LGBT rights. They do not have friends which make their lives difficult. I believe that it could be hard for them to be accepted by the community because some of them are not yet accepted by their biological parents.

Participants feel as if they are being punished by the community. As a researcher, I refer to this as social rejection because the community deliberately excludes them from social interaction. For example, the girls of NL's age do not want to go with her, in fact, they rejected her because of her sexual orientation. This notion is supported by Page, (2018) where it states that gay youth are more like to be rejected by families. Furthermore, rejection can be either by bullying, teasing or ridiculing or passive, by ignoring a person or giving silent treatment. By starting to question her sexual orientation, the community members believe that she breaks the societal laws. Page (2018) also states that laws on discrimination demonstrate lack of legal protection around sexual orientation and gender identity. Which creates a climate of fear and legitimizes harassment and violence perpetrated by state sectors and further puts LGBT people at risk of violence perpetrated by family and the community. Gay students who have good social support from family, friends and the wider gay community have higher self-esteem, a more positive group identity and more positive mental health. This makes them believe that knowledge is power and their parents and the community should be educated about gay community.

Some lesbian and gay students face challenges like bullying, victimization and undermining. Although they feel victimized but they respect societal rules, their family members and community members. Page (2018) states that LGBT young people in the Global South experience extreme hardships within their communities rendering it extremely difficult for them to live healthy lives and become productive adults. Participants suggest creating environment in which LGBT persons feel safe to be open about their identities supports wellbeing. Furthermore, when LGBT students are able to come out, this helps to create an organisational culture of literature. Page (2018) also supports the measures that include raising awareness through internal research, awareness-raising in general and events that address LGBT issues and inviting LGBT person to speak to community.

Other participants feel happy to be part of the community. This shows that rural community leaders seldom acknowledge or present positive attitudes towards sexual minorities but the

community expects a girl to be married and also a male to have a wife. Ziemes & Abs (2017) affirms that heterosexual marriages are created for economic reasons whilst homosexual unions are created for love. He further states that religious denominations such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam have been promoting sex strictly for reproductive reasons with monogamy and sexual fidelity in marriage becoming the order of the day and homosexual is seen as dangerous and sodomy is seen as sin. The level of acceptance of sexual orientation and gender identity by parents can detract from or expand a child's healthy growth and development in many ways. In the community people believe that sexual orientation is unc customary, it is un-African, ungodly and non-existent (Ziemes & Abs, 2017).

#### **6.21. Gay students' response on abuse.**

Lesbian and gay students use various ways to respond to abuse. Some lesbian and gay students become silent and others fight back, while some feel ashamed. Vare & Norton (1998), confirmed lesbian and gay students use numerous approaches to cope, such as withdrawing from their peers and denying gay identities.

In the case of being silent, lesbian and gay students are scared to report the abuse because they do not trust anyone. They use silence as a tool to deal with discrimination and vulnerability at the college. Clearly, they do not know where to go and report their problems because some lecturers use to insult them. Since there is no support, they view the situation as an end of the world, which means they have lost hope and they see themselves as weak and as people who cannot deal with their problems. Perceptibly, they tolerate the pain of being insulted and becoming worried about attacks made by perpetrators. Internalizing and accepting the hatred and homophobia directed towards them is another strategy. Theron (1994) states that once someone realizes that they are homosexual, they become aware of the stigma and discrimination associated with it. They added that those strong enough accept that their lives will be associated with being insulted, and that they need to be careful because not everyone likes them. This shows that anti-gay attitudes in the 'for hetero-sexism' and homophobia are still pervasive in South Africa, resulting in gay people still being expected to become so called "normal" in order to put the rest of society at ease (Muholi, 2004).

Other lesbian and gay students blame themselves about the whole situation. For example, LL ended up being silent and not reporting the matter to her parents because her parent was concerned about her going out at late hours. Consequently, she suffered emotionally which

makes her feel ashamed of herself and continued to criticize herself as if it was her mistake to be raped. Msibi (2012) also confirmed that young people between the ages of 14 to 20 years, both in and out of school, testify to a culture of fear, harassment in which religion, gender and culture limit their freedoms.

Counseling also played a significant role in assisting lesbian and gay students to deal with abuse and other difficult situations. Some of them were being taught acceptance, subsequently, they accepted themselves and their lives without fear. Muller (2015), claims that young lesbians are struggling to create a climate where there is freedom of sexual expression. Including the goal of social justice, which is to see all people treated in the same manner in society. It seems that they learned to accept everything that people think of them. It appears that when people say bad things about them, lesbian and gay students do not fight but they remain silent and also turn away from the perpetrators.

Other participants reported that they fight back if the perpetrators carry on with deviant behavior. By fighting back, they show they have power like heterosexual students but they differ in terms of sexual orientation and they have what heterosexual students have. In fact, they try to defend themselves from accusations and insults but they know that fight might drag them into an argument that will not help. It is apparent that they do not tolerate if heterosexual students continued saying negative words to them even if they have come out. Sometimes, they inform the perpetrators at onset to make them aware about their sexual orientation. Avery, Clemons & Mathews (2017) affirms that many young homosexuals are assaulted in rural communities by heterosexuals with the belief of making them stronger, if not straight.

One of the participants (TL) indicated that she became passive and withdrew from the class and others say they do not regret their sexual orientation, instead, they feel strong and declare it as their life. Attitudes develop when thoughts and feeling associated with specific personal interactions with gay men and lesbians, and if the interaction is positive, the attitude will most likely be favorable but if the interactions are negative, the attitudes will be unfavorable (Herek, 1986; 1993).

## **6.22. Responses to community attitudes**

The data suggests that the participants respect their parents and the community at large. It appears that they do not deny any given instruction from their parents and members of the

community although they do not feel well since heterosexual life conflicts with their real sexual identities. Parents are more concerned with their own needs. In this case, the abuse or neglect tends to be on going. The stigma attached to sexual orientation and gender identity or expression, expected heterosexual norm to relegate many lesbians and gays to the margins of society and this marginalization often excludes lesbians and gays from many support structures often including their own families (Aleksandrs, 2019). Munt (2000) states that in most cases homosexuals from rural communities live a double life whereby they are straight back home and gay in the cities. Herek (2004) affirms that common stereotypes that heterosexuals hold about lesbian and gay men are that they are mentally ill and likely to be child molesters.

Some participants use Bible verses to suppress their anger towards the community and their families. This serves as a coping strategy. They fear that if they do not respect their parents, God will reduce their days of life. Sometimes, they cry to let go all the stress they have. Garcia, Gray-Stanley & Ramirez-Valles (2008) added that it is common that homosexual people become more religiously affiliated to hide their sexuality in a way that everyone will not know anything about their love life.

Other participants hide their sexual orientation to avoid being kicked out from their homesteads. Many lesbian and gay students are reluctant to come out to their parents about their sexuality or preferred gender identity while living at home full time. This is done both out of concern that may be rejected by their family and also out of a desire to protect their parents from the emotional hurt or disappointment that they anticipate such a revelation (Mavhandu-Mudzusi (2014). As a researcher, I understand that parents have expectations for their children to grow and behave and when these expectations are not met, it can be painful.

### **6.23. Management of stress**

Lesbian and gay students speak to various people such as friends, siblings, people whom they trust and others cry and play music. There are also those who hide their sexual orientation and keep their problems to them and those who use drugs to manage stress. Lesbian and gay students understand that stress is part of human life and use the advice they get to assist them to calm down and motivate them to get things done.

With the intention of telling their friends, siblings and people they trust, they wanted to get advice on how to let the stress go and come with ideas on how to deal with it and improve

whatever situation they are in. Gay students find great comfort when they communicate with others who share their experiences (Lee, 2022). It seems that the participants share their problems to prevent the built-up of tension and feelings. By seeking advice, they want to make better decisions and try to get on top of the problem straight away. Siblings always model good behavior by using inclusive language and setting an accepting environment about her sexual orientation or gender identity (Aguessivognon, 2022). According to Epstein's research (1994), parental reactions put stress on young lesbians especially if they are still dependent in one way or another on their families and in most cases they do not receive support from their biological parents.

Furthermore, they use music as a tool to escape and pray to God. Aronoff & Gilboa (2015) declares this as using music as a companion. They explain that it is the music that offers the support that might have been provided by a friend. It is apparent that they want to feel more optimistic and positive about their life. They want peace and relation and help to induce sleep. It appears that music is the way of expressing their feelings and emotions and is a form of therapy. For instance, when participants feel very sad and need cathartic moment, they listen to a piece of sad music that makes them cry and get back to their senses.

To keep quiet, the participants want peace. It might happen that they need time to solve their problems. Aleksandrs (2019) confirmed that at this time of journey to adulthood, a critical period of social and emotional development, they can be particularly vulnerable. It is often more difficult for LGBT people to be out in rural areas. Sometimes they cry to relieve pain and promote a sense of wellbeing. They want to feel better. Most particular younger lesbians had to cope with stigmatization, discrimination and harassment without support (Aleksandrs, 2019). Victimization can take away gay survivors' sense of trust, safety and security in the world with potential after effects of sleeping difficulties, headaches, digestive problems, agitation, substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, hyper-vigilance and expectations of future rejection and discrimination. Ryan, Russel, Huebner, Diaz & Sanchez (2010) affirm that lesbian and gay students frequently struggle with mental and behavioral problems such as anxiety depression, self-harm and suicidal ideation.

Some participants resort to palliatives in the form of alcohol; and smoking dagga and cigarette. It appears that when drink alcohol they want to reduce fears and take their mind off from troubles they faced everyday based on their sexual identities. Furthermore, drinking assists them to feel less shy and give them a boost mood and makes them feel generally relaxed.

Lesbian and gay people like to use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs than general population and are more likely to continue heavy drinking into later life (Aleksandrs, 2019). Lesbian and gay youth's use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs for same reasons as others, but their likelihood for doing so is heightened by personal and cultural stresses resulting from anti-gay bias.

Other participants use social media to communicate their adversities. Since the technology is advanced, they joined the LGBT group in the social media to find people who have similar problem and to get an advice. The internet, school diversity clubs, and LGBT youth groups have helped gay and lesbian youth find accurate information, guidance and support (Aleksandrs, 2019). With greater access to resources, more LGBT youth are coming out during adolescence.

#### **6.24. Seeking advice**

Lesbian and gay students seek advice from their friends, more especially to people who belong to the gay group. Lynch, Victor, Nel, & Mbatha (2014) also confirmed that most lesbian youth just talked to their gay sibling, to their friends and to their partners. According to the data they prefer their friends because they believe that they could assist them in dealing with the harassment they encountered at the college, and at home. To speak to their friends, they see it as a healing tool, and it can also help them feel less alone. In fact, lesbian and gay students are choosy, that is why they do not talk to everyone. Mavhandu-Mudzisi (2017) insisted that most non-heterosexuals are very sensitive when it comes to their sexuality.

Parents are homophobic. Participants fear that if they disclose their sexual orientation to their parents, they might reject or kick them out. Coming out to their parents is fraught with danger. Indeed, they have a fear of being abandoned by their own families since they use to make unpleasant remarks about LGBT community. Negative words and attitudes articulated by heterosexual people make the participants feel uncomfortable. According to Ncama, Luvuno, Ngidi, Mchunu & Mashamba-Thompson (2019), members of the public are generally not educated about and lack an understanding of homosexual people; once they discover that someone is homosexual, their attitude changes and they start looking down upon the individual.

The data shows that participants who get advice also share their thoughts with the young ones who recently came out having similar problems. Actually, they want to change the young ones



with the way they look at things, and to feel that they are not alone. The limited availability of programs and service that have tailored these youths, also presents a challenge (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy, 2015).

One of the participants (AG) also emphasized that he speaks to God. He believes that God is the healer and comforter and everything he speaks to Him about remains confidential. He also believes that when he plays music he feels relaxed and comfortable because music takes him very far.

Contrary, one participant (ZL) indicates does not trust anyone. It is apparent that the lesbian and gay students who choose to not talk to anyone believe that people could not keep their secrets and they would share them with other people. Actually, they believe that there is no one can share their problems with. Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy (2015) states that these youth may fear disclosing their problems, as a result, may be inhibited from seeking the support and therapeutic resources they need. Youth that are afraid to be open about their identity may be less likely to report their experiences and needs to providers and others in a service system. It takes time for many heterosexual people to understand others, who they are and who they are becoming since they show the non-acceptance of lesbian and gay students in the community.

### **6.25. Making college a better place**

A college education does not only provide students with knowledge and skills, but also aims to equip them with the ability to deal with societal problems. College provides the foundation for students to change, grow and develop in order to equip them with the complexities of living in modern society. According to Gaff (1983) it is in the context of higher education where students develop personal qualities such as tolerance of ambiguity and empathy for people with different values.

Some participants emphasize capacity building and support groups or organizations, workshops and awareness campaign. Students surveyed by the Kiguwa & Nduna (2017) showed strong support for increased training for teachers and staff in order to eliminate homophobia. These participants believe that if all students and lecturers, who are heterosexuals, are being educated about gay community everything will be normal. All students should be motivated to effect change in their lives and in their relationships. They assume that if the students can be given time to affirm who they are and what they do not like, they will be able

to work together. They assume that diversity training workshops led by trained professionals can help to alert individuals to such biases and introduce college members to facilitate discussions regarding gay students' inclusivity. Bennett & Reddy, (2015) stated that higher education environment should be a very worthy channel for exploring more inclusive and transformative pedagogies.

Referring to the data, participants suggest that the heterosexual students should be made to understand that people are born differently. Murray & Roscoe (1998) believes that gay activism can also play a vital role in bringing about changes in the law for gays and lesbians in South Africa. Lesbian and gay students are all normal like any other person. Heterosexual students should be taught to curb using abusive language when they talk to gay students. The participants believe that training will reduce the hostility and discrimination that is pointed at them. It is apparent that they believe that if heterosexual people get education, they will start accepting and understanding each other since they will have knowledge. They believe that they will live comfortably and will be able to explore their sexuality and know what it means to them to live their own life, possibly away from home. To curb this situation, Marx & Kettrey (2016) also insist that a more positive climate for LGBT students is the creation of a gay-straight alliance or gender and sexuality alliance often referred as a GSA. They further explain that GSA is a student-led group or club dedicated to creating a safe environment and advocacy platform for LGBT students and allies. Some studies suggest that the presence of a GSA at an institution can importantly reduce bias-driven victimization of lesbian and gay students and improve indicators of their mental health (Fhumulani & Mukwevho, 2018).

Organizing a campaign is an effective way of expanding and clarifying issues as well as building alliances with other students. Truly, campaigns and workshop offers space for views to be aired and debated. By instigating the workshop, they believe that all gay students will increase the visibility in the college, build solidarity among them and all students will get empowerment. Muller (2015), believes that it is important to identify and analyze internalized homophobia in the life experiences of lesbians and gays; develop strategies for interrupting internalized homophobia; facilitate an environment that is free of homophobia and oppression; identify and describe actions that can be taken to transform society and eliminate homophobia and oppression; explore liberation of consciousness and how this might be applied to the elimination of homophobia and oppression; develop action plans aimed at increasing homosexuals' capacity and readiness to take action to eliminate homophobia and oppression.

Gay students are as multi-talented as heterosexual students and these issues should be spoken about in an open discussion. Kiguwa & Nduna (2017) believes that the coaching programs have to provide an in-depth training on how to create a positive environment in the gymnasium and on the field. It also specifies that it is the key to equip teachers and coaches with appropriate tools for creating a safe environment, recognizing unsafe emotional environment, addressing issues and making the classroom, locker room and field desirable places for LGBT students to be. Beginning training in the teacher preparation program is important, given the findings of O'Brien and colleagues (2013) who reported higher levels of anti-gay prejudice among physical education majors when compared to non-physical education majors.

The participants also emphasize the sameness and equal treatment. It is apparent that lesbian and gay students are not happy the way they are being ostracized. They emphasize respect as personal value. In this regard, they wish to see every gay student respected and greeted with respect. Referring to their data, they believe that equal treatment brings all students together to share their experiences. When they have that opportunity they believe that they will have proper solutions to deal with their problems. Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy (2015) found that stigmatizing and discriminatory acts had a negative impact on the social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of gender non-conforming students; with some of these students refusing to attend some classes in order to avoid humiliation.

Some participants emphasize unity among lesbian and gay students. According Taimur & Onuki (2020) the Department of Education has developed the school charter outlining the need to ensure equal rights; offer counselling and support around identity issues; distribute LGBT resources; and respond to bullying. It is very significant for the higher institutions to stick to effect unity. It appears that they believe if they can work together and share their problems, they will be able to fight the perpetrators using college structures. They believe that if they fight each other, anyone can break them easily and take advantage of them. They wish to see all students working together, respecting each other sustain and create an environment in which everyone feels safe, supported and encouraged to express their views and concerns. In fact, they wanted to be treated equally and fairly.

Lesbian and gay students also want to see them participating in drama activities in the college. Leone (2016) affirms that lack of participation in physical activity deprives gay students of the benefits which include positive impact on physical health, self-esteem and connectedness to college. They believe that there should be a fundamental shift in the college as well as

entertainment, and gay students should be permitted to play the male character if she is a lesbian and female character if she is a gay. It is clear that is not easy for them to be accepted because some heterosexual administrators, lecturers and students still have negative attitudes towards participation of gay students in different activities and they live in a world where they do not enjoy their rights. As a researcher, I observed that they might have equal rights on paper that does not equal social rights.

One of the participants (TEL) seems satisfied with the way she is treated in the college. She believes that everybody within the college understands what is expected of him or her as they are living in democratic society. She has a positive contact with heterosexual students and lecturers. Allport (1979) states that contact allows individuals to confront stereotypes or beliefs they may have long held with the realities of the targeted group. He further explains that through increased contact with members of a target group, individuals broaden their perspectives and confront previously held stereotypes that may not be necessarily accurate. Contact with a homosexual has been shown to significantly influence overall attitudes toward homosexuals in a positive direction (Burkholder & Dineen, 1996).

Participants emphasize the building of inclusive toilets. This motion is being supported by the Department of Education in Ireland where it has released the guidance allowing the introduction of gender neutral toilet provision with schools (O'Loughlin, 2019). Building gendered toilets, make gay students feel uncomfortable and as if they are not recognized. They suggest that if the college has gendered neutral toilets, it means it fosters an inclusive environment that shows it cares about diversity. This will also demonstrate that the college does not just tolerate students' differences but affirms them. They believe that the college needs to let students understand that need each other. It will send a message that the college respects and values every person for who they are and what they contribute not by what sex they were assigned at birth or gender identity. Hames (2007) agreed that South African supportive policy on campuses should include the provision of unisex toilets; gender reconstructive surgery leave; equitable access for same-sex couples in student housing; placement of specific LGBT non-discrimination clauses in recruitment advertisements and policies for the pursuit of recourse; and the provision of safe spaces for LGBT socialisation.

The data also suggests that there should be a disciplinary committee. They believe that if it has been established it will maintain order, ensure that students obey rules, and remain orderly and peaceful of educational objectives in the college and in the community. Toomey, Yoon &

Stathatos (2020) highlights this as a challenge and also states that legal requirements may not be enough to guarantee that schools will provide LGBT students with the supports they need. Some participants articulate that if the policemen are involved in those support groups they would have had better chances to report harassment. They believe that gay students are part of state and the community that needs to be reached to make policing effective. In all, they believe that those who say destructive words should be arrested. Truly, destructive words have a long lasting effect in mind which makes the gay students feel inferior in the college. According to Nel & Judge (2008) 73% of a Gauteng study of LGBT people indicated that lesbian and gay students had not reported hate-crimes against them because they expect not to be taken seriously. Similarly, in their study of anti-gay hate crimes in South Africa, Wells & Louise (2006) found that gay and lesbian abuse is prevalent but that these crimes are under reported due to fears of secondary victimization by the police in the form of verbal or physical abuse, blackmail or victim-blaming. Unfortunately, this under-reporting tends to exacerbate homophobic violence, since it contributes towards invisibility.

One of the participants (LL) suggests that the college should invite prominent lesbian and gay members. Lesbian and gay students believe that by bringing prominent gay people in the college, could bring confidence to lesbian and gay students. Meeting prominent gay people will provide additional opportunities to explore identity and gay students resource centre will create spaces to interact with others.

The participants also believe that there should be class rules and an inclusive policy. Martinez (2011) affirms that educational policies and curriculum development has begun to include content on issues pertaining to homosexuality and the impact of hetero-sexism. As a result, the majority of Americans no longer view homosexuality as immoral with more, instead showing willingness to grant gays and lesbians certain civil freedoms (O'Loughlin, 2019). Participants point out that it is necessary to have specific plans in place to meet the specific needs of all students so that they feel safe and happy. If there is an inclusion, it gives all students the potential to achieve and create an environment where those with additional needs are not segregated and seen as 'other', they are part of the same community.

By introducing modelling, they want to reduce the stereotypes that heterosexual students have about gay students and to enhance positive contact amongst them.

## 6.26. Envisioning the future

All participants are happy about their future, but they view their future in various ways. Some participants see the necessity of creating a support group. They believe that once the support group has been established, the gay students will be able to share their own experiences. In fact, the gay community will break the silence of South African people around reality and diversity of gender. They believe that teachers can help to improve the experiences of gays and lesbians through appropriate intervention programmes (Butler, Alpaslan, Struumberg & Astbury, 2003). LGBT youth are part of a distinctive cultural group because they share larger cultural identity which include of a defined set of norms, social events, style and use of language (Govender, Maotoana & Nel, 2019). They imagine that if the support group is functional, it will help the gay group to be recognized in the college, community and in society at large. Moreover, they want the gay groups to be set free from societal norms that demean the LGBT rights and prevent them from living full lives. In addition, they want the community members to support LGBT individuals on their various journeys and have to listen, offer support when they could and when it is appropriate.

Referring to the data, lesbian and gay students are fighting for acceptance in their communities. People in their communities view them as sinners. Participants believe that their rights are undermined by heterosexual people. For equal treatment, Bhana (2012) states that teachers can play an important role in offering a critique of homophobia grounded in South Africa's legal claim to equality on the basis of sexual orientation. He further explains that legislative and educational interventions are needed to understand and address the gravity of the problem. The rights of homosexual people are strongly linked to the belief that it is something individuals are born with (Ciszek & Pounders, 2020). Herek, Norton, Allen & Sims (2010) also affirms that most gays and lesbians believe that they have no choice at all in their sexual orientation. The Section nine of the Constitution guarantees equal rights to all South Africans and disallows discrimination, including discrimination that is based on ethnicity, gender, religion as well as sexual preferences.

But they wish to turn the lens on those with anti-homosexual attitudes. Weinberg (1975) concluded that anti-homosexual attitudes are often a real phobia, based upon a repressed fear that one is unconsciously homosexual. Participants clearly wish to see more gay people in leadership positions. In their perspective, they do not want to only occupy position, but also to use it to deal with all issues affecting the country. This will be done by doing queer education

and awareness on active citizenship, for example, how to be involved in local development plan meetings where regular citizens can influence budgets decision. Furthermore, they believe that the government should encourage South African leaders to step up to change the narrative that to be gay is un-African.

The participants also wish to change the perception of churches towards homosexuals. This statement is confirmed by Mongie (2016) where she states that many churches in South Africa remain hotbeds of homophobia. This indicates that there is a gap between law and churches, law and social norms. People in the church believe that lesbians and gays would not inherit the Kingdom of God. In fact, it is painful to see lesbians and gays living under this shameful life of being excluded, neglected and discriminated. They believe LGBT people need deliverance. They need deliverance from harmful theologies that tell they are unloved and also need deliverance from their families who threw them away.

Some participants want to have families. In fact, they want to have their spouse. Researchers have found that same sex couples in legal unions are more likely to remain in a committed relationship. LGBT share same rights like heterosexual people and they can adopt a child by spouse and by partners in permanent domestic life partnerships, regardless of orientation (Dlamini, 2021). By having a big family, indeed, she wishes to live her own life and parent her own children. They want to be independent which means they wish to do what they want to do and there should be nobody that will stop them.

Erikson's theory (1968) suggests that teenagers go through a stage of crisis where they explore and form their sense of self and identity. In order to achieve that, they have to move towards self-acceptance. Self-acceptance is especially hard for LGBT people but there is support when they are ready to be themselves. In order to survive and live an independent life, they want to be surrounded by positive people. Furthermore, they have to ignore the negativity from their life and live in the present and keep moving on with their life. I believe one effective strategy is to involve community members and parents of the LGBT people in public initiatives. In fact, this will help to fight against attempts to dehumanize LGBT people. They want to take control of their life and accomplish their goals. In fact, they want freedom to do what they want, without caring what the people say or think and want to find some original solutions to their problems.

Regarding big corporation businesses, lesbian and gay students want to change attitudes in the workplaces and encourage wider positive change and work towards societal acceptance. While

these colleges focus on preparing students for the workplace by putting emphasis on technical skills (Diale & Brown, 2017); little work has been done on equipping these students with social skills.

### **6.27. Reliability and validity**

Reliability and validity was realized in the following manner:

Trustworthiness is achieved by credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability and conformability in qualitative research. I did the following to operationalize these terms:

1. Long engagement field: Apart from extensive data collection over 4 weeks, I also did a substantial reading of the secondary source to inform me of the context of this study as well as the key concepts under investigation.
2. Reliability was also enhanced by thick descriptions obtained from the participants.
3. Triangulation of data sources, research questions and methods was ensured.
4. To enhance credibility was ensured through member checking
5. The drawings were viewed in the social and cultural contexts of production.

### **6.28. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I discussed how participants define being gay, how they discovered themselves and how they came out. I also explain how they feel being at the college, their attitudes towards sticking together and positive attitude about the college. I then discussed the following themes: students' attitudes towards gay students; treatment of lesbian and gay students by lecturers; family attitudes towards lesbian and gay students; gay students as victim of sexual abuse; gay students as victim of verbal abuse; gay students frequency of verbal abuse; campus support; gay students' right at the college; religious impact; lesbian and gay students' academic performance at the college; college without happiness; living in my community. Lastly, I discussed how the participants navigated in those places and spaces of discomfort, the following themes were discussed: gay students' responses towards abuse; responses to community attitudes; management of stress; seeking advice; making college a better place; and envisioning the future.



The implication of this analysis will be discussed in the concluding chapter which is next. The concluding chapter will look at a summative understanding of the data and explain its limitations and possible areas of further research.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY**

#### **7.1. Introduction**

The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of lesbian and gay students at a Technical and Vocational Educational and Training (TVET) College in rural town of Kwa-Zulu Natal. The aim of the study was to understand how lesbian and gay students are being treated and how they navigate in those spaces of discomfort within and beyond the college.

In this final chapter, I begin with a summary of chapters to present an overview of this study. I follow by discussing how the findings of the study answered the research questions. Then, I describe a reflection upon the study and then I explain the potential contributions of this study in terms of its theoretical and methodological contributions. I also explained the originality of the study. I outlined the limitations and finally I provided reflection and consideration for further research.

#### **7.2. Summary of Chapters**

In the introductory Chapter, Chapter One, I explained the purpose of the study and I explained the rationale for investigating lesbian and gay students in a TVET college in Kwa-Zulu Natal. I followed by explicating how the study will contribute to professional knowledge. I outlined the problem statement. Then, I followed by explaining the statement of purpose. I also outlined the research questions. The following research questions guided my study:

1. A) How do lesbian and gay students experience being homosexual at a TVET College?  
B) Why do they hold these views?
2. What are the risks factors arising from their sexual orientation in a TVET College, if any?
3. What strategies do they use to navigate these risk factors, if any?

Then, I discussed the geographical setting and overview of the study. I presented research assumptions. Lastly, I explained the rationale of the study and how the study was organized.

In Chapter Two, I started by explaining the primary purpose of the study. The literature that was presented was drawn from locally, nationally and internationally related articles pertaining

to experiences of lesbian and gay students who were affected directly or indirectly. The chapter was organized thematically and arranged using the following themes: defining lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, lesbian and gay experiences in higher education, coming out in the college, lesbian and gay experiences in their respective communities, risk factors facing lesbian and gay students, traditional perspectives on lesbian and gay students, religious perspectives on lesbians and gays, and legal framework on lesbians and gays.

In Chapter Three, I begin by explaining the key concepts under queer theory, and then I followed by a definition of queer theory. Lastly, I briefly outlined the stance for using queer theory.

In Chapter Four, I presented the research design and rationale for the research approach. I discussed the research context, then I followed by discussing the research sample and data sources. I explained how the data was collected and elucidated the analysis methods. Issues of trustworthiness and validity were discussed. Lastly, I explained the limitations and delimitations.

In Chapter Five, the data that was presented was taken from participants' responses on how they feel when they are in a college setting and in the community. I provided bibliographical information of participants. Lesbian and gay students reflected on their experiences which makes me, as a researcher, to understand that they need support and capacity building that will help those who really do not understand lesbian and gay identity. I presented the themes that emerged when I was reading the data. Before I presented, I reviewed the transcripts from the participants' answers that emanated from interviews. I presented the data to provide a systematic account of the recorded phenomenon. I also used the drawing as a visual methodology. I wanted the participants to draw themselves when they are in the college, in the community, and in future. I wanted to elicit rich data and to see how they feel in those places and how they interact with heterosexual people in those spaces.

In Chapter Six, I analysed the data that was presented in Chapter Five and also used verbatim quotations. The analysis and synthesis of the study was an attempt at answering all the four questions that guided the study. Analysis was done in all the data presented in Chapter Five from individual responses. I analysed how participants understand being a gay, engage with how they discovered themselves and came out. I also revealed how they feel being at the college, their attitudes towards sticking together in a particular group and any positive attitudes about the college, they might have. I also looked at the following themes: students' attitudes

towards gay students, treatment of gay students by lecturers, family attitudes towards gay students, community attitudes towards gay students, gay students as victims of sexual abuse, gay students as victims of verbal abuse, gay frequency of abuse, campus support, gay students' right at the college, religious impact, the college without happiness, living in my community, academic performance, gay students' response to abuse, management of stress, seeking advice, responses to community attitudes, making a college a better place, and envisioning the future. Lastly, I also looked at the reliability and validity of the study.

### **7.3. Answering the research questions**

In this study my research questions were:

1. A) How do lesbian and gay students experience being homosexual at a TVET College?  
B) Why do they hold these views?
2. What are risks factors arising from their sexual orientation at a TVET College, if any?
3. What strategies do they use to navigate these risk factors, if any?

#### **7.3.1 How do lesbian and gay students experience being homosexual at a TVET College?**

Empirical data as well as existing scholarship suggest that being gay means to be attracted to the same gender, it is normal and, it is not that a gay male or gay female has changed his or her identity. Lesbians and gays feel love for the same gender and their feelings motivate them to have relationships with the same gender. The study found that lesbian and gay students are worried about people who do not understand their sexual identity. It became a painful experience to them since they experience abuse daily. In this instance, lesbian and gay student are vulnerable and defenceless because people still have negative attitudes towards gay students and consider them to be deviating from societal expectations.

Findings indicated that being gay is not a choice or something that occurs overnight but is something lesbian and gay students were born with. Confusion in lesbian and gay students was also found because they did not understand what happened in their lives. For example, boys discovered that they did not have certain characteristics or features that characterize them as men, like growing beards and they noticed their soft voices. The study also found that lesbian

students engaged in relationships with various people because they were uncertain about their sexual feelings and others wanted to satisfy their parents and community members who hold negative attitudes about the gay community. It was revealed that when they discovered themselves, they experienced difficulties in being accepted by the community members and supported by their family members.

The study also found that some lesbian and gay students came out for the first time in the college and others revealed their sexual orientation to their families. Some of them feel accepted and supported. It was revealed that some lesbian and gay students hid their sexual orientation because they were scared to be kicked out from their homes. They did not tell their parents but confided in their friends. They hid their sexual orientation because they wanted to meet societal expectations and to avoid upsetting their parents.

### **7.3.2. Why do they hold these views?**

The study found that some lesbian and gay students have a positive view about the college because they feel at home since they have come out for their first time. They see it as a safe place to come out. They were able for their first time to really live without fear and associate with other students. A welcoming environment plays a vital role in improving the rate of lesbians and gays' acceptance. The study also revealed that lesbian and gay students wish to see other gay students enjoying freedom, be more comfortable and also not feel stigmatised at their past.

The study revealed that some lesbian and gay students stick together as a means of sharing their adversities, social interaction and support. They enjoyed staying together for a variety of reasons, chief among them being the acceptance of being a member of a particular social group, albeit a minority one. In contrast, findings revealed that there is interpersonal conflict among gay students. The data indicates that other lesbian and gay students do not stay together because they discriminate against each other. They emphasized that issue of class and status is the problem. Those who feel discriminated against preferred to stay with heterosexual students. Lesbian who are called 'butch' are generally bossy which makes some lesbian students resent the way the 'butch' treat them. The 'butch likes to dominate because she acts like a real man.

Furthermore, the study indicated that some lesbian and gay students found the college as a first place to explore. Some lesbian and gay students feel that they are fairly treated by college staff,

if they compare their treatment with heterosexual students. They enjoy the freedom to going to all places and are not expelled due to their sexual orientation. In spite of existing homophobia, some gay students expressed the view that there was a process of integration occurring across the campus.

### **7.3.3. What are risks factors arising from their sexual orientation at a TVET College, if any?**

The study found that some gay students feel happy when staying with heterosexual females and lesbian students are happy when they hang around heterosexual male students. Gay students' freedom is suppressed by verbal abuse articulated by heterosexual male students. As a result, they do not find peace when they enter the college gate because some heterosexual students subject them to ridicule. In addition, the study revealed that rural students seem to contribute to discrimination of lesbian and gay students at the college since they had been socialized according to gender norms. The study indicated that there are heterosexual students who distance themselves from lesbian and gay students because they are scared that they would be considered as if they are attracted to gay students.

In relation to lecturers, the study found that some lesbian and gay students feel welcomed by college lecturers and others feel neglected. Those who feel neglected, feel that lecturers ignore the harassment that is directed to them. On the other hand, some lecturers do not use accommodative rules when they elect learner representative because they do not regard lesbians as males and gays as females.

The study found that there are some lesbian and gay students who are accepted by their families and others do not receive support from their parents. Those who are welcomed receive full support which shows a connection between lesbian and gay students and their parents. Lesbian and gay students, who feel neglected, have different navigating and coping strategies to deal with challenges if their parents are not responsive. For example, they remain closeted and also rely on imparting the information with their friends than biological parents. Moreover, the study revealed that there are lesbian and gay students who decided to hide their sexual orientation. They become the victims of abuse.

Findings indicated that the conservative nature of communities and social relations in the rural area pose added difficulties to lesbian and gay students. There are parents and community

members who still believe in gender norms that persist in our communities. Gender norms include factors such as stereotypes about men and woman, attitudes towards appropriate roles for woman and man. Parents believe that lesbian and gays violate gender roles and take this as a failure to raise their children in a proper way. The community members do not want to listen even if they try to explain their sexual orientation because they believe they were born as girls or boys, and girls would do all girls chores later be married.

Furthermore, the study also revealed the conservative nature of patriarchy is more dominant because the communities are under the control of chiefs. This type of community has strong anti-gay views and a conception that homosexuality is un-African. Parents and community members still believe in forced marriages. Lesbians are forced into marriages against their will. They experience emotional pressure to get married by being made to feel that their sexual orientation brings shame in the family and in the community at large. In this case, lesbians live the opposite life. Parents do not feel comfortable when they watch lesbian and gay programmes. They feel upset and disappointed if they realize that there is a gay person in the community.

Findings also indicated that lesbian students entered in relationships with boys so that they could heal the demon (someone possesses an evil spirit or devil) and were frustrated by their sexual identity. They ended up being raped by the people they trusted a lot, such as their own fathers, relatives and friends. Perpetrators use tactics such as outing someone to control them. On the other side, boys tend to force girls to have sex because they believe that girls are sex objects who should agree to sex if a man so desires. This idea is particularly manifest in the rural areas typified in the research site used in this study. Moreover, the study indicated that gay male students are also vulnerable to sexual abuse. This case eliminates the view that it is only girls who are raped or harassed or abused by boys. Gay male rape occurs, though not as frequently as lesbian rape especially if they are vulnerable and will not be able to protect themselves.

Some lesbian and gay students sometimes face hostility. Teachers worsen the situation by labelling and articulating negative words. Lesbian and gay students develop anger since they are unkindly treated and embarrassed in front of the class. Teachers are regarded as the second parents who understand the diversity at school. Gay students see their personality as being damaged by the words articulated by their lecturers and teachers. The study also indicated that some lesbian students face bullying because heterosexual boys undermine their sexualities.

Boys propose to them intentionally so that they could be tempted and also make them believe their sexual orientation is not their true identity.

In contrast with other lesbians, the study revealed that lesbian students who are called 'fem' do not experience abuse because of their personality. They do experience abuse if boys know their sexual orientation. Findings indicated that the majority of lesbian and gay students experience verbal abuse daily and weekly. Lesbian and gay students are undermined by heterosexual students and they become the victims of violence if they inform the heterosexuals about their sexual orientation. Some lesbian and gay students remain indoors most of the time because they are scared to be judged, a form of enforced seclusion.

Some lesbian and gay students reported that there is no support at the college. They do not feel accommodated since they encounter abuse daily. Findings also indicated that there are lecturers who still act as parents to them. Gay students are given an opportunity to educate others about their sexual identity in Life Orientation. The study also revealed that lesbian and gay students are not accommodated in other activities, such as sports in the college. In fact, their sexual orientation curbs them in various ways which made them feel suppressed.

Moreover, the study also found that lesbian and gay students do not enjoy rights such as freedom of speech and non-discrimination. They feel suppressed when they elect their candidate as a member of student representative council. Their rights are denied, for example, heterosexual students do not want to engage or allow playing with them. In the same way, the study revealed that lesbian and gay students do not enjoy their lack of right to privacy. In this case, they do not have privacy when they use toilets.

The study revealed that the church frowns upon homosexuals because it believes that it is contrary to the teachings of the Bible. The church plays a vital role in suppressing the gay identity and believes in heterosexual marriages. Namely, church members believe a woman should marry a man. Some lesbian and gay students blame the church of suppressing their sexual orientation. For instance, lesbian and gay students do not feel comfortable wearing a skirt in church. They feel as if they are punished for being gay. The study also found that bad treatment really lowers academic performance. When they experience bullying, this causes them to fail in achieving their expected standards because of the trauma and shame they experience. Others use a reverse psychology, and show courage. They become optimistic about their future.



#### **7.3.4. What strategies do they use to navigate these risk factors, if any?**

The study revealed that some lesbian and gay students decided to be silent when they are dealing with discrimination and vulnerability at the college. They do not know where to report their problems. For this reason, some lesbian students use skills that they got during the counselling process. On the other hand, some lesbian and gay students fight back if perpetrators carry on deviant behaviour. They show that they have power like heterosexuals but they differ in terms of sexual orientation. Others become passive and withdraw from the class.

The study found that lesbian and gay students respect their parents and the community members although they do not feel well since heterosexual life conflicts with their real sexual identities. Findings indicated that some lesbian and gay students use the Bible to mediate their anger towards the community members and others hide their sexual orientation in order to avoid being kicked out from their homesteads. In addition, some lesbian and gay students use music to mediate emotions. They thought music offers a lot of support that might be offered by friends or parents or community members. Others keep quiet because they want peace and to feel better. The study also revealed that some lesbian and gay students resort to substance abuse such as drinking alcohol, smoking cigarette and dagga. They want to reduce fears and take their mind off from troubles they face every day based on their sexual identity. Some use social media to communicate their predicaments. They joined groups to get advices.

In contrast with the above findings, the study revealed that some lesbian and gay students seek advice from their friends, more especially to people who belong to gay groups. Advice helps them feel less isolated. Alternatively, they believe that God is a healer and comforter. They do not trust anyone. They believe that there is no one that can help them with their problems.

The study indicated that lesbian and gay students emphasize that capacity building and support groups or organizations, workshops and awareness campaign should be increased. They believe that all students should be motivated to effect change in their lives and in their relationships. Typically, they suggest that heterosexual people should learn to understand that people are born differently. They believe that if heterosexual students and lecturers are capacitated, everything will be simple and normal in the college because they will start accepting each other since they will have knowledge about this.

The study found that lesbian and gay students emphasize unity among each other, they believe that if they fight each other anyone can break them easily and take advantage of them. In addition, the study revealed that they want to participate in drama in the college. They want to play all characters, a female character if he is a gay and male character if she is a lesbian. Another issue that has been revealed by the study, lesbian and gay students want inclusive toilets. They suggest that if the college has gendered neutral toilets, it means it fosters an inclusive environment, it shows it cares about diversity. The study indicated that there should be a disciplinary committee. They suggest that if policemen are involved in support groups they would have better chances to report issues.

Lastly, the findings reported that lesbian and gay students want the gay community to be set free from societal norms that demean gay rights and prevent them from living a full life. They want the community members to support gay individuals on their various journeys and to have to listen and offer support when they can and when it is appropriate. The findings indicated that some lesbian and gay students wish to change the perception of churches towards homosexuals. They need deliverances from harmful theologies that state they are unloved and also need deliverance from their families who threw them away. In fact, they want freedom to do what they want without caring what other people say.

#### **7.4. Reflection on my learning**

Pertaining to the study, I learnt that lesbian and gay students are living with shame, fear, discrimination, hate and violence from our societies. From being denied basic human rights, they are subject to discrimination simply for being who they are. I learnt that there is no one who is equal until all of us are treated equally. Lesbian and gay students in this study are typical examples, the way they are treated by different people in the college, home and in the society at large.

The topic was crucial to me as a researcher or an educator because I sought to improve how I communicate with lesbian and gay students, to impart knowledge to those members of the community who have negative attitudes towards the gay community. I would like to see more gay students come out and assert themselves in a free democratic society. What encouraged me to undertake this study was the Social Justice Education course that I learnt in my Master's level which emphasizes non-discrimination, non-racism, fairness, justice and equality. So when

I saw one of the gay students being treated unfairly by one of the heterosexual students in the TVET College, I felt that the gay community is marginalized and a persecuted minority.

In this study, listening to individual's stories afforded me an opportunity to become conscious of lesbian and gay students' needs and to understand how they make meaning of their own lives in relation to their treatment by college students, family members and community members. The participants in this study were very happy about the whole process because they spoke freely, and openly. The study taught me directly how to maintain balance in terms of diversity since participants came from diverse backgrounds. I now recognize the role that was played by their environments in shaping their lives. I feel that my study would contribute to the discussions and debates taking place in the community and college platforms around the gay community.

Working with lesbian and gay students on a one-on-one basis made me as a researcher, better understand the significance of supporting them and to use platforms in class to engage heterosexual students or learners about the gay community and sexuality in general. I learnt to listen tentatively to individual's story which was a difficult skill that I did not have. I also learnt to separate issues since the incidents occurred in different areas. While I was listening to their stories, lesbian and gay students made different suggestions on how they should be treated in society. This confirms that lesbian and gay students are marginalized in their society on issues related to their sexual orientation and on general matters. This suggests that their voices should be listened to and are to be accorded equal rights.

The different and thought provoking themes that have been derived from the study suggested that community members and students in colleges could learn to tolerate each other regardless of their sexual orientation. Using visual methods in order to access lesbian and gay students' experiences, made me realize that there was a great need for lecturers to apply pedagogical strategies across the curriculum with the aim of providing support to gay community.

Although I was a stranger to the lesbian and gay students, they were able to talk to me and divulge details of their lives through drawings. This means that if college lecturers want to gain insights into the lesbian and gay students' lives in order to support them, a solution could be in the use of visual method. However, in this study, lesbian and gay students confirmed viewing themselves during the semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and therefore engaged with individual experiences through visual methods, provided such an opportunity to talk. Listening to individual experiences can be utilized by college lecturers to develop the

resilience of lesbian and gay students. This means that a pastoral role can also be exercised as part of normal college curriculum.

During the data collection, I learnt that ethical issues were very crucial and related to be taken seriously by a person who intended to engage in research with vulnerable groups. When one of the participants decided to withdraw from the study on the second session, the focus group interviews, I experienced first-hand, how important it was to commit to ethical principles stated in the consent form. In the consent form, I stated that participants could withdraw from the study at any time. I was confronted with the reality of being aware of ethical issues when doing research with lesbian and gay students.

I have learnt that adults are not the source of information about the experiences of lesbian and gay students. I learnt that if I want to get rich information I must speak with the relevant person. This information could be utilized by lecturers and teachers in different levels to build confidence and provide support to the gay community rather to be gleaned with societal expectations or beliefs. This requires me as a researcher and college lecturers to be life-long learners. I have understood that the gay community is part of our society and it is here to stay with us. This means that heterosexual people like me and others, should learn to accept and tolerate the existence of gay community in our societies.

In this study, I did not know that the negative words that we articulate as heterosexual people also play a destructive role in hurting the gay community. I also did not know that the act of coming out by lesbians and gays to family members, community members and in college becomes hard for them. Furthermore, I did not know that lesbian and gay students also discriminate and undermine each other. They look at individual's background and class in terms of affordability. I did not know that some lesbian and gay students do not stick together during lunch time or after school hours and there are those who are bossy and rude to others. I did not know that lesbians have different names like 'fem', 'butch' etc.

## **7.5. Potential contribution of this study**

In this section, I will present potential contribution of this study in terms of theoretical contribution and methodological contribution.

### **7.5.1. Theoretical contribution**

I used queer theory (Butler, Abes, Fryer, Calafell & Nakayama, Jagose, Kirch, Giffney, Riggs & Trehane, Sedgwick, Warner, Seidman and others) as an appropriate theory to gain insight about a selected lesbian and gay community. I adopted queer because it is an umbrella term for people who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI). Queer theory emphasizes that categories and labels are to be ignored and deconstruct the existing categories of people and cultures. The theory helps me understand that heterosexual people are reluctant to accept lesbian and gay people as members of the community, they feel excluded in all practices in their communities, are expelled from their homes and places where they regard them as a safe place such as a college. Taking a queer theory stance helped me to take into account the interaction and experiences the lesbian and gay students encounter in their daily lives.

I believe that the study has contributed to queer theory by confirming that cultural taboo and perception of people about the gay community still exist and needs to be condemned and excised from society. The findings suggest that positive attitudes about the gay community create a positive environment. The suggestion from this study could make a contribution to enhance resilience particularly in those places where lesbian and gay students experience discomfort. Those suggestions will serve as a protective measure to curb discrimination or undermining. The rich data that I gleaned from interviews and drawings, gave me insight on how lesbian and gay students fight for acceptance in the college, home and in the community at large. The data shows explicitly how lesbian and gay students interact with their classmates who are heterosexuals, families and the community.

### **7.5.2. Methodological contribution**

I used narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry prepares me to enter into the lives of each participant. The intention is to understand their challenges or problems in their own environment. It is also appropriate for professionals and people who want to explore, understand and to provide social justice. It will help them to address the adversities prevailing in the context. Since now I understand that this methodology is appropriate, as a teacher, I can now introduce topics that relate to the lesbian and gay students experiences so that I could enter into their world. This helps me improve their classroom contexts. It inspired me to make some changes personally, in the way I perceive lesbian and gay community and develop my new teaching style so that I will accommodate diversity in the classroom. I gained a new insight by using narrative inquiry.

It became suitable for me as a teacher, who intends to make a change in my professional practice. Narrative methodology prepares and develops mental strength to adapt and transform into new habits because change is not an easy experience. This methodology is focussed on individual experiences.

This methodology has given a voice to marginalized population, particularly lesbian and gay students whose perspective was not considered. It has given each participant an opportunity to voice his/her experiences that she/he encounters daily because of her or his sexual orientation. The interviews and visual methods that I employed in this study allowed for the generation of in depth data on the lesbian and gay students' experiences. I used their responses from individual interviews and drawings as a first layer of analysis. Interacting with lesbian and gay students in their mother tongue meant that their culture was observed, respected and recognized. The lessons learnt in this study made methodological contribution to the ethics of working with lesbian and gay students and respecting their voices regarding their daily experiences. Narrative inquiry encourages the teachers and lecturers to listen and tackle problems and challenges that face lesbian and gay students in their respective places. This methodology encourages teachers and lecturers to provide support to lesbian and gay students.

#### **7.6. Originality of the study**

This study was conducted in a TVET College located in a rural town of Kwa-Zulu Natal. The participants who participated in the study were coming from deep rural areas where the customs and beliefs are respected. In these areas, every person is expected to behave in a certain manner and according to societal expectations. The study is unique because the participants came from different areas but studying in the same TVET College which assisted me in understanding how their communities treat the gay community. The study explored interactions and treatment the lesbian and gay students face directly or indirectly within or way out in a TVET College.

Lesbian and gay students afforded an opportunity to let their voices be heard and in so doing, provided a glimpse into how they understand, identify and navigate the places and spaces in which they feel discomfort. The study created an awareness to me as a researcher, to recognize that in our communities there are still lesbian and gay youth who still face exclusion and who remain closeted because they are scared to be discriminated by their families and the society.

The study will assist the college to develop new strategies that will enhance inclusivity and recognition of diversity. This will help college lecturers to effect change, promote wellbeing, foster safe and affirm school environments. The study will contribute by helping the college to provide support for LGBT students and create awareness in the college and help to counteract discrimination. In this instance, the college will ensure that the college policies and curriculum are inclusive. Furthermore, the study has recognized the significance of lesbian and gay students' perspectives and expertise and considered them as valued partners in educational research and practice.

### **7.7. Limitation of the study**

The study cannot be generalized as the findings are limited to rural TVET College in Zulu-Bhaca ethnic community. Other colleges with different demographic and with participants from other cultures may produce different results. Generalization was not the main of the study. However, I believe that what I have learnt and what the findings suggest shed light on how students, lecturers, college staff, families and community members could understand, treat and support lesbian and gay students. The study was intended to get ten participants, five students who identified as lesbians and five participants who identified as gays. Since it was a sensitive study, it was difficult for me as a researcher to get participants I intended. Therefore I used snowball sampling where I managed to get six participants who identified themselves as lesbians and three participants who identified as gays. The participants were between the ages of 19 to 30 years. The number of participants was very small. Although the study used small number of participants but it does assist in comprehending how the gay community are unkindly treated and how they navigate the world with these experiences.

In this study, majority participants presented the data in IsiBhaca and IsiZulu language, one participant in IsiXhosa and one participant in English since he is Coloured, but he knows other languages since he had grown up in Umzimkhulu as his home town. I then translated this data into English. I acknowledged that some of the nuances and meanings that were put across may have been lost in translation. However, I wrote some of the words as it were to maintain authenticity. I asked the participants to explain the meaning of words so that I could not lose the meaning.

## **7.8. Recommendations**

### **7.8.1. Implication on policy and practice**

College can improve the climate for lesbian and gay students in a class and on campus. Lesbian and gay students also experience discrimination when colleges take passive stance. College can help to create a welcoming environment for all students and if all stakeholders are involved and play their role:

#### **7.8.1.1. College as institution**

There are many ways to make college policies and practices lesbian and gay inclusive.

- Establish non-discriminatory policy that prevents discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity expression.
- Work with college coaches and psychological education lecturers to combat anti-LGBT language among staff and students.
- Ensure events are inclusive of same gender and gender non-conforming couples. College events such as proms that limit students guest or date choices to those of another gender can make students feel excluded and unwelcome.
- Ensure that the college library include LGBT themed literature in the library collection.
- Ensure that internet filters are not blocking students from finding positive and helpful information about LGBT community.
- Educational programmes can be included into first year seminars that help to give factual information and dispel myths about homosexuality. Butler and Astbury (2003) add that these programmes should be inclusive of the existing curriculum to engender as sense of equality for lesbian and gay students.
- Ensure that there is an intergroup dialogue programmes between heterosexual and LGBT students.
- Since faculty and staff play a vital role in socializing students, the onus rests on them to create a co-operative learning environment that takes sexual diversity into account.
- Support initiatives that will enable lesbian and gay students to develop friendships with their heterosexual students.
- Ensure that there is speaker panels and guest presentations by lesbian and gay students.



- Increase visibility of LGBT issues and people:
  - ❖ Support visible LGBT faculty and staff as role models for students.
  - ❖ Incorporate LGBT material in the curriculum of mainstream courses
  - ❖ Support the development of LGBT studies curricula.

#### **7.8.1.2. College staff**

- When lecturers presenting lesson, they must include examples of diverse families including same sex couples and LGBT parents, whenever referencing families in the classroom. Providing students with support can help LGBT students and students with LGBT family members feel included in the classroom.
- They must use inclusive literature. Using inclusive literature will help to create a welcoming space for LGBT students as well as promote respect and acceptance among all students.
- They must celebrate LGBT events. Celebrating LGBT events can help LGBT students feel included in the college. They must promote LGBT events throughout the school as they would any other cultural celebration.
- They must act as role model for other staff, use the relevant terms such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning queer or LGBT and correct people when they hear incorrect or derogatory language.
- They must tell them about experiences of LGBT students in college. Letting other staff know about the concrete things they can do may help make being an ally a realistic option for LGBT students.
- They must find community organization that can provide training resources to college.
- They must distribute information about the LGBT community.
- They must give a presentation to college staff.
- They must teach to reduce victimization of lesbian and gay students. For example:
  - ❖ Recognize and interpret harassment when it occurs.
  - ❖ Create a classroom climate that supports dialogue, debate, disagreement within the context of personal respect.
  - ❖ Refrain from anti-LGBT jokes, derogatory remarks and personal attacks on students.
  - ❖ Call prompt attention to both malicious and unintended homophobic remarks by students.

- Support students in their academic exploration of LGBT issues. For example:
  - ❖ Encourage all students to read and write about issues affecting the lesbian and gay communities.
  - ❖ Learn more about lesbian and gay issues by attending campus events, as well as related sessions at academic conferences (Renn, 2000).

#### **7.8.1.3. Parents**

Parents can assist their LGBT children by:

- Asking them about their experiences and how they can help them feel supported.
- Listening without interrupting or arguing.
- Telling them that they are loved and express affection.
- Learn together about issues LGBT youth face by joining an LGBT family support organization.
- Standing up for their children when they are mistreated, even by other family members.
- Helping their children find LGBT role models among friends and family members.
- Talking to their religious leaders about helping their place of worship become more supportive of LGBT people or find a more supportive place of worship.
- Encouraging family and friends to check in with their children and show support.
- Challenging homophobic comments.
- Getting to know their children's LGBT friends and romantic partner.
- Support their children gender expression.

#### **7.8.1.4. Community members**

Community members can assist the LGBT community by:

- Establishing a core group. This could be an LGBT group or wider but should comprise of young people who want to make a difference in their community.
- Describing the group as a community group or social justice group.
- Encouraging people to participate voluntarily to the group.
- Making everyone know that the originators of the group are LGBT but it is a community group not an LGBT group.

### **7.9. Reflection and consideration for further research**

South Africa is in twenty eight years of democracy but lesbian and gay community continues to suffer in terms of their sexual orientation. They feel excluded and discriminated as the findings indicated. The study has not included lesbians and gays who are not attending the college since the study did not embrace lesbians and gays who were not schooling. I, therefore, suggest room for further research on those children who are at home and who also experience ill-treatment in their communities. There should be further research, especially on traditional structures, norms, values and beliefs that underlie how lesbian and gay students navigate in those places where they experience discrimination, bullying and abuse. The research should look at how these communities address perpetration of abuse, discrimination, bullying and traditional norms over lesbian and gay identity.

### **7.10. Conclusion**

The study discussed how the lesbian and gay students understand being gay, how they are being treated in those spaces of discomfort and how they navigate in these spaces in which they considered themselves as vulnerable. The study found that the legacy of discrimination and abuse within the Umzimkhulu area is prevalent. The way the gay community is treated is unfair to the victims because they use cultural practices that normalize the incidents and the victims are forced to act as normal people. The study made suggestions that may assist the college and the community at large in dealing with abuse and discrimination of lesbians and gays. The study helped the students by creating an awareness of the issues of abuse, discrimination, culture and practices in their own spaces.

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## Appendix 1

## School of Education

Consent letter from the Campus Manager

School of Education  
University of Kwa-Zulu Natal  
Edgewood Campus  
P. Bag X03  
Ashwood 3605, Durban  
09 July 2018

The Campus Manager  
Eyasidi Umimkhulu TVET College  
Umzimkhulu  
3297

Dear Sir/Madam

### **Re: Request for the permission to conduct research at your institution**

We are staff members in the School of Education, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. We plan to undertake a study titled: *An exploration of Lesbian and gay student experiences at a TVET College in Harry Gwala District in Kwa-Zulu*. We are the projects leaders for this project.

We hereby request your permission to conduct a study at Eyasidi Umzimkhulu TVET College. The participants in the study will be students from your institution. They will be required to participate in individual interviews and focus group interviews that are expected to last 90-120 minutes in three sessions.

Please note that:

- ✓ The college and participants will not receive material gains for participation in this research project.

- ✓ The students will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect their own personal opinion
- ✓ The college's or participant's identities will not be divulged under any circumstances.
- ✓ All student responses will be treated with strictly confidentiality.
- ✓ Pseudonyms will be used (real names of the participants and the institution will not be used the research process).
- ✓ Participation is voluntarily; therefore, participants will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or understandable consequences to them.
- ✓ The participants will not, under any circumstances, be forced to disclose what they do not want to reveal.
- ✓ Audio-recording of interviews will only be done if the permission of the participants is obtained.
- ✓ Data will be stored in the University locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed.

I thank you

Yours sincerely

.....  
[Redacted Signature]  
Professor A. Sheik


[Redacted Address]  
Email: [sheika@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:sheika@ukzn.ac.za)


## Consent Form

If permission is granted to conduct the research at your college, please fill in and sign the form below.

I, ALSON M. CELE.....(Full Name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I hereby grant permission for the researcher to conduct the research project at the ESAYIDI TVET COLLEGE (CLYDESDALE CAMPUS).....(Name of institution). I understand that students are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they desire.

Name ALSON M. CELE.....

Signature  Date 08/08/2018

  
Professor A. Sheik



Email: sheika@ukzn.ac.za

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION & TRAINING ESAYIDI TVET COLLEGE CLYDESDALE CAMPUS
2018 -08- 08
P.O. BOX 132, UMZIMKHULU 3297 TEL: 074 1718 155 clydesdale.esayidi@gmail.com



## Appendix 2

## School of Education

Consent letter from the students

School of Education  
University of Kwa-Zulu Natal  
Edgewood Campus  
P. Bag X03  
Ashwood 3605, Durban  
09 July 2018

Dear Student

### **Re: Request your participation in a research project**

It was good to meet you on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2018. As I told in our meeting, I am a PhD student in the School of Education, University of Kwa-Zulu natal. I would like to do a study called, '*An exploration of Lesbian and gay student experiences at a TVET College in Harry Gwala District in Kwa-Zulu.*

I kindly ask your permission to participate in the project. The participants in the study will be students from your institution. I value what you think about your institution and how you are experiencing. You will be required to permit me to interview you individually and in focus group. The interviews will take approximately 90-120 minutes. I will meet you in three sessions on different days that is convenient for you.

Please note that:

- ✓ The college and participants will not receive material gains for participation in this research project.
- ✓ The students will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect their own personal opinion
- ✓ The college's or participant's identities will not be divulged under any circumstances.
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- ✓ You will not, under any circumstances, be forced to disclose what they do not want to reveal.
- ✓ Audio-recording of interviews will only be done if the permission of the participants is obtained.
- ✓ Data will be stored in the University locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed.

I thank you

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Mr A.K. Zincume (PhD Student)

[REDACTED]

Email: [alfredkzincume@gmail.com](mailto:alfredkzincume@gmail.com)

[REDACTED]

Professor A. Sheik

[REDACTED]

Email: [sheika@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:sheika@ukzn.ac.za)

## Consent Form

If you agree to take part in this research project, please fill in and sign the form below.

I, Anelre Henrico Heslop.....(Full Name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I hereby to take part in the research project at my college. I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time I want to.

Name...Anelre Heslop.....

Signature. [REDACTED]..... Date...05 August 2018.....

[REDACTED]  
Professor A. Sheik

[REDACTED]  
Email: [sheika@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:sheika@ukzn.ac.za)

[REDACTED]  
Mr A.K. Zincume (PhD Student)

[REDACTED]  
Email: [alfredkzincume@gmail.com](mailto:alfredkzincume@gmail.com)

## Appendix 2

## School of Education

Consent letter from the students

School of Education  
University of Kwa-Zulu Natal  
Edgewood Campus  
P. Bag X03  
Ashwood 3605, Durban  
09 July 2018

Dear Student

### **Re: Request your participation in a research project**

It was good to meet you on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2018. As I told in our meeting, I am a PhD student in the School of Education, University of Kwa-Zulu natal. I would like to do a study called, *'An exploration of Lesbian and gay student experiences at a TVET College in Harry Gwala District in Kwa-Zulu.*

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Please note that:

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- ✓ The students will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect their own personal opinion
- ✓ The college's or participant's identities will not be divulged under any circumstances.
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- ✓ Pseudonyms will be used (real names of the participants and the institution will not be used the research process).
- ✓ Participation is voluntarily; therefore, participants will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or understandable consequences to them.
- ✓ You will not, under any circumstances, be forced to disclose what they do not want to reveal.
- ✓ Audio-recording of interviews will only be done if the permission of the participants is obtained.
- ✓ Data will be stored in the University locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed.

I thank you

Yours sincerely

  
.....

Mr A.K. Zincume (PhD Student)



Email: [alfredkzincume@gmail.com](mailto:alfredkzincume@gmail.com)

  
.....

Professor A. Sheik



Email: [sheika@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:sheika@ukzn.ac.za)



## Consent Form

If you agree to take part in this research project, please fill in and sign the form below.

I, Mawande Jaka.....(Full Name) hereby confirm  
that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I  
hereby to take part in the research project at my college. I understand that I can withdraw  
from the project at any time I want to.

Name Mawande Jaka.....

Signature [Redacted]..... Date 08-08-2018.....

[Redacted]  
Professor A. Sheik

[Redacted]  
Email: [sheika@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:sheika@ukzn.ac.za)

[Redacted]  
Mr A.K. Zincume (PhD Student)

[Redacted]  
Email: [alfredkzincume@gmail.com](mailto:alfredkzincume@gmail.com)

## Appendix 2

## School of Education

Consent letter from the students

School of Education

University of Kwa-Zulu Natal

Edgewood Campus

P. Bag X03

Ashwood 3605, Durban

09 July 2018

Dear Student

### **Re: Request your participation in a research project**

It was good to meet you on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2018. As I told in our meeting, I am a PhD student in the School of Education, University of Kwa-Zulu natal. I would like to do a study called, '*An exploration of Lesbian and gay student experiences at a TVET College in Harry Gwala District in Kwa-Zulu.*

I kindly ask your permission to participate in the project. The participants in the study will be students from your institution. I value what you think about your institution and how you are experiencing. You will be required to permit me to interview you individually and in focus group. The interviews will take approximately 90-120 minutes. I will meet you in three sessions on different days that is convenient for you.


Please note that:

- ✓ The college and participants will not receive material gains for participation in this research project.
- ✓ The students will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect their own personal opinion
- ✓ The college's or participant's identities will not be divulged under any circumstances.
- ✓ All student responses will be treated with strictly confidentiality.

- ✓ Pseudonyms will be used (real names of the participants and the institution will not be used the research process).
- ✓ Participation is voluntarily; therefore, participants will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or understandable consequences to them.
- ✓ You will not, under any circumstances, be forced to disclose what they do not want to reveal.
- ✓ Audio-recording of interviews will only be done if the permission of the participants is obtained.
- ✓ Data will be stored in the University locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed.

I thank you

Yours sincerely

  
.....

Mr A.K. Zincume (PhD Student)



Email: [alfredkzincume@gmail.com](mailto:alfredkzincume@gmail.com)

  
.....

Professor A. Sheik



Email: [sheika@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:sheika@ukzn.ac.za)



## Consent Form

If you agree to take part in this research project, please fill in and sign the form below.

I, THABISILE TWARA.....(Full Name) hereby confirm  
that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I  
hereby to take part in the research project at my college. I understand that I can withdraw  
from the project at any time I want to.

Name THABISILE TWARA.....

Signature [Redacted]..... Date 08 August 2018.....

[Redacted]  
Professor A. Sheik

Email: sheika@ukzn.ac.za

[Redacted]  
Mr A.K. Zincume (PhD Student)

[Redacted]  
Email: alfredkzincume@gmail.com

## Appendix 2

### School of Education

#### Consent letter from the students

School of Education  
University of Kwa-Zulu Natal  
Edgewood Campus  
P. Bag X03  
Ashwood 3605, Durban  
09 July 2018

Dear Student

#### Re: Request your participation in a research project

It was good to meet you on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2018. As I told in our meeting, I am a PhD student in the school of Education, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. I would like to do a study called, *'An exploration of lesbian and gay student experiences at a TVET College in Harry Gwala District in Kwa-Zulu Natal.*

I kindly ask your permission to participate in the project. The participants in the study will be students from your institution. I value what you think about your institution and how you are experiencing. You will be required to permit me to interview you individually and in focus group. The interviews will take approximately 90-120 minutes. I will meet you in three sessions on different days that is convenient for you.

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- ✓ You will not, under any circumstances be forced to disclose what they do not want to reveal.
- ✓ Audio-recording of interviews will only be done if the permission of the participants is obtained.
- ✓ Data will be stored in the University locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed.

I thank you

Your sincerely

  
.....  
Mr A.K. Zincume (PhD Student)

  
Email: [alfredkzincume@gmail.com](mailto:alfredkzincume@gmail.com)

.....  
Professor A. Sheik

  
Email: [sheik@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:sheik@ukzn.ac.za)

## Consent Form

If you agree to take part in this research project, please fill in and sign the form below.

I, Silindile Mzolo.....(Full Name)  
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of document and the nature of the research project. I hereby to take part in the research project at my college. I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time I want to.

Name Silindile Mzolo.....

Signature [Redacted].....Date 20/09/2019.....

.....  
Professor A. Sheik

[Redacted]  
Email: [sheik@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:sheik@ukzn.ac.za)

.....  
Mr A. K. Zincume (PhD Student)

[Redacted]  
Email: [alfredkzincume@gmail.com](mailto:alfredkzincume@gmail.com)

## Appendix 2

### School of Education

#### Consent letter from the students

School of Education  
University of Kwa-Zulu Natal  
Edgewood Campus  
P. Bag X03  
Ashwood 3605, Durban  
09 July 2018

Dear Student

#### Re: Request your participation in a research project

It was good to meet you on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2018. As I told in our meeting, I am a PhD student in the school of Education, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. I would like to do a study called, '*An exploration of lesbian and gay student experiences at a TVET College in Harry Gwala District in Kwa-Zulu Natal.*'

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- ✓ Data will be stored in the University locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed.

I thank you

Your sincerely

  
.....  
Mr A.K. Zincume (PhD Student)

  
Email: [alfredkzincume@gmail.com](mailto:alfredkzincume@gmail.com)

.....  
Professor A. Sheik


  
Email: [sheik@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:sheik@ukzn.ac.za)

## Consent Form

If you agree to take part in this research project, please fill in and sign the form below.

I, Vuyani Duma ..... (Full Name)  
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of document and the nature of the research project. I hereby to take part in the research project at my college. I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time I want to.

Name Vuyani Duma 1 .....

Signature:  ..... Date 20/09/2019 .....

.....  
Professor A. Sheik

  
Email: [sheik@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:sheik@ukzn.ac.za)

.....  
Mr A. K. Zincume (PhD Student)

  
Email: [alfredkzincume@gmail.com](mailto:alfredkzincume@gmail.com)

## Appendix 2

### School of Education

#### Consent letter from the students

School of Education  
University of Kwa-Zulu Natal  
Edgewood Campus  
P. Bag X03  
Ashwood 3605, Durban  
09 July 2018

Dear Student

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I thank you

Your sincerely

  
.....  
Mr A.K. Zincume (PhD Student)

  
Email: [alfredkzincume@gmail.com](mailto:alfredkzincume@gmail.com)

.....  
Professor A. Sheik

  
Email: [sheik@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:sheik@ukzn.ac.za)

## Consent Form

If you agree to take part in this research project, please fill in and sign the form below.

I, Vuyani Duma ..... (Full Name)  
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of document and the nature of the research project. I hereby to take part in the research project at my college. I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time I want to.

Name Vuyani Duma 1 .....

Signature:  ..... Date 20/09/2019 .....

.....  
Professor A. Sheik

  
Email: [sheik@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:sheik@ukzn.ac.za)

.....  
Mr A. K. Zincume (PhD Student)

  
Email: [alfredkzincume@gmail.com](mailto:alfredkzincume@gmail.com)

## Appendix 2

### School of Education

#### Consent letter from the students

School of Education  
University of Kwa-Zulu Natal  
Edgewood Campus  
P. Bag X03  
Ashwood 3605, Durban  
09 July 2018

Dear Student

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- ✓ Data will be stored in the University locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed.

I thank you

Your sincerely

[REDACTED]

.....  
Mr A.K. Zincume (PhD Student)

[REDACTED]

Email: [alfredkzincume@gmail.com](mailto:alfredkzincume@gmail.com)

.....  
Professor A. Sheik

[REDACTED]

Email: [sheik@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:sheik@ukzn.ac.za)

## Consent Form

If you agree to take part in this research project, please fill in and sign the form below.

I, NANDI DLAMINI.....(Full Name)  
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of document and the nature of the research project. I hereby to take part in the research project at my college. I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time I want to.

Name NANDI DLAMINI.....

Signature .....Date.....

.....  
Professor A. Sheik

  
Email: [sheik@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:sheik@ukzn.ac.za)

.....  
Mr A. K. Zincume (PhD Student)

  
Email: [alfredkzincume@gmail.com](mailto:alfredkzincume@gmail.com)

## Appendix 2

### School of Education

#### Consent letter from the students

School of Education  
University of Kwa-Zulu Natal  
Edgewood Campus  
P. Bag X03  
Ashwood 3605, Durban  
09 July 2018

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I thank you

Your sincerely

[REDACTED]

.....  
Mr A.K. Zincume (PhD Student)

[REDACTED]

Email: [alfredkzincume@gmail.com](mailto:alfredkzincume@gmail.com)

.....  
Professor A. Sheik

[REDACTED]

Email: [sheik@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:sheik@ukzn.ac.za)

## Consent Form

If you agree to take part in this research project, please fill in and sign the form below.

I, Luleka Mbonjwa.....(Full Name)  
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of document and the nature of the research project. I hereby to take part in the research project at my college. I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time I want to.

Name Luleka Mbonjwa.....

Signature..........Date 20/09/2019.....

.....  
Professor A. Sheik

  
Email: [sheik@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:sheik@ukzn.ac.za)

.....  
Mr A. K. Zincume (PhD Student)

  
Email: [alfredkzincume@gmail.com](mailto:alfredkzincume@gmail.com)



## Appendix 2

### School of Education

#### Consent letter from the students

School of Education  
University of Kwa-Zulu Natal  
Edgewood Campus  
P. Bag X03  
Ashwood 3605, Durban  
09 July 2018

Dear Student

#### Re: Request your participation in a research project

It was good to meet you on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2018. As I told in our meeting, I am a PhD student in the school of Education, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. I would like to do a study called, *'An exploration of lesbian and gay student experiences at a TVET College in Harry Gwala District in Kwa-Zulu Natal.*

I kindly ask your permission to participate in the project. The participants in the study will be students from your institution. I value what you think about your institution and how you are experiencing. You will be required to permit me to interview you individually and in focus group. The interviews will take approximately 90-120 minutes. I will meet you in three sessions on different days that is convenient for you.

Please note that:

- ✓ The college and participants will not receive material gains for participation in this research project.
- ✓ The students will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect their own personal opinion
- ✓ The college's or participant's identity will not be divulged under any circumstances.
- ✓ All student responses will be treated with strictly confidentiality.
- ✓ Pseudonyms will be used (real names of the participants and the institution will not be used in the research process).

- ✓ Participants is voluntarily, therefore, participants will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or understandable consequences to them.
- ✓ You will not, under any circumstances be forced to disclose what they do not want to reveal.
- ✓ Audio-recording of interviews will only be done if the permission of the participants is obtained.
- ✓ Data will be stored in the University locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed.

I thank you

Your sincerely

[REDACTED]

.....  
Mr A.K. Zincume (PhD Student)

[REDACTED]

Email: [alfredkzincume@gmail.com](mailto:alfredkzincume@gmail.com)

.....  
Professor A. Sheik

[REDACTED]

Email: [sheik@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:sheik@ukzn.ac.za)

## Consent Form

If you agree to take part in this research project, please fill in and sign the form below.

I, Luleka Mbonjwa.....(Full Name)  
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of document and the nature of the research project. I hereby to take part in the research project at my college. I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time I want to.

Name Luleka Mbonjwa.....

Signature..........Date 20/09/2019.....

.....  
Professor A. Sheik

  
Email: [sheik@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:sheik@ukzn.ac.za)

.....  
Mr A. K. Zincume (PhD Student)

  
Email: [alfredkzincume@gmail.com](mailto:alfredkzincume@gmail.com)

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ASOKA ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITING  
35 Arcadia, 1 Peacehaven Pl, Grosvenor, Bluff, 4052. South Africa



## DECLARATION

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE DISSERTATION ENTITLED  
**AN EXPLORATION OF LESBIAN AND GAY STUDENTS EXPERIENCES AT A  
TECHNICAL AND VOCATION COLLEGE IN HARRY GWALA DISTRICT IN  
KWA-ZULU NATAL**

Candidate: ALFRED ZINCUME

*HAS BEEN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITED.*



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Whilst the English language editor has used electronic track changes to facilitate corrections and has inserted comments and queries in a right-hand column, the responsibility for effecting changes in the final, submitted document, remains the responsibility of the client and the editor cannot be held responsible for the quality of English Language expression used in corrections or additions effected subsequent to the transmission of this certificate on 23/02/2021.

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Prof. Dennis Schaffer, M.A.(Leeds), PhD, KwaZulu (Natal), TEFL(London), TITC Business English,  
Emeritus Professor UKZN. Univ. Cambridge Accreditation: IGCSE Drama. Hon. Research Fellow, DUT.  
Durban University of Technology.

17 December 2019

Mr Alfred Khayaletu Zincume (212559882)

School of Education

Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Zincume,

**Protocol reference number : HSS/0233/019D**

**Project title:** An exploration of lesbian and gay student experiences at a Technical Vocational Educational and Training (TVET) College in Harry Gwala District in KwaZulu-Natal

**Approval Notification – Full Committee Reviewed Protocol**

This letter serves to notify you that your response received on 05 July 2019 to our letter of 20 May 2019 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

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 discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid for one year until 17 December 2020.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Shamila Naidoo (Acting Chair)

/ms

cc Supervisor: Professor A Sheik

cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Ansurie Pillay

cc School Administrator: Ms M Ngcobo

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

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