

**A STUDY ON SOCIETAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS
HOMOSEXUALS IN THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY
OF VHEMBE DISTRICT, SOUTH AFRICA.**

BY

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BY

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in the Department of Psychology at the University of Venda

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Declaration

I, Vhahangwele Mushome, hereby declare that the dissertation on **“the societal attitudes towards homosexuals in Thulamela Municipality of the Vhembe district”** for the Master of Arts at the University of Venda, hereby submitted by me has not previously been submitted for a degree at this or any other institution, and that it is my own work in design and in execution and that all reference material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

Signature:

Date:

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I thank God the Almighty who gave me love, strength and courage to complete this dissertation.

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Dedication

I lovingly dedicate this dissertation to my late sister Suzan Humbulani Mushome and my son Tshedza Prince Nedzingahe who have always been my source of motivation to tackle any task with enthusiasm and determination in both my professional and personal life. I also dedicate this dissertation to all the homosexual, bisexual, transgender and other gender non-conforming people in the world who struggle to be what they are; your struggle is real, your struggle is unique, keep fighting.

Abstract

The study aimed to explore societal attitudes towards homosexual individuals in the Thulamela Municipality of the Vhembe District Municipality. The objectives of the study were to identify societal attitudes towards homosexuals in Thulamela Municipality, to explore challenges posed by society towards homosexual people in Thulamela Municipality, and to describe societal perceptions of homosexual individuals. The study was qualitative in nature and purposive sampling was used in the study. A semi-structured interview guide was used. A minimum of 12 non-homosexual people were interviewed. Thematic content analysis was used to analyse data. Different ethical issues were taken into consideration before the study was conducted. The findings of the study show that society is still conservative when it comes to homosexuality. However, it discourages harsh negative attitudes towards homosexual people. Society needs to develop more accepting and tolerant behaviors towards homosexuality. The study found that age, sex, race, ethnicity, social background, level of education and religious affiliation were consistent factors in determining attitudes towards homosexuality. This study recommends that training workshops on sexual orientation should be intensified for teachers, police officers, nurses and other public service employees as well as school administrators to inform them of current trends of homosexuality in the schools. It is also recommended that student accessibility to appropriate and accurate information regarding students' sexuality should be increased at early stages through library and Internet resources, as well as workshops and forums.

Keywords: attitudes, homosexuality, homosexuals, society.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
APA	American Psychological Association
CBD	Central Business District
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DSM	Diagnostic Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders 1
DSM-II	Diagnostic Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders 2
DSM-III	Diagnostic Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders 3
DSM-III- R	Diagnostic Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders 3 Revised
DSM-IV	Diagnostic Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders 4
DSM-IV-TR	Diagnostic Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders 4 Text Revised
DSM-5	Diagnostic Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders 5
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
GLSEN	Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
LGBT	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender
LGBTI	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Intersex
NGOs	Non-Government Organisations(s)
NSA	National Security Agency
OCD	Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
OCPD	Obsessive Compulsion Personality Disorder
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PNC	Perseverative Negative Cognition
USA	United States of America
U.S	United States
UHDC	University Higher Degree Committee
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background

The word 'homosexual' emanated from endeavors in the medical and psychiatric avocations. The name Homosexuality was used to describe and diagnose individuals who exhibited same sexual behaviors and it was regarded and treated as a disease. Presently, the American Psychiatric Association has clearly stated that homosexuality is not a sign of a mental disorder or any form of a disease. However, the term homosexual has been used for a long time to describe same-gender attraction as a mental problem (Griffin, 2017). Furthermore, homosexual as a term is restrained in its scope because it does not incorporate bisexual, queer, transgender, or other prevalent diverse sexual orientations and gender identities that exist. Numerous people in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex community prefer the use of an acronym (like LGBTI) to enclose their expanded identities in one community (Griffin, 2017).

Commonly, homosexual individuals are subjected to a great deal of provocations and indignities that are often engendered by heterosexual people or those who postulate that acceptable sexual orientation should only be heterosexuality or opposite-sex intimate relationships. Some people in the society believe that heterosexuality is the unequaled normal sexuality that every human being should assume. Moreover, when gay or lesbian individuals perform homosexual activities, heterosexual and homophobic people feel offended and they most likely resort to criticising, classifying, discriminating, stigmatising, abusing and sometimes killing homosexual people (World Report, 2013).

In the past, meanings ascribed to homosexual individuals were negative. Unfavorable depictions of homosexuals in the media, laws that prohibited homosexual activities, and the stigmatisation of homosexual individuals by the medical, behavioral and social science associations demonstrate the negative meanings society attached to homosexuality and homosexual individuals. During the 1900s, there were many homosexuals who were not able to show their love just like straight or heterosexual people. Homosexuals would be abused with harmful words, physical violence and

sometimes be murdered. Many people viewed homosexuality as unrealistic, immoral and thought it should not be commended. This made many homosexuals not to come out and people thought homosexuality did not exist or, at least, that it was very minimal. It was a very difficult period for lesbians, gays and the whole LGBTI community (Leddick, 2011).

However, along in years since the Stonewall riots, various cultural, political and academic evolvment have occurred. These evolutions correspond to a change in the meaning society attaches to homosexuality and homosexual individuals. In the 21st century many people have come out of the closets publicly and have started or joined organizations to show and gain support for homosexuality. People who formed homosexuality groups wanted others to come out of the closet and be proud of their sexuality. The organisations that homosexual individuals formed also wanted to end discrimination against homosexuals and to put an end to the legal and social discrimination that homosexuals are put through (Sears & Mallory, 2011).

These practices increased the number of homosexual people coming out around the world and society showed greatly varied feelings and reactions about homosexuality (Leddick, 2011). Today, millions of homosexuals over the world live openly about their homosexuality. Many show their love in public workspace and in public communities and this has led to societal negative reactions towards homosexuality. Although there is also a slight decrease in the violent acts gay men and lesbian women are put through, there are many people who still commit murders because of homosexuality (Leddick, 2011).

In recent years, there has been a great shift globally in attitudes towards homosexuality as societies critically examine the role that homosexuals should play in the society and the value that they have (Sears & Mallory, 2011). Although, a person's sexual orientation does not affect their ability to contribute to society, societal discrimination against homosexual people is substantially based on erroneous stereotypes. Some societies are becoming more tolerant to the conception of homosexuality because their governments have now sanctioned laws that acknowledge and protect homosexuals.

However, despite all these efforts by the governments, homosexual people nevertheless still confront challenges in all societies ranging from an awkward staring, finger pointing and greater assaults. In other words, attitudes towards homosexuality move in two opposite directions; some societies are becoming more tolerant while others are becoming less tolerant (Mellstrom, 2012). Some countries still see homosexuality as taboo even when the laws and other legislative bodies have agreed that homosexuality can be practiced.

People practicing homosexuality lifestyles seek tolerance and acceptance from society at large. By organising themselves into a political movement, homosexuals have vigorously lobbied psychiatric, legal and political organisations for changes in discriminatory laws to include sexual preferences and the right to adopt children, health, as well as pension and tax benefits enjoyed by legally married heterosexual couples (Tahir & Winnipeg, 2010).

Although families, communities and societies are usually a significant source of support and acceptance, discriminatory attitudes within families and communities can also hinder the abilities of homosexual individuals to enjoy quality, healthy and happy lifestyles (Shankle, 2006). Homosexual individuals may find themselves being discriminated against by their relatives and other significant individuals in society (Hammarberg, 2009). Such discriminatory attitudes are revealed in many ways, including the eviction of homosexuals from homes, being disinherited or disowned, being stopped from going to school, being taken to psychiatric or other mental health institutions, being coerced to marry the opposite sex partner, or to abdicate children, being penalised for any involvement in activism work and being subjected to attacks and harassments which depreciate personal reputation and dignity (Phooko, 2011).

On several accounts, lesbians, bisexual women and transgender individuals are particularly at risk as a result of rooted gender inequalities that prohibit their freedom in making decisions about sexuality and family life. Family and community members generally impose gender norms and punish transgressions (Shankle, 2006). The community may also be the ground of constrictions and control of female sexuality. For example, females who exhibit their sexuality in ways other than heterosexuality are

usually confronted with violence and humiliating treatments which include being forced to get married, being pressurized to fall pregnant, and also being raped in those forced marriages. Some of these treatments are performed as ways of punishing lesbians for their assumed sexual orientation or behavior (Hammarberg, 2009).

1.2 Problem Statement

Most homosexuality rights movements are centered in big cities and often fail to address or promote the needs of homosexuals in small towns or rural areas. Many homosexuals residing in rural areas, such as Thohoyandou, mostly endure the pain of anti-homosexual controversies more than their urban counterparts. Thulamela Municipality is a rural Municipality and many people there do not understand homosexuality. As a result, homosexuals in this Municipality are at a higher risk of being victimised. To escape from victimization, most homosexual people are coerced to lead dual lives. Some seek to resolve the conflict by marrying a member of the opposite sex to escape from the pain that comes with a homosexual label.

Many people from rural areas in the Thulamela Municipality do not have close or personal relationships with homosexual people and they are more likely to display anti-gay attitudes and discrimination against homosexuals. As a result of these inappropriate attitudes, homosexual people might be depressed and develop other psychological disorders or even develop suicidal thoughts. Their families and religious communities may not accept them. In school, they may face rejection and harassment from peers including bullying or violence, and school officials may not provide adequate support or protection. Moreover, homosexuals who do not conform to gender stereotypes face greater harassment. Even in countries that seem to be fighting against homosexuality crimes, such as South Africa, homosexual people still get killed.

Being a homosexual needs a lot of courage, confidence, self-esteem and social support from family or friends because it is difficult for a homosexual to face society by themselves (Roghunathan, 2013). Homosexuals in Thulamela Municipality often do not see the option

to be themselves or to enjoy life like any other individual who is not discriminated against because of their sexual orientation. Many homosexuals in Thulamela Municipality are struggling with lack of social acceptance and some of these challenges emanate from their own homes, schools, churches and also in their work places. Many homosexual people are killed, abused, and isolated in sporting activities. They are stared at in class and stalked. Some homosexuals also endure threatening comments on social networks, and threats of correctional rape simply because of their sexual orientation. At the work place homosexuals experience discrimination. Colleagues may not want to socially associate with them or share some duties with them. This can be really challenging and it can hinder their productivity and freedom. These practices can also compromise homosexuals' psychological and emotional states and wellbeing. They get pre-occupied with concerns about basic safety, issues of fitting in, making friends as well as getting and keeping a job. They constantly worry about who will accept them for who they really are.

This can be changed if heterosexual people understand the trouble and risks that homosexual people encounter every day. If society is not educated about homosexuality, homosexuals, especially children, will continue to experience many challenges such as poor self-esteem, family rejection, stigma, social isolation, self-harm, and other risky behaviors. In schools, where children should feel safe, they could be taunted and bullied. In many cases, a homosexual child will not seek help; he/she will suffer in silence due to shame. As these social stressors accumulate, homosexual individuals are at increased risk of developing several mental and physical health problems compared to their heterosexual counterparts (Safren & Heimberg, 2011).

1.3 Aim of the study

The aim of this study was to explore societal attitudes towards homosexuals in Thulamela Municipality of Vhembe District, in South Africa.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study sought to:

- Describe society's perceptions of homosexual individuals;
- Identify society's attitudes towards homosexuals in Thulamela Municipality;
- Explore challenges posed by the society towards homosexual people in Thulamela Municipality; and
- Make recommendations that will be used to reduce negative societal attitudes that homosexual people face.

1.5 Research Questions

- What are the society's perceptions of homosexuality?
- What attitudes does society have towards homosexual people in Thulamela Municipality?
- What challenges do homosexual people in Thulamela Municipality face as a result of society's attitudes towards them?
- What can be done to prevent or stop negative societal attitudes that homosexual people experience?

1.6 Significance of the study

- The findings of this study may contribute to the society by making people learn to accept homosexuals as part of society including and providing homosexuality education and service to them.
- This might broaden society's knowledge and help them accept the fact that homosexuals are human beings also and that they can contribute to society just like everyone else.
- This study may help parents who have homosexual children to become aware of the impact of their negative attitudes towards their homosexual children.

- This study could help people in the society to reconsider their negative attitudes towards homosexuality.
- Public Institutions such as schools, universities, government departments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and hospitals, as well as public figures such as parents and school authorities might gain an understanding of the experiences and challenges that homosexual people face. As a result, this could encourage such institutions and policy makers to improve social security in schools and the lives of all homosexuals.
- The study explained the challenges that homosexuals face as a result of society's attitudes, it is hoped that this might encourage the government to create 24 hour hotlines for homosexual individuals to receive assistance when faced with difficulties. These hotlines would provide counseling and referrals for homosexuals who need assistance.
- This study therefore contributes to existing body of knowledge on homosexuality in Africa in general, and South Africa in particular. It expands the literature in this field by specifically understanding societal attitudes towards homosexuality in a South African context.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

This study focused on non-homosexual people residing in Thulamela Municipality in the Vhembe District.

1.8 Definitions of Key Terms

- **Attitudes**

An attitude is "a relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings, and behavioral tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols" (Hogg, &

Vaughan, 2005). In this study, attitudes describes the evaluations people in the society make about homosexual people.

- **Challenges**

This is the situation of being faced with something that needs great mental or physical effort, in order to be done successfully and, therefore, tests a person's ability (Acharya et al., 2017). Challenges refer to problems that people have when interacting with people in society or when engaging in normal social behaviours.

- **Gay**

Exhibiting sexual desire or behavior directed toward a person or persons of one's own sex; homosexual (Douglas, 2013). The term 'gay' is not gender specific, thus men or women can be termed "gay." In this study, gay is used to refer to men who have intimate relationships with other men.

- **Homosexual**

Sexually attracted to people of one's own sex (Acharya et al., 2017).

- **Homosexuality**

Predominant or consistent sexual interest in persons of the same sex (Acharya et al., 2017).

- **Lesbian**

This is a female who experiences romantic love or sexual attraction to other females (Douglas, 2013). In this study, lesbian means women who have intimate relationships with women.

- **Society**

A community, nation, or broad grouping of people having common traditions, institutions, and collective activities and interests (Cliffnotes, 2016). In this study, society means all the people in society/country who are not homosexuals.

1.9 Outline of chapters

Chapter 1 provides the introduction to the study.

Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical framework.

Chapter 3 reviews related literature.

Chapter 4 describes the research methodology that was utilised to conduct the study.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of the study.

Chapter 6 discusses the findings of the study.

Chapter 7 summarises the study findings, makes recommendations for future research and lastly draws a conclusion.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This study employed the social identity theory by Tajfel and Turner (1979) and symbolic interaction (Blumer, 1969) to explain the attitudes of society towards homosexuality and homosexual individuals. Tajfel (1979) proposes that groups (e.g. social class, family, sex etc.) which people belong to are an important source of pride and self-esteem. Groups give people a sense of social identity, a sense of belonging to the social world (McLeod, 2008). However, in our unequal world, many people find themselves in groups that are devalued compared to others, for example, homosexual people in a homophobic society. This theory argues that people in society develop negative attitudes towards homosexuality by assuming identities with different groups that are identified in society, thus, assuming that the “in-group” is the only group that accumulates positive values and traits. These assumptions grant members of a particular “in-group”, which, in this study refers to non-homosexuals to discriminate, demoralise and devalue members of the “out-group” which in this study are homosexuals.

The symbolic interaction framework emphasises that societal attitudes towards homosexuality develop through the process of social interaction, thus, signifying that the community in which an individual lives influence a person’s attitude towards homosexuality. People have varied attitudes towards homosexuality which is evident that some of these attitudes are directly influenced when they make interactions and form relations with other people in societies.

Although larger structural elements, such as the media portrayals and laws concerning homosexuality may impact the symbolic component of an attitude, the interpersonal relations an individual has with someone who is gay or lesbian may alter the way an individual perceives and feels about homosexuality and homosexual people. This affective aspect is crucial in attitude formation because as Blumer (1969) argues, in order for there to be a sincere transformation in attitude, an individual’s feelings towards a particular object must change.

2.2 Social Identity Theory

The Social Identity Theory is a theoretical framework developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979). This theory can be defined as part of one's self-concept which is based on the knowledge of membership in social group(s) in combination with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership. Individuals strive to maintain a positive self-concept, as well as a positive social identity (Howarth, 2002). People make comparisons between in-groups and out-groups on valued dimensions to establish, maintain, and defend positive in-group distinctiveness (social comparison). When a social comparison results in a positive outcome for the in-group, the need for a positive social identity is satisfied, but the opposite may also happen (e.g. for low-status minority groups). Intergroup discrimination can be one way to uphold a positive social identity for the in-group, for example, when heterosexuals think they are superior and discriminate against homosexual groups.

In-group members are believed to have positive traits, while out-group members are thought to have negative ones thus leading to discrimination. The Social Identity Theory assumes that intergroup conflict is not required for discrimination to occur. It has been applied to understanding behaviors such as ethnocentrism, in-group favoritism, conformity to in-group norms, and stereotyping (Howarth, 2002). The Social Identity Theory was selected for this study because it helps explain why lesbians and gay men are especially likely to be victims of hate-motivated violence and negative attitudes. As a group generally held in low regard by society, lesbians and gay men represent a relevant out-group. The Social Identity Theory proposes that, when acting in groups, we define ourselves in terms of our group membership and seek to have our group valued positively relative to other groups. Social identity is a person's sense of who they are based on their group membership(s). Thus, if we define ourselves in terms of our nationality (e.g. as American, South African or British), we want our country to look good compared to other countries. However, in this study it would be heterosexual people believing that the acceptable sexual orientation is heterosexuality only; homosexuality would be shunned.

In order to increase our self-image, we enhance the status of the group to which we belong. We can also increase our self-image by discriminating and holding prejudiced

views against the out group (the group we do not belong to). For example, heterosexual people classify gays, lesbians and transgenders as mentally ill or immoral. Therefore, society divides the world into “them” and “us” through a process of social categorisation (i.e. society put people into social groups). These are known as in-groups (us) and out-groups (them) (McLeod, 2008). The Social identity theory states that members of the in-group will discriminate against the out-group to enhance their self-image, which in this case comprises of homosexual individuals. The central hypothesis of the Social Identity Theory is that group members of an in-group will seek to find the negative aspects of an out-group, thus enhancing their self-image (McLeod, 2008). Prejudiced views between cultures or groups may result in racism, homophobia etc. In its extreme forms, homophobia may result in genocide around the world between LGBTI communities and the society at large.

Tajfel (1979) argues that stereotyping (i.e. putting people into groups and categories) is based on a normal cognitive process, the tendency to group things together. In doing so, we tend to exaggerate the differences between groups; we see the group to which we belong (the in-group) as being different from the others (the out-group), and members of the same group as being more similar than they really are. We categorise people in the same way. Social categorisation is one explanation for prejudiced attitudes (i.e. the “them” and “us” mentality) which results in-groups and out-groups.

Categorisation of people into social groups increases the perception that group members are similar to one another. An outcome of this is that the out-group is perceived as homogeneous. This is the belief that members of an out-group are the same, while members of one's in-group are perceived as being diverse, e.g. "they are alike; we are diverse". This is likely to occur especially with regards to negative characteristics. Under certain conditions, in-group members can be perceived as being similar to one another with regards to positive characteristics. This effect is called in-group homogeneity (Jackson, 2011).

Tajfel and Turner (1979) argue that there are three mental processes involved in evaluating others as “us” or “them” (i.e. “in-group” and “out-group”). These take place in a particular order that is social categorisation, social identification, and social comparison. The first is social categorisation. People categorise objects, in order to understand and identify them. In the very same way, they categorise one another (including themselves), in order to understand the social environment. People (society) use social categories such as black, white, gay, Australian, Christian, Muslim, student etc., because they are useful. Although thinking about others in terms of their social category memberships has some potential benefits for the person who does the categorising, categorising others, rather than treating them as unique individuals with their own unique characteristics, has a wide variety of negative, and often very unfair, outcomes for those who are categorised. One problem is that social categorisation distorts our perceptions so much so that we tend to exaggerate the differences between people from different social groups while at the same time perceiving members of groups (and particularly out-groups) as more similar to each other than they actually are. This overgeneralisation makes it more likely that we will think about and treat all members of a group in the same way (Tajfel & Wilkes, 1963).

Too often when people in the society categorize other people, they tend to see people who belong to the same social group as more similar than they actually are, and society tend to judge people from different social groups as more different than they actually are. The tendency to see members of social groups as similar to each other is particularly strong for members of out-groups and this results in out-group homogeneity, the tendency to view members of out-groups as more similar to each other than society see members of in-groups (Linville, Salovey, & Fischer, 1986).

In the second stage, social identification, people adopt the identity of the group they belong to. If for example one is categorised as heterosexual, the chances are high that one will adopt the identity of heterosexuals and begin to act in ways that heterosexuals act. They will conform to the norms of the group. There will be an emotional significance to one’s identification with the group, and one’s self-esteem will become bound up with

group membership (McLeod, 2008). Individuals understand and identify themselves with reference to groups. Social identities, for example, national, ethnic, racial, gender, religious, sexuality, and so on comprise critical aspects of the self-concept and are derived from a perceived membership of a particular social groups (Gale, 2008).

The final stage is social comparison. Once people in society have categorized themselves as part of a group and have identified with that group, they then tend to compare that group with other groups. If people's self-esteem is to be maintained, their group must compare favourably with other groups. This is critical to understanding prejudice because, once two groups identify themselves as rivals, they are forced to compete, in order to maintain their self-esteem. Competition and hostility between groups are thus not only a matter of competing for resources like jobs, but they are also a result of competing identities (McLeod, 2008).

Social comparison is the act of viewing one's social identity as superior to that of others; it comes from regarding the products of one's in-group (the things the in-group does, their attitudes or utterances) as better than the products of an out-group. This leads to prejudice and, if one has the power to influence the out-group, it will lead to discrimination too (Tajfel, 1979).

2.3 Symbolic interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is an American theory that was developed from practical considerations. It makes use of people's particular utilization of dialect to make images, normal implications, for deduction and correspondence with others. Herbert Blumer, a student and interpreter of Mead, coined the term and argued that people act toward things

based on the meaning those things have for them, and these meanings are derived from social interaction and modified through interpretation. With symbolic interactionism, reality is seen as social, developed interaction with others. Symbolic Interactionism argues that both individuals and society cannot be separated from each other because they are both created through social interaction, and one cannot be understood without the other. Behavior is not defined by forces from the environment or inner forces such as drives, or instincts, but rather by a reflective, socially understood meaning of both the internal and external incentives that are currently presented (Meltzer et al., 1975).

Herbert Blumer (1969) set out three basic premises of this perspective as follows: Humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things; the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others and society; and these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters.

The first premise includes everything that a human being may note in his/her world, for example, physical objects, actions and concepts. Essentially, the behavior of individuals towards objects and others is based on the personal meanings that the individual has already given these items that is people in society develop attitudes towards homosexuality based on the interpretations and meanings they give to homosexuality. Some regard homosexuality as immoral and an abomination and, as a result of these personal meanings and beliefs attached to homosexuality, negative attitudes towards homosexuals is automatic.

The second premise explains the meaning of such things, where they are derived from, or from where they arise, and the social interaction that one has with other humans. Blumer (1969), following Mead (1962), claimed that people interact with each other by interpreting or defining each other's actions instead of merely reacting to each other's actions. Their "response" is not made directly to the actions of one another, but is instead based on the meaning which they attach to such actions. Thus, human interaction is mediated by the use of symbols and signification, by interpretation, or by ascertaining the

meaning of one another's actions (Blumer 1962). Meaning is either taken for granted and pushed aside as an unimportant element which needs not to be investigated or it is regarded as a mere neutral link or one of the causal chains between the causes or factors responsible for human behavior, behavior which is seen as the product of such factors (Blumer, 1969). Social interaction is the source of meaning. We have the ability to name things and designate objects or actions to a certain idea or phenomenon. The use of symbols is a popular procedure for interpretation and intelligent expression.

In Blumer's third premise, the idea of minding comes into play. Symbolic interactionist describe thinking as an inner conversation. Mead called this inner dialogue minding. Minding is the delay in one's thought process that happens when one thinks about what one will do next. This premise of symbolic interactionism states that meanings can be changed or be modified through interaction with others (Blumer, 1969). In interaction, the individual participates in a form of role taking which results in interaction with oneself and with others in the situation. We naturally talk to ourselves in order to sort out the meaning of a difficult situation. But first, we need language. Before we can think, we must be able to interact symbolically.

The emphasis on symbols, negotiated meaning, and social construction of society brought on attention to the roles people play. Role-taking is a key mechanism that permits people to see another person's perspective to understand what an action might mean to another person. Role-taking is a part of our lives at an early age. Playing house and pretending to be someone else are examples of this phenomena. There is an improvisational quality of roles; however, actors often take on a script that they follow. Because of the uncertainty of roles in social contexts, the burden of role-making is on the person in the situation. In this sense, we are proactive participants in our environment.

There are five central ideas to symbolic interactionism. According to Charon (2004), the human being must be understood as a social person. It is the constant search for social interaction that leads us to do what we do. Instead of focusing on the individual and his or her personality, or on how the society or social situation causes human behavior,

symbolic interactionism focuses on the activities that take place between actors. Interaction is the basic unit of study. Individuals are created through interaction; society too is created through social interaction. What we do depends on our interaction with others earlier in our lifetimes and on our interactions right now. Social interaction is central to what human beings do. If people want to understand cause, they should focus on social interaction.

The human being must be understood as a thinking being. Human action is not only interaction among individuals, but it is also interaction within the individual. It is not our ideas or attitudes or values that are as important as the constant active ongoing process of thinking. We are not simply conditioned, we are not simple beings who are influenced by those around us, and we are not simple products of society. We are, to our very core, thinking animals, always conversing with ourselves as we interact with others.

Humans do not sense their environment directly. Instead, humans define the situation they are in. An environment may actually exist, but it is our definition of it that is important. Definition does not simply randomly happen; instead, it results from ongoing social interaction and thinking. The cause of human action is the result of what is occurring in our present situation. Cause unfolds in the present social interaction, present thinking, and present definition. It is not society's encounters with us in our past that cause action nor is it our own past experience that do so. It is, instead, social interaction, thinking, and definition of the situation that takes place in the present. Our past enters into our actions primarily because we think about it and apply it to the definition of the present situation.

Human beings are described as active beings in their environment. Words such as conditioning, responding, controlled, imprisoned and formed are not used to describe the human being in symbolic interaction. In contrast to other social-scientific perspectives being humans are not thought of as being passive to their surroundings, but as actively involved in what they do.

2.4 Causes of homosexuality

Homosexuality is a complex phenomenon, with its etiology being misunderstood. Even though several researches have been conducted to try and explain the causes of homosexuality, few have managed to justify the causes of homosexuality. There are many different theories that have been given to explain homosexuality. Some of these theories are discussed below.

2.4.1 Psychoanalytic theory

Most psychoanalytic theories stress the role of parental and family dynamics, not the society as a whole. Behaviorists believe that some sexual and gender identification differences (Gender ID) result from roles such as masculine and the feminine stereotypes imposed by family and friends upon children. However, there is no evidence, social or biological, to support the argument that homosexual children were raised differently from heterosexual children. In addition, with the reinforcement of gender identification norms, one would be led to logically deduce that the reinforcement of stereotypes would ensure a heterosexual outcome.

Sigmund Freud's views on homosexuality were complex. In his attempts to understand the causes and development of homosexuality, he first explained bisexuality as a normal part of the "original libido endowment," meaning that all human beings are born bisexual (Freud, 1953). He believed that the libido was made up of a homosexual portion and a heterosexual portion, and that through the course of development, one wins out over the other. He also believed in a basic biological explanation for natural bisexuality, arguing that humans are all biologically capable of being aroused by either sex. Because of this, he described homosexuality as one of many sexual options available to people. Freud argued that the human being's inherent bisexuality leads to many individuals eventually choosing which expression of sexuality is more gratifying. However, because of cultural taboos, homosexuality is repressed in many people. According to Freud, if there were no taboos, people would choose whichever was more gratifying to them and this could remain fluid throughout life sometimes a person would be homosexual, and of other times heterosexual (Ruitenbeek, 1963).

Freud also identified some other causes of homosexuality and these included an inverted Oedipus complex, where individuals begin to identify with their mothers and take themselves as a love object. This love of oneself is defined as narcissism and Freud thought that people who were high in the trait of narcissism would be more likely to develop homosexuality because loving the same sex is like an extension of loving oneself (Ruitenbeek, 1963).

Freud believed that the treatment of homosexuality would be not successful because the people would not want to give up homosexual identity because it brings them pleasure. He used analysis and hypnotic methods as treatments, but showed little success (Weideman, 1962). It was through this that Freud arrived at the conclusion that homosexuality was "nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation, it cannot be classified as an illness, but a variation of sexual function (Freud, 1951)".

He further stated that psychoanalysts "should not promise to abolish homosexuality and make normal heterosexuality take its place," (Freud, 1953) as he had concluded in his own practice that attempts to change homosexual orientations were likely to be unsuccessful. While Freud himself may have come to a more accepting view of homosexuality, his legacy in the field of psychoanalysis, especially in the United States, resulted in a negative view of homosexuality as abnormal and as being caused by family and developmental issues. It was these views that significantly impacted the rationale for putting homosexuality in the first and second publications of the American Psychiatric Association's DSM, conceptualizing it as a mental disorder and further stigmatising homosexuality in society (Glassgold, 2009).

Furthermore, Sigmund Freud argued that homosexuality is derived from an unresolved Oedipus complex. The third variation of Freud's thought emphasised the boy's desire to be the libidinal object of his father, rather than an oedipal desire for his mother. Some boys become fixated on what at this stage and, consequently, desire those partners who resemble their fathers (Phelan, 2005). A fourth Freudian variation sees homosexuality as

springing from boys not wanting to give in to the competition that they for their mothers' love. A reaction formation occurs and instead of seeing other men as hated rivals, they see them as erotic objects (Phelan, 2005).

2.4.2 The bio-psychosocial approach model

2.4.2.1 The family environment

Most nurture theories focus on the parent-child relationship. Male homosexuals often have a dominant, supportive mother and a weak, remote or hostile father. Lesbians may have had a dysfunctional mother-daughter relationship. They both subsequently try to meet their unmet same-gender needs through sexual relationships. However, these theories of family dynamics have been disputed by some clinicians who believe that parents have very little influence on the outcome of their children's sexual partner orientation (Basavanthappa, 2007). The parent-child relationship can also be disturbed through death or divorce. Saghir and Robins found that 18% of homosexual men and 35% of lesbians had lost their fathers through death or divorce by the age of ten. The figures for heterosexuals were 9% and 4% respectively (Saghir & Robins, 1973). Up to 70% of homosexual adults describe themselves as having been 'sissies' or 'tomboys' as children. However, most adult homosexuals do not fit the effeminate male or masculine female stereotype.

2.4.2.2 Conflict with male peers

Forming a homosexual identity takes time. Most pre-pubertal children consider themselves heterosexual and are reinforced in this by peer-group pressure. For the child who does not "fit in" the masculine female or the non-masculine male, identification with the opposite sex peer group may prove easier. This can lead to gender confusion in adolescence and identification with others of the same sex who are suffering from the same feelings of isolation. The acceptance of the homosexual label can then bring a measure of security, self-understanding and acceptance.

In a study conducted by People can Change (2004) participating homosexuals confirmed that, somehow, even as boys or young teenagers, they felt like they were never "man enough." They did not live up to the masculine ideal. They saw themselves as too fat or too skinny, too short or too awkward, not athletic enough or tough or not strong or good-looking enough or whatever other qualities they admired in other males but were lacking in themselves. Homosexuals suffer from low self-esteem and low gender-esteem, a deficiency in their core sense of gender upon which their whole self-image is built. Heterosexual males are naturally masculine, and this results in homosexuals, especially gays feeling different and lonely among other males (People can change, 2004).

Male homosexuals who feel deficient strive to be accepted and affirmed by others, especially those whose masculinity they admire most. They idolise the qualities in other heterosexual males which they lack in themselves. They tend to fear other males and feel like they could never belong. Many of them fear the sports field and this makes them feel like they could never compete. This leaves homosexuals in gender confusion, not fully masculine and not really feminine either. They disassociate themselves not just from individual heterosexuals they fear would hurt them, but also from the entire heterosexual world. Some of the homosexual individuals even detach themselves from their own masculinity as something shameful and inferior (People Can Change, 2004).

Painful, frightening, or alienating experiences with father, brother, peers, and other males can lead boys to pull away from males, generally, breaking or preventing normal same-sex bonds and creating a state of same-sex disaffiliation. This may have been caused by abuse, harassment, and bullying as well as rejection, non-inclusion, and alienation from other males or through a profound experience of mismatch with the males around them (Center for Gender Wholeness, 2013). Complaints and criticisms by females about the males in a young boy's life can cause a boy to look down on those males, leading to negative stereotypes that alienate him from other males, and contributes to same-sex disaffiliation. Such stereotypes are easily perpetuated because the disaffiliated boy has

little interaction with other males to disconfirm them (Center for Gender Wholeness, 2013).

Gender incongruity can also contribute to same-sex disaffiliation by causing a boy to avoid other males out of a sense of being different or strange. The boy may fear that if the other boys get to know him, they will see his strangeness and reject him. Likewise, same-sex disaffiliation can reinforce gender incongruity since the less time a boy spends with other males, the fewer of their traits he will adopt. Gender incongruity and same-sex disaffiliation can become a mutually reinforcing negative cycle. These kinds of negative experiences with males can cause some boys to form unhealthy relationships with males in adulthood.

Four broad categories of unhealthy relationships have been identified namely oppositional, detached, inauthentic, and needy. Boys who become oppositional respond to other males with rejection, anger or disgust, which is a defensive wall against reconnection. Boys who become detached tend to be disinterested, uninvolved, and distant from other males. Boys who develop inauthentic relationships tend to be anxious and superficial with other males, presenting a friendly false self that protects a fearful self underneath. Boys who develop needy relationships often long to be taken care of, obsess about male intimacy, and may be dependent on other males for attention, affection and approval (Center for Gender Wholeness, 2013).

The connection with others of one's own sex is a core need. Thus, if a boy is disaffiliated from other males, his natural needs for same-sex connection, affection, affirmation, and resonance will go unmet. Unfulfilled needs typically transform into longings and cravings and, unmet needs for same-sex affiliation thus become longings or cravings for male attention, closeness, and love.

2.4.2.3 Sexual abuse and trauma in childhood

Sexual abuse occurs when one person uses another for his or her own sexual gratification against that person's will or without his/ her consent. It occurs when an older and more powerful child engages a younger or smaller child in sexual activity. It also occurs when an adult engages a minor in a sexual activity or exposes the sexually explicit material or language, with or without the minors consent. Consent implies the ability and maturity to understand what is going on and the possible consequences of it. Since children do not really understand sexuality, they cannot give consent when an older person involves them in sexual behavior (Center for Gender Wholeness, 2013). Most male homosexuals have been sexually abused by an older or more powerful person as a child or a youth. Usually, it is by a male; 96% of homosexuals who participated in the People Can Change study considered the abuse to have contributed to their developing homosexuality feelings (People Can Change, 2004).

2.4.2.4 Other sexual experiences

Other sexual experiences include pornography, sexual fantasy and sex play with other boys as children or youth. These experiences can contribute to the development of homosexual behavior (People Can Change, 2004).

2.4.2.5 The cultural environment

The cultural view is that sexual conduct is determined by society. Whereas biological sex is set at birth, gender-specific behavior develops in a cultural context. Tradition, religious belief and political factors lay a framework for acceptable behavior which eventually feels natural. The diversity of sexual behavior across cultures and history provides evidence for this view. There are cultures where homosexual behavior is so uncommon that there is no word for it in the language (Bancroft, 1994).

2.4.2.6 Feeling incongruent with one's own gender

Many homosexual men report that, during childhood, they saw themselves as being at odds or out-of-sync with what they believed a boy was supposed to be. Essentially, their perspective of other males was, “I am not like them and they are not like me, I am different.” This condition is referred to as “gender incongruity.” While most boys and men may occasionally feel like they do not fully measure up to their masculine ideal, boys experiencing gender incongruity tend to focus on these thoughts extensively. They experience a pervasive sense of lacking in vital qualities or capacities they consider essential for masculinity. They may believe there is no way for them to obtain or grow into these qualities or capacities (American Family Association, 1994).

Gender incongruity is a subjective experience, meaning that it is based entirely on individual perspective. It is usually conscious, although some males may not be conscious of how incongruent they actually perceive themselves to be. It is essential for all people to feel congruent with their own gender. Males need to see themselves as adequately matching the traits they believe are appropriate for men and they need to feel capable of fulfilling the roles expected of males in their society (Hockenberr & Billingham, 1987). When an individual feels incongruent with his gender, he may experience a painful conflict between what he thinks he must be and what he thinks he can be. The inability to resolve that situation might result in the unconscious mind compensating in the most direct way it can, perhaps by becoming intensely drawn to or fixated on males and masculinity in an unconscious attempt to somehow internalise it. Many men with same-sex attraction are experiencing exactly that situation (Center for Gender Wholeness, 2013).

2.4.2.7 Certain emotional and psychological problems

Certain emotional and psychological issues may increase the likelihood of developing homosexuality. These issues probably do not play a causal role, but may intensify the effect of other predisposing factors, particularly gender incongruity, same-sex disaffiliation, sexual conditioning, and sexual abuse (Center for Gender Wholeness, 2013). Obsessiveness and ruminative thinking may amplify problems caused by other predisposing factors. The conditions described below are all grouped under the heading

of obsessiveness and ruminative thinking. All of these have in common the tendency to fixate, perseverate, or stubbornly hold to a thought, belief, or way of being (Center for Gender Wholeness, 2013).

- **Perfectionism** is an internally generated demand for accuracy, order, flawlessness, or completion.
- **Rumination** is a tendency to focus on distressing subjects. It involves pessimism and worry, and dwelling on failures, negative possibilities, and consequences. Sometimes the mind feels forced or pressured by these thoughts as if there is no control. This is sometimes referred to as perseverative negative cognition (PNC).
- **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)** is an anxiety disorder in which repetitive distressing thoughts create intense anxiety, leading to compulsive behaviors that are performed in an attempt to lessen the anxiety.
- **Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder (OCPD)** is a rigid and generally perfectionistic style of thinking and living. It may involve extreme perfectionism, preoccupation with order, neatness, detail, or control. It tends to cause those who have it to seem inflexible and stubborn.

2.4.3 Biological model

Some scientists have intently tried to discover scientific proof that same-sex attraction is genetic. Some studies hint at a biological component, but have not proven that same-sex attraction is simply an inborn or biologically-determined characteristic (Friedman & Downey, 1993). Biology may play some role in influencing behavior or feelings. Some people seem susceptible to particular actions and may be drawn toward them or become addicted to them more easily than others (Oaks, 1995.) One person may be able to dabble with gambling, while another becomes a compulsive gambler. Some may drink only socially, while others have an unusual attraction to alcohol. Studies indicate that genetics such as aggression, obesity, or alcoholism may be factors in susceptibilities to some behavior-related disorders. Likewise, there are theories that claim biological

predispositions influence the development of homosexual attractions when other life experiences are also present (Friedman & Downey, 1993). Beyond such predispositions, some scientists search for more direct genetic causes, a gene or chromosome that actually determines sexual orientation (Friedman & Downey, 1993). Some researchers have theorised that the sexual preferences and behavior of homosexuals may be dictated by the structure of the brain. For example if the brains of homosexual men, for example, can be shown to resemble those of heterosexual women more than they resemble those of heterosexual men, these theories would be validated (LeVay, 1991).

2.4.4 Conclusion

The fact that more and more homosexual individuals are opting to live openly and come out of closets in great numbers increases their visibility in society. This in turn increases personal contacts that people in society might have with homosexual acquaintances. This affective phenomenon is vital for people in society, in order for them to have more tolerant and positive attitudes towards homosexuality. Since the social identity theory and symbolic interactionism agree that learning is essentially a social activity and that meaning is constructed through communication, collaborative activity, and interaction with others, the two frameworks employed in this study helped to highlight the role of social interactions in the formation of attitudes and meaning making by society about homosexuality.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

Societal attitudes toward homosexuality vary greatly in different cultures and different historical periods, as do attitudes toward sexual desire, activity and relationships in general. All cultures have their own values regarding appropriate and inappropriate sexuality. Some sanction same-sex love and sexuality, while others disapprove of such activities in part. As with heterosexual behavior, different sets of prescriptions and proscriptions may be given to individuals according to their gender, age, social status or social class (Murray, 2000). People practicing homosexuality lifestyles seek tolerance and acceptance from society at large. By organising themselves into a political movement, homosexuals vigorously lobby psychiatric, legal and political organisations for

changes in discriminatory laws to include sexual preference and the right to adopt children, health, and pension and tax benefits enjoyed by legally married heterosexual couples (Tahir & Winnipeg, 2010). Some countries still see homosexuality as taboo even when the laws and other legislative bodies have agreed that homosexuality can be practiced.

3.2 Global perspectives on homosexuality

- United States of America (USA)

In the USA and many other nations, young people are much less likely than their older counterparts to describe homosexuality as morally unacceptable. Meanwhile, 37% of Americans believe it is unacceptable; this is a relatively high number among advanced economies. However, American attitudes have grown more tolerant in recent years. For instance, in 2001 only 35% supported same-sex marriages, compared with 52% in 2014. Forty-six percent of Americans aged 50 and older and 28% of 18-29 year-olds say homosexuality is unacceptable. The most striking age gap is found in South Korea where 79% of the people 50 years and older and 28% of those under 30 believe homosexuality should not be accepted (Jackson, 2011).

There is also a strong relationship between a country's level of religiosity and views on this issue, with negative opinions much more common in countries where religion plays a central role in people's lives. Homosexuality is deemed morally unacceptable particularly in nations where large numbers of people say religion is very important to them, pray at least once a day, and think it is necessary to believe in God to be moral. Meanwhile, acceptance of homosexuality is more common in countries with low levels of personal religiosity, such as the relatively secular nations of Western Europe.

- South America

There are also wide differences across Latin America. Salvadorans express the most intolerant attitudes (70% unacceptable), while about half feel that way in Bolivia (51%) and Venezuela (49%). Mexicans (40%), Brazilians (39%), Chileans (32%) and Argentines (27%) are less likely to believe homosexuality is unacceptable.

- Europe

Europeans express the least negative views on the issues of homosexuality. In none of the eight European Union countries surveyed does a majority say homosexuality is morally unacceptable. More than four-in-ten in Greece and Poland do hold this view that homosexuality is morally unacceptable. At 8% and 6% respectively, Germany and Spain are the only countries where less than one in ten consider homosexuality unacceptable (Jackson, 2011).

- Asia

Although views vary considerably across the region. A median of 65% across the Asian nations in the survey said homosexuality should not be accepted. Large majorities in the predominantly Muslim nations of Indonesia (93%), Malaysia (88%), and Pakistan (85%) believe homosexuality is morally unacceptable, as do somewhat smaller majorities in India (67%), the Philippines (65%), China (61%), and South Korea (57%). However, just 31% of Japanese and 18% of Australians hold this view.

- Iran

In 2005, two Iranian gay men were hanged to death because they were engaging in a homosexual relationship and the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad told the United Nations “we do not have homosexuals” (World Report, 2013).

- North Africa, Middle-east and Sub-Saharan Africa

A 2013 Pew Research survey asked people in 40 countries whether they believe homosexuality is morally acceptable, morally unacceptable, or not a moral issue. Across the nations polled, a median of 59% said homosexuality is unacceptable. Larger percentages considered extramarital affairs and gambling unacceptable. Meanwhile, fewer respondents said this about abortion, premarital sex, alcohol use, divorce, or contraception. Overall, the most negative views about homosexuality were found in the Middle East, with nine-in-ten or more Jordanians, Egyptians, Palestinians, and Tunisians saying it is unacceptable. Israelis are the clear outliers in the region with 43% saying that it is unacceptable.

Attitudes are also overwhelmingly negative in sub-Saharan Africa. Solid majorities in all six African nations polled deemed homosexuality unacceptable, including a nearly unanimous 98% in Ghana, and 93% in Uganda, whose president signed an extremely severe law against homosexual behavior in February 2012, although the law was subsequently struck down by a court on technical grounds (Jackson, 2011).

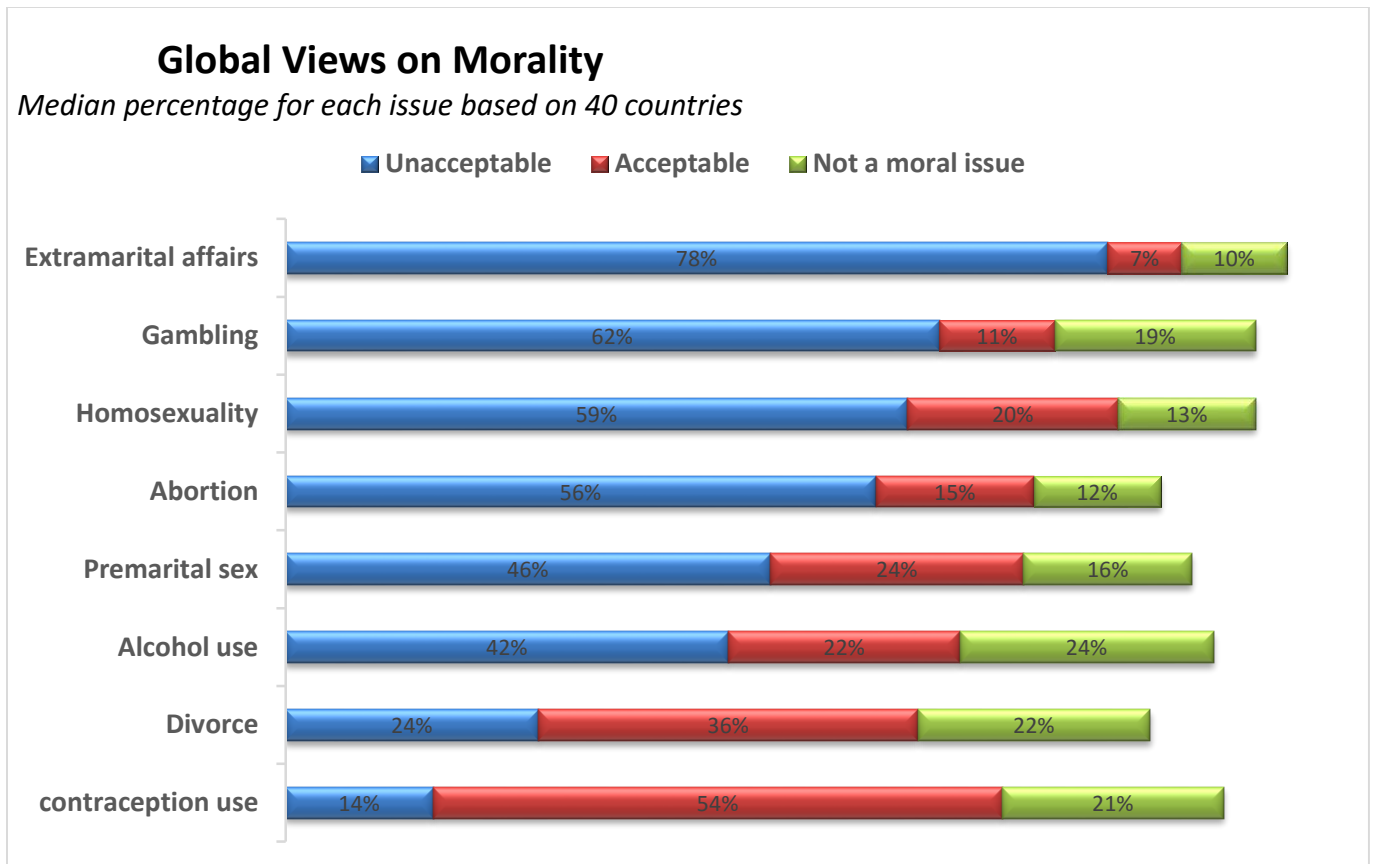
- Nigeria

Some 38 of Africa's 55 states criminalise homosexuality and it is still regarded as taboo and homosexuals get executed. In fact, there are 76 countries in the world prosecuting people on the ground of their sexual orientation, seven of these with a death penalty. (Mellstrom, 2012). In countries like Nigeria, homosexual persons face unique legal and social challenges not experienced by non-homosexual residents. The country's record on human rights, in particular the right to practice homosexuality is very poor (World Report, 2013). There is no legal protection against discrimination in Nigeria. Very few homosexual persons are open about their orientation, and violence against homosexual people is frequent. Both male and female same-sex sexual activity is illegal in Nigeria. The maximum punishment in the twelve northern states is death by stoning (World Report, 2013).

- South Africa

South Africa was the very first country in the world to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and has one of the most progressive constitutions along with other legislations that outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation in the workplace, and legalises same-sex marriages (Fabricius, 2014). It was also the first country in the world to safeguard in its constitution sexual orientation as a human right (Van Zyl, 2011) nonetheless homosexual people in South Africa encounter problems daily due to their sexuality. Examples of cases that support this allegation include the story a 21-year-old gay person in South Africa who was tortured and murdered in the Belle Vista neighborhood of Ceres; the alleged suspect reportedly invited as many as seven teenagers to watch the brutal assault (Villette, 2014). Another 26-year-old lesbian was found dead with a toilet brush lodged in her vagina after yet another homophobic attack in Thokoza, east of Johannesburg (Bottomley, 2013). According to a recent survey conducted by the GLSEN (2013), nearly 9 out of 10 middle and high school gay or lesbian students suffered physical or verbal harassment in 2009. This harassment ranged from taunts to outright beatings. This information is summarised in figure 3.1 below:

Figure 3.1 Global Views on Morality



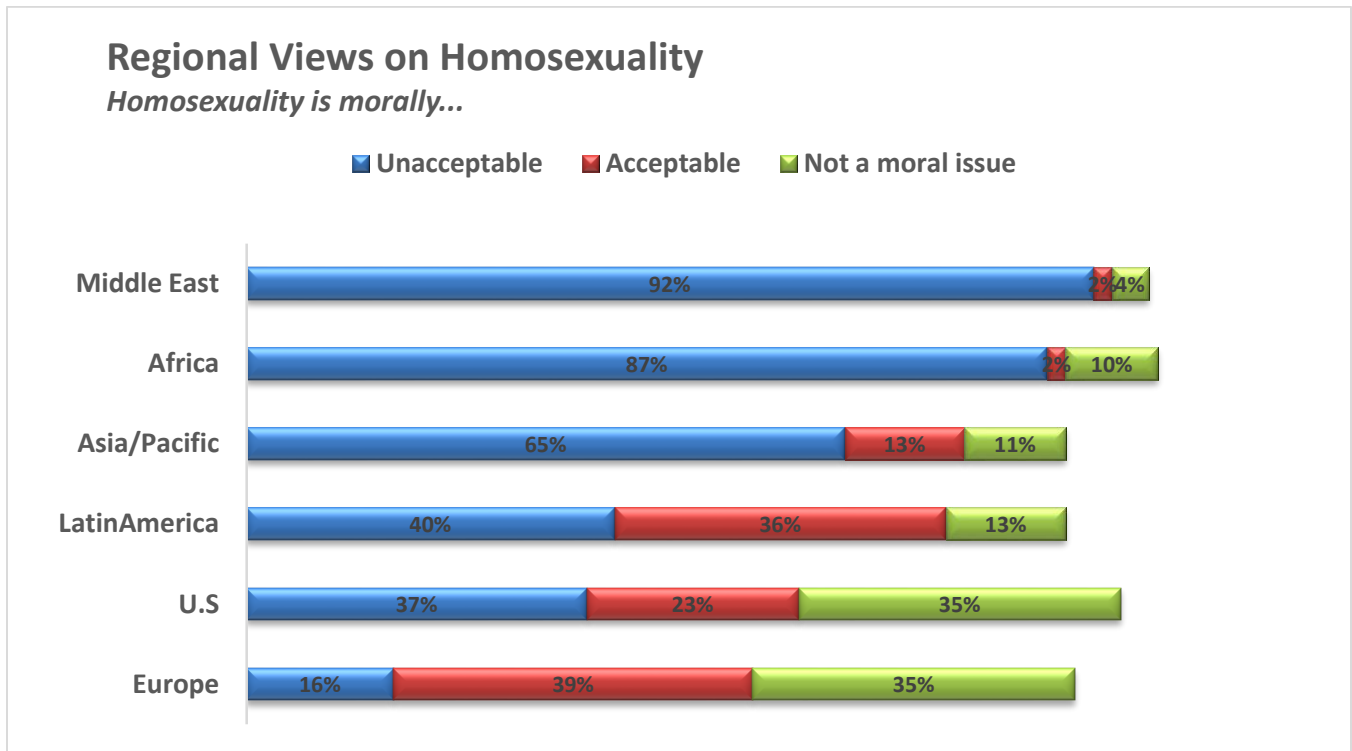
Source: Spring (2013)

Figure 3.1 shows the median responses for each question across the 40 countries that were surveyed by the Pew Research Center's 2013 Global Attitudes survey which surveyed the opinions of 40,117 respondents in 40 countries. The respondents were asked what they thought about eight topics often discussed as moral issues namely; extramarital affairs, gambling, homosexuality, abortion, premarital sex, alcohol consumption, divorce, and the use of contraceptives. For each issue, respondents were asked whether the issue under discussion was morally acceptable, morally unacceptable, or not a moral issue.

There was a great deal of variation across these issues. Generally, extramarital affairs, gambling, homosexuality and abortion were deemed unacceptable by the largest number of respondents. African and predominantly Muslim countries generally tended to find most of these activities morally unacceptable, while in advanced economies, such as those in

Western Europe, Japan, and North America, people tended to be more accepting or to not consider them moral issues at all (Pew Research Center, 2013).

Figure 3.2 Regional views on homosexuality



Source: Spring (2013)

Figure 3.2 indicates that societal perceptions and attitudes in Africa and in predominantly Muslim countries remain among the least accepting of homosexuality. In sub-Saharan Africa the majority (at least nine-in-ten in Nigeria (98%), Senegal (96%), Ghana (96%), Uganda (96%) and Kenya (90%) believe homosexuality should not be accepted by society. Even in South Africa where, unlike in many other African countries, homosexual acts are legal and discrimination based on sexual orientation is unconstitutional, 61% say homosexuality should not be accepted by society, while just 32% say it should be accepted.

Overwhelming majorities in predominantly Muslim countries surveyed also say homosexuality should be rejected. The responses show that 97% in Jordan, 95% in Egypt, 94% in Tunisia, 93% in the Palestinian territories, 93% in Indonesia, 87% in Pakistan, 86% in Malaysia, 80% in Lebanon and 78% in Turkey believe homosexuality is unacceptable. Elsewhere, majorities in South Korea (59%) and China (57%) also say homosexuality should not be accepted by society, while 39% and 21%, respectively, say it should be accepted. South Korean views, while still negative, have shifted considerably since 2007, when 77% said homosexuality should be rejected and 18% said it should be accepted by society (Pew Research Center, 2013).

3.3 Classification of homosexuality in the Diagnostic Statistic Manual (DSM I - III)

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) is the standard classification of mental disorders used by mental health professionals. It is intended to be applicable in a wide array of contexts and is used by clinicians and researchers of many different orientations, for example, biological, psychodynamic, cognitive, behavioral, interpersonal, family/systems (APA, 2015).

Psychology was one of the first disciplines to study homosexuality as a discrete phenomenon. Prior to and throughout most of the 20th century, common standard psychology viewed homosexuality, in terms of pathological models, as a mental illness (Smith & Gilfoyle, 2007). That classification was subjected to critical scrutiny in the research, which consistently failed to produce any empirical or scientific basis for regarding homosexuality as a disorder or abnormality. As a result of such accumulated research, professionals in medicine, mental health, and the behavioral and social sciences, opposing the classification of homosexuality as a mental disorder, concluded that it was inaccurate to classify homosexuality. They argued that the DSM classification reflected untested assumptions that were based on once-prevalent social norms and clinical impressions from unrepresentative samples, which consisted of patients seeking therapy and individuals whose conduct brought them into the criminal justice system (Smith & Gilfoyle, 2007).

In 1952, the original Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) listed homosexuality among the sociopathic personality disturbances. In 1968, DSM II removed homosexuality from the sociopathic list, categorising it with other sexual deviations. Then in 1973, the DSM III showed the most striking change of all; homosexuality was considered a problem only when it was dissatisfying to the person. When the condition was compatible (“ego-syntonic”) and the person was comfortable with his homosexual thoughts, feelings and behavior, homosexuality was not considered pathological (Nicolosi, 2001). Ego-syntonic refers to behaviors, values and feelings that are in harmony with or acceptable to the needs and goals of the ego, or consistent with one's ideal self-image (Rosenthal, 2003).

The DSM III was further revised and, now, homosexuality is not referred to as mental illness at all. No reference is made to it by name within the diagnostic manual. Even though homosexuality had been removed from the DSM, many psychiatrists and psychologists still believed that homosexuality was a psychopathology which must invariably cause impairment and distress. Others argued that the impairment and distress often seen by clinicians were a byproduct of stigma and social repression of homosexuals. This group argued that the pathologisation of homosexuality in the DSM was a form of social control that itself contributed to the social stigma and to the harm it did (Treehugger, 2011).

The removal of homosexuality from the DSM had the effect of discouraging treatment and research and this discouraged clinicians from communicating with each other, and from making presentations at professional meetings (Nicolosi, 2001). There were two reasons why the psychiatric profession removed homosexuality from its diagnostic manual. The first reason is that psychiatry hoped to eliminate social discrimination by removing the stigma of “sick” attributed to homosexual people (Bayer, 1981; Barnhouse, 1977 as cited in Nicolosi, 2001). Most psychotherapists are personally committed to removing emotional distress and diminishing the destructive effects of socially-imposed guilt. There

was a leap of assumption that continued diagnosis of homosexuality would perpetuate society's prejudice and the homosexual person's social suffering.

The second reason is that the psychological profession had failed to identify the psychodynamic causes of homosexuality, and consequently, devising a consistently successful treatment for it. Subsequently, a new diagnosis, ego-dystonic homosexuality was created for the DSM's third edition in 1980. Ego-dystonic is the opposite of ego-syntonic and refers to thoughts and behaviors (e.g., dreams, impulses, compulsions, desires, etc.) that are in conflict, or dissonant with the needs and goals of the ego, or, further, in conflict with a person's ideal self-image (Rosenthal, 2003). Ego dystonic homosexuality was indicated by (1) a persistent lack of heterosexual arousal, which the patient experienced as interfering with initiation or maintenance of wanted heterosexual relationships, and (2) persistent distress from a sustained pattern of unwanted homosexual arousal (American Psychiatric Association, 1987).

This new diagnostic category, however, was criticised by mental health professionals on numerous grounds. It was viewed by many as a political compromise to appease those psychiatrists, mainly psychoanalysts, who still considered homosexuality as pathology. Others questioned the appropriateness of having a separate diagnosis that described the content of an individual's dysphoria. They argued that psychological problems related to ego-dystonic homosexuality could be treated as well by other general diagnostic categories, and that the existence of the diagnosis perpetuated anti-homosexual stigma.

Moreover, widespread prejudice against homosexuality in the United States meant that many people who are homosexuals go through an initial phase in which their homosexuality could be considered ego dystonic. According to the American Psychiatric Association, "Fears and misunderstandings about homosexuality are widespread and present daunting challenges to the development and maintenance of a positive self-image in homosexual persons and often to their families as well." In 1986, the diagnosis was removed entirely from the DSM. The only vestiges of ego dystonic homosexuality in the revised DSM-III were listed under the heading "Sexual Disorders Not Otherwise

Specified”, which included persistent and marked distress about one's sexual orientation (American Psychiatric Association, 1987). Homosexuality is still not included in the DSM, including in the recent DSM 5 version.

3.4 Experiences of homosexual people: Negative societal attitudes, homophobia, discrimination, violence and rejection

Homosexual people may face more challenges of developing mental health problems than heterosexual people and these disorders are more likely to be caused by the negative attitudes they get from their communities which violate their rights and oppress their esteems (Ritch & Williams, 2005). Most homosexual people are very sensitive and already lack confidence due to the societal stigma, discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes which are challenging for them. As a result, they develop suicidal thoughts, depression, anxiety, phobia, obsessive compulsive disorder or engage in self-mutilation and alcohol and drug dependence. Homosexual people tend to experience more mental health problems than heterosexual people (Charkratborti, 2011).

The widespread prejudice, discrimination and violence to which homosexuals are often subjected are significant mental health concerns. Sexual prejudice, sexual orientation discrimination and anti-homosexual violence are major sources of stress for homosexuals. Although in many societies homosexuals are more accepted than in the past, homophobia continues to be prominent around the world. Experiences of violence or negative attitudes can have significant and enduring consequences for mental health (Mays, 2003). Most homosexual men and homosexual women have experienced victimisation as adults because of their sexual orientation. In turn, these groups also show symptoms of depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress (Meyer, 2003). The different experiences that homosexuals go through are discussed next.

3.4.1 Negative attitudes

Negative attitudes towards homosexuality are common even in areas where it is legal. Strong religious traditions in many places severely threaten homosexual equality and governments are failing to fully enforce the protection of homosexual individuals from homophobia and any negative societal attitudes (Omoto, 2006). As a result of antigay prejudice, many individuals feel compelled to hide their homosexuality or pretend to be “straight” or heterosexual (Humphreys, 1972).

Homosexual people in rural areas suffer isolation and discrimination and feel unable to fully integrate with heterosexual people. A significant number of them still find it difficult to be out and remain living in their local communities. It is like a standard norm that homosexual people get discriminated against, prejudged, abused, or stigmatized because of their sexual orientation. In most rural areas, the heterosexual family unit is valued as an essential part of life. It is the overtly dominant lifestyle in these spaces, which makes being homosexual a different experience than one would have in a much urban area (Johnston et. al, 2010).

In contrast, homosexual people in urban areas have gained much more acceptance and visibility as a result of gay rights movements and the recognition of the potential of the homosexual economical contribution. Acceptance of homosexuality is also much more common in suburban and urban communities, because there is a higher acceptance of diversity in general (Barrett et.al, 2005). All cities have recognized, visible gay neighborhoods and that gay couples are more likely to live in urban areas than are lesbian couples as the urban setting can be much more conducive to gay culture and life (Gates, 2004). Amongst those with higher income or education, acceptance is also more prevalent. These two points have led to an increase of the migration of homosexual people from rural communities to urban areas.

Other negative attitudes experienced by homosexuals come in the form of malicious gossip, name-calling, intimidating looks, internet bullying, vandalism, theft of property, discrimination at school or at work, isolation and rejection, sexual assault or even being

sentenced to death (Lewis, 2010). All this homophobic behavior or negative attitudes have social and personal impact. Sometimes homosexual people turn society's negative views about them inward or internalise them. This can affect their psychological well-being and can have consequences for healthy development. On the social level, prejudice and discrimination against homosexual people are reflected in the everyday stereotypes that members of these groups are subjected to (Lewis, 2010). These stereotypes are often used to excuse unequal treatment of homosexual people, for example, by limiting their job opportunities, parenting and refusing to recognise their relationships.

3.4.2 Homophobia

Homophobia can be explained as the fear of feeling love for members of one's own sex and, hence the hatred of those feelings in others (Lorde, 1984). Homophobic and transphobic violence has been recorded in all regions. Such violence may be physical (including murder, beatings, kidnappings, rape and sexual assault) or psychological (including threats, coercion and arbitrary deprivations of liberty) (OSCE, 2007). These attacks constitute a form of gender-based violence, driven by a desire to punish those seen as defying gender norms (Altschiller, 2005).

3.4.3 Violence against homosexuals

Violence and other spontaneous attacks in public settings against those perceived as LGBT may be targets of more organised abuse, including by religious extremists, paramilitary groups, neo-Nazis and extreme nationalists. Young LGBT people and those of all ages who are seen to be transgressing social norms are at risk of family and community violence (Altschiller, 2005).

Lesbians and transgender women are at particular risk because of gender inequality and power relations within families and the wider society. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women recently reported alleged incidents of gang rapes, family violence and murder experienced by lesbian, bisexual and transgender women in El Salvador,

Kyrgyzstan and South Africa, where the Rapporteur noted that “lesbian women face an increased risk of becoming victims of violence, especially rape, because of widely held prejudices and myths”, including “for instance, that lesbian women would change their sexual orientation if they are raped by a man” (Hammarberg, 2008).

Violence against LGBT persons tends to be especially vicious compared to other bias-motivated crimes. According to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), homophobic hate crimes and incidents often show a high degree of cruelty and brutality and such as beatings, torture, mutilation, castration and sexual assault (OSCE, 2007).

Homosexual individuals in rural areas, as in many other places, face discrimination and violence. In small rural areas, perpetrators and victims are typically both known to the surrounding community. Even police, who are intended to hold up the law, are known to commit crimes against sexually marginalized people (Lewis, 2010). The Special Rapporteur reported incidents in which individuals were subjected to victimisation by police and prison guards, and authorities failed to take reasonable measures to prevent violence against detainees perceived as LGBT. For example, in a police station in Indonesia, a man and his male partner were allegedly severely beaten and sexually abused by police officers a day after reportedly having been assaulted by 16 civilians. In Uzbekistan, a male human rights defender charged with homosexuality was reportedly beaten by police and threatened with rape with a bottle. A lesbian couple in Brazil was allegedly beaten at a police station and forced to perform oral sex. In Greece, detainees in a lesbian, gay and transgender section of the prison were reportedly denied access to an outside yard for two years, confined to their cells and a corridor at all times. The Special Rapporteur has also reported transsexual women being intentionally beaten on their breasts and cheekbones to burst implants and release toxins (Diamant, 1993). The Special Rapporteur, on violence against women, has highlighted similar cases (Svab & Kuhar, 2005).

In 2006, prisoners detailed allegations of transgender women in Nepal being beaten by police, who demanded money and sex. In 2011, they described a case in El Salvador in which a transgender woman was placed in a male-only prison and detained in a cell with gang members, where she was raped more than 100 times, sometimes with the complicity of prison officials. Other cases have been documented by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights defenders. One issue highlighted by United Nations experts is the “medically worthless” practice of subjecting men suspected of homosexual conduct to non-consensual anal examinations to “prove” their homosexuality. Such examinations have been condemned by the Committee against Torture, the Special Rapporteur on torture and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which has held that the practice contravenes the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment (Hunt & Jensen, 2007).

3.4.4 Discrimination

Homosexual individuals may find themselves being discriminated against by their relatives and other significant individuals in society (Hammarberg, 2009). Indeed, discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity may often contribute to the process of the dehumanisation of the victim, which is often a necessary condition for torture and ill-treatment to take place. In 2010, the Special Rapporteur noted that, in detention facilities, there was usually a strict hierarchy, and that those at the bottom of the hierarchy, such as gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender persons, suffered double or triple discrimination (Diamant, 1993). Such discrimination manifests itself in various ways, including through individuals being excluded from family homes, being disinherited and, prevented from going to school, being sent to psychiatric institutions, being forced to marry or to relinquish children, being punished for activist work and being subjected to attacks on personal reputation (Phooko, 2011). In many cases, lesbians, bisexual women and transgender people are especially at risk owing to entrenched gender inequalities that restrict autonomy in decision-making about sexuality, reproduction and family life.

Sexual orientation does not affect a person's ability to contribute to society and discrimination against homosexual people is substantially based on erroneous stereotypes. The level of discrimination that a homosexual faces can vary. Factors such as cultural values, schools, colleges, and universities can create an environment that decreases discrimination or these factors can promote these problems and minimises the legitimacy of gay men (Hunt & Jensen, 2007). Discrimination against homosexuals continues to be major a barrier to ending the global HIV and AIDS epidemic (Okie, 2007).

3.4.5 Family and social rejection

While families, communities and societies are often an important source of support, discriminatory attitudes within families and communities can also inhibit the ability of homosexual people from enjoying quality, healthy and happy lifestyles (Shankle, 2006). Friends and family affect how one can feel and, if one's family is negative, this may cause a bad attitude among family members (Rich, 2010). Those who are not open about their sexual orientation may experience additional difficulties in their lives (Hunt & Jensen, 2007). When homosexuals try to hide their sexual orientation from their co-workers and employers they often indicate that "this concealment creates a great deal of stress and anxiety, requires a large expenditure of effort, and results in dissatisfaction, feeling misunderstood, pressured, detached, and alienated". Homosexual people often rely on family support. However, for some homosexual people, their families do not accept their sexual orientation or gender identity. In extreme cases, homosexual people are disowned or kicked out of their homes, which leaves them without an important source of support (Rich, 2010). Family or community members often enforce gender norms and punish transgressions (Shankle, 2006).

The community may also be the site of restrictions on and regulations of female sexuality. For example, women who live out their sexuality in ways other than heterosexuality are often subjected to violence and degrading treatment including being forced to marry or fall pregnant, and being raped in marriage. Some of these so called treatments are

enacted as forms of punishment for assumed or actual sexual orientation or behaviour (Hammarberg, 2009).

3.4.6 Stigma and Labeling

Some heterosexual people consider homosexuality as a voluntary act and behavior, which a person can act on. Some opponents go that far, since homosexuality is from their point of view a matter of choice. Heterosexuals regard homosexual sexual practices as “crimes” which make homosexuals criminals. In many countries, stigma and labelling prevent men who have sex with men from accessing vital HIV prevention, treatment and care services (Meyer, 2003).

Isolation and stigma generate depression and other health problems. They contribute to truancy, absenteeism and children being forced out of school and, in extreme cases, attempted or actual suicide. Members of sexual minorities are disproportionately subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment because they fail to conform to socially constructed gender expectations. There is also stigma attached to homosexuality which takes different forms. Too often, it can take the form of verbal or physical violence. Many people live in fear of the discrimination that may come if they disclose their sexual identity to their families, friends, employers, and coworkers (Hammarberg, 2009).

3.4.7 Exposure to abuse

Not only are homosexual people denied of equal treatment, but they have also been victims of violence and harassment in society because of their sexual orientation. In individual cases, homosexuals are often insulted, kicked, punched and things thrown at them by fellow classmates, co-workers and even family members just for being homosexuals (Diamant, 1993).

Abuse towards homosexuals is usually displayed in the form of homophobic jokes, physical attacks, and negative media representation. At the beginning of the HIV and

AIDS epidemic, homosexual men in many countries were frequently singled out for abuse as they were seen to be responsible for the spread of HIV. Homosexual women were raped as a way of making them change to “real” women. This view was fueled by sensational reporting in the press, which became progressively anti-homosexuality (Mays, & Sullivan, 2002).

In many African countries such as Zimbabwe and Zambia, homophobia is legitimised by governments. Criminalisation of homosexuality remains strong in 36 countries in Africa and gay people face persecution and violence from police, employers, hospitals, traditional leaders and community organisations (OSCE, 2007). Lesbians are being attacked, raped, forcibly impregnated and otherwise punished because of their sexual orientation. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women expressed grave concern about reported sexual offences committed against women on account of their sexual orientation (Hammarberg, 2008).

3.4.8 Prejudice and stereotypes

Most common prejudices and stereotypes are related to cross-sex characteristics. A significant number of individuals characterize male homosexuals as mentally ill, promiscuous, lonely, insecure, sex-crazed maniacs and likely to be child molesters, while lesbians have been described as aggressive and hostile toward men. They are often considered extremely immoral (Herek, 1984). Positive characteristics are also part of the homosexual stereotype, for example sensitivity, intelligence, honesty, imagination, and neatness. Such situations may contribute to more vulnerability among this population (Cochran, 2003). The global HIV and AIDS epidemic has always been closely linked with negative attitudes towards homosexual men, a group that is particularly affected by HIV and AIDS (Barrett, 2000).

3.4.9 Suicidal ideation

Homosexual people who attempt suicide are disproportionately subjected to anti-homosexual attitudes. They often have fewer skills for coping with discrimination, isolation and loneliness and are more likely to experience family rejection (Charkratborti, 2011). Many homosexuals commit or attempt suicide as an escape from their problems. Homosexuals have problems that can turn out to be more than they can deal with. Homosexuality is something that is not easy to live with because society, most of the time, says it is wrong. These people usually have no one to go to with their problems for fear of being taunted or harassed (Polders, 2013).

Schools also rarely have groups for gay students to go to for help and parents are often unaware of what their children are going through. With no place to go and no one to help them, homosexual teens can feel alienated. This can force them think of more harmful ways of dealing with their problems. Thus at times homosexuals may turn to suicide rather than have to deal with their problems (Polders, 2013).

The high prevalence of suicide attempts among urban and rural gay youths ranges from 12% to 42% (D'Augelli, 2002) with up to 50% contemplating self-harm (Waldo, 1998). Most who attempt suicide make their first attempt before the age of 25 (Paul et al., 2002). The attempts mainly followed awareness of same-sex feelings and before disclosure of sexual orientation to others (D'Augelli, 2002). Risk factors for gay men who attempt suicide include problems related to sexual orientation, parents' reactions, a hostile environment, and victimisation because of sexual orientation. Most gay men are verbally abused; fifteen percent have been physically attacked, and more than one third reported losing friends because of their sexual orientation. The loss of friends is among one of the strongest predictors of suicide attempts (Polders, 2013).

3.4.10 Development of depressive disorders

If a gay man is not able to be himself in public situations, he may develop feelings of loneliness, worthlessness, low self-esteem, and increased internalised homophobia (D'Augelli, 2001). Other researchers confirm this by stating that gay students are more

depressed, lonely, have fewer reasons to live, and are at least four times more likely to attempt suicide than a control group of college students (Ritch & Williams, 2005). Social pressures are part of the reason for these attempted suicides.

Before or while “coming out”, gay people are particularly under enormous pressure to act in ways that are not natural to them (Polders, 2013). They are in fear of discovery, and are afraid of the response. When they do come out, there is pressure from all quarters accompanied by hatred and anger and oppression. Even if people do manage to deal with the burden of being gay in their culture, there is the opposite problem of lack of support (D’Augelli, 2001). Sometimes, it seems that straight people do not understand that not having role models is a big problem for the gay community as are laws against sodomy. Straight people are woven into a social dynamic that supports them when they need it; many are not even aware that it is there. Homosexuals are significantly more depressed than heterosexuals (Charkratborti, 2011).

3.5 Factors that constitute to society giving negative attitudes to homosexuals

Homosexuals suffer negative attitudes and are rejected by various groups of heterosexual people. Those heterosexuals who express hostile attitudes toward homosexual persons also tend to endorse traditional ideologies of family, sexuality and sex roles, and are often prejudiced against other minorities as well (Herek, 1984). In a survey done by the Pew Research Centre (2013), it was found that people in Africa and in predominantly Muslim countries remain among the least accepting of homosexuality. In sub-Saharan Africa, the majority (Nigeria (98%), Senegal (96%), Ghana (96%), Uganda (96%) and Kenya (90%)) believe that homosexuality should not be accepted by society. Even in South Africa where, unlike in many other African countries, homosexual acts are legal and discrimination based on sexual orientation is unconstitutional, 61% say homosexuality should not be accepted by society, while just 32% say it should be accepted.

Socio-demographics such as age, gender and religious affiliations contribute to attitude towards homosexuality. Age is also a factor in several countries, with younger people

offering far more tolerant views of homosexuality than older ones. In many countries, views of homosexuality also vary across age groups, with younger respondents consistently more likely than older ones to say homosexuality should be accepted by society (Pew Research Centre, 2013).

Negative attitudes involve acts of violence and intimidation, usually directed towards already stigmatised and marginalised groups. As such, negative attitudes are a mechanism of power and oppression, intended to reaffirm the precarious hierarchies that characterise a given social order. It attempts to re-create simultaneously the threatened (real or imagined) hegemony of the perpetrators' group and the appropriate sub ordinate identity of the victims' group. It is a means of marking both the self and the other in such a way as to re-establish their proper relative positions (Charkratborti and Garland, 2015).

Experiential attitudes develop when affects and cognitions associated with specific interpersonal interactions are generalised to all homosexuals. A person with positive experiences, therefore, expresses generally favorable attitudes and a person with negative experiences reports unfavorable attitudes because of the in experiences (Herek, 1984). Thus, heterosexuals who know lesbians and gays (homosexuals) are better able than others to recognise stereotypes as inaccurate, and are more likely to express tolerant attitudes as well. The bulk of studies have sought to uncover the causes of negative attitudes towards homosexuality. Sex differences in the direction and intensity of attitudes have been observed fairly consistently. It appears that heterosexuals tend to have more negative attitudes toward homosexuals of their own sex than of the opposite sex (Herek, 1984). In a study conducted by Herek (1984), the findings revealed that heterosexuals with more negative attitudes toward homosexuals are more likely to have the following experiences:

- They are less likely to have had personal contact with lesbians or gay people;
- They are less likely to report having engaged in homosexual behaviors, or to identify themselves as lesbian or gay;
- They are more likely to perceive their peers as manifesting negative attitudes, especially if the homosexuals are males;

- They are more likely to have resided in areas where negative attitudes are the norm (e.g., the Midwestern and southern United States, the Canadian prairies, and in rural areas or small towns), especially during adolescence;
- They are likely to be older and less well educated;
- They are more likely to be religious, to attend church frequently, and to subscribe to a conservative religious ideology;
- They are more likely to express traditional and restrictive attitudes about sex roles;
- They are less permissive sexually or manifest more guilt or negativity about sexuality, although some researchers have not observed this pattern and others have reported a substantially reduced correlation with the effects of sex-role attitudes and
- They are more likely to manifest high levels of authoritarianism and related personality characteristics.

3.5.1 Age and gender

Age is also a factor in several countries, with younger people offering far more tolerant views than older ones. Homosexuality is still difficult for many heterosexual members in different societies. Elders in developing communities are less technologically influenced and are less advanced to understand the evolution of era and generations and they have the mentality of comparison. Most of them cannot seem to step out of the past decades stereotypes and orthodox (Finlay & Walther, 2003).

In most of the countries surveyed by the Pew Research Centre (2013), views of homosexuality do not differ significantly between men and women. In the countries where there is a gender gap, women are considerably more likely than men to say homosexuality should be accepted by society. Gender differences are not prevalent in all countries, thus, in those countries where they are, women are consistently more accepting of homosexuality than men. In contrast, in poorer countries with high levels of religiosity, few believe homosexuality should be accepted by society (Pew Research Centre, 2013).

In a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center (2013), it was found that people aged 50 years and older in the U.S., Canada, Argentina, Bolivia and Chile are also less likely than those in the two younger age groups to say homosexuality should be accepted by society. However at least half of those 50 and older in all but Bolivia are accepting, including 75% in Canada. In the U.S., 70% of those aged 18-29 and 64% of those aged 30-49 are accepting of homosexuality, compared with about half of Americans ages 50 and older (52%). In Bolivia, however, 53% of 18-29 year-olds and 43% of 30-49 year-olds say homosexuality should be accepted, but just 27% in the older groups that were surveyed share this view.

Mexicans and Chinese aged 18-29 are more likely than those in each of the other two age groups to offer positive views of homosexuality. However, there is no significant difference between the views of 30-49 year-olds and those 50 or older. In Russia, El Salvador and Venezuela, those younger than 30 are more tolerant of homosexuality than are those aged 50 and older, while the views of those aged 30-49 do not vary considerably from those in the youngest and oldest groups.

Across the predominantly Muslim countries surveyed, as well as in the six sub-Saharan countries, solid majorities across age groups share the view that homosexuality should be rejected by society. In Lebanon, however, there is somewhat more acceptance among younger respondents; 27% of Lebanese younger than 30 say homosexuality should be accepted, compared with 17% of 30-49 year-olds and 10% of those 50 or older (Pew Research Center, 2013) .

3.5.2 Religion

There is a strong relationship between a country's religiosity and opinions about homosexuality or homophobia. People who are involved in church groups (as indicated by frequent attendance at church services) reflect the historical religious bias against lesbians and gay men, and this is especially so for Christians. The more religious people

are in terms of strength of faith and church attendance, the more likely they are to be against gay rights, gay marriage etc.

More frequent church attendees as well as those who belong to more conservative denominations are more likely to report prejudice against homosexual individuals (Finlay & Walther, 2003). It is clear from research that religious conservatives hold more negative attitudes towards homosexuality. Negative attitudes towards homosexuality among religious conservatives stem from Biblical based moral judgments (Hood, Hill & Spilka, 2009).

There is far less acceptance of homosexuality in countries where religion is central to people's lives measured by whether they consider religion to be very important, whether they believe it is necessary to believe in God in order to be moral, and whether they pray at least once a day. Acceptance of homosexuality is particularly widespread in countries where religion is less central in people's lives (Finlay & Walther, 2003). These are also among the richest countries in the world. In contrast, in poorer countries with high levels of religiosity, few believe homosexuality should be accepted by society and homosexual people are more likely to face harassment, and dangerous oppression which contrasts in those highly secularized nations where religion is the weakest, the lives of homosexuals are much safer, freer, and relatively more equitable (Finlay & Walther, 2003).

3.5.3 Personal homophobia (internalised prejudice)

This form of homophobia is primarily caused by misinformation. As with racism and sexism, people are taught to be homophobic. Myths about LGBT people are perpetuated in society despite the availability of accurate information. Few children are given unbiased information about LGBT people; many adults continue to believe the stereotypes they learned as children and some religious and conservative organisations promote lies about lesbian, gay and bisexual people (Thompson & Zoloth, 1990).

Personal homophobia is prejudice based on a personal belief that lesbian, gay and bisexual people are sinful, immoral, sick, and inferior to heterosexuals, or that they are incomplete women and men (Thompson & Zoloth, 1990). Personal homophobia is experienced as feelings of fear, discomfort, dislike, hatred, or disgust with same-sex sexuality. People regardless of their sexual orientation or preference, can experience personal homophobia and when this happens with LGBT people, it is called internalised homophobia (Blumeld, 1992).

Like heterosexuals, lesbians, gays and bisexuals are taught that same-sex sexuality is inferior to heterosexuality, and many internalise this to the point where self-acceptance is difficult. One result of this is that some LGBTs desperately try to deny or change their sexual orientation; and some have tried or succeeded in committing suicide (Thompson & Zoloth, 1990).

3.5.4 Interpersonal homophobia (harassment and individual discrimination)

Interpersonal homophobia can be explained by considering psychological factors in conjunction with prejudice. People who are not comfortable with their own sexuality, or who feel threatened by same-sex sexuality, tend to be more rigid about what is sexually "right" and may try to punish or force their beliefs on LGBT people. Interpersonal homophobia is individual behaviour based on personal homophobia (Blumeld, 1992). . This hatred or dislike may be expressed by name-calling, telling "jokes," verbal and physical harassment, and other individual acts of discrimination (Galliher, Brekhus & Keys, 2004).

Interpersonal homophobia, in its extreme form, results in LGBT people being physically assaulted for no other reason than their assailants' homophobia (Thompson & Zoloth, 1990). Most people act out their fears of LGBT people in nonviolent, more commonplace ways. Relatives often shun their LGBT family members; coworkers are distant and cold to LGBT colleagues and heterosexual friends are not interested in hearing about their LGBT friends' relationships (Galliher, Brekhus & Keys, 2004).

3.5.5 Institutional homophobia

This is caused, in part, by competition for power. Societies such as ours create scapegoats to maintain the status quo and the positions of those in power. During the 21st century, groups such as Jews, African Americans, Asian Americans, Latin Americans, American Indians, women and LGBT people have all been blamed for a variety of social and economic problems. When scapegoating is successful, dominant groups do not need to take responsibility for injustice or give up privilege (Thompson & Zoloth, 1990). This form of phobia refers to the many ways in which government, businesses, churches, and other institutions and organizations discriminate against people on the basis of sexual orientation.

Institutional homophobia is also called heterosexism (Thompson & Zoloth, 1990). Institutional homophobia is reflected in religious organisations which have stated or implicit policies against lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders. There are also leading services agencies which refuse to allocate resources for services to LGBT people; and governments which fail to insure the rights of all citizens, regardless of their sexual orientation.

3.5.6 Cultural homophobia

Cultural homophobia is largely caused by social norms which dictate "correct" sexuality. Sexual contact between women and men has been practiced in all societies throughout history and is openly accepted in many cultures. But Western civilization is generally repressive of sexuality in any form, other than intercourse necessary for procreation or sexual activity in the context of heterosexual marriage. Therefore, same-sex sexuality will certainly be feared or damned (Finlay & Walther, 2003).

Cultural phobia refers to social standards and norms which dictate that being heterosexual is better or more moral than being LGBT, and that everyone is or should be heterosexual. Cultural homophobia is also called heterosexism (Finlay and Walther, 2003). Cultural homophobia is spelled out each day in television shows and print advertisements where virtually every character is heterosexual, every erotic relationship involves a female and a male, and every "normal" child is presumed to be attracted to and will eventually marry someone of the other sex. In the few cases where LGBT are portrayed, they are usually unhappy, stereotyped, engaged in self-destructive behaviours, or ambivalent about their sexual orientation (Thompson & Zoloth, 1990).

3.6 Impacts of homophobia on homosexual people

The impact of homophobia, stigma and discrimination can be especially hard on adolescents and young adults. Young homosexuals are at an increased risk of being bullied in school. They are also at risk of being rejected by their families and, as a result, are at increased risk of homelessness (Norman, Carr, & Jimenez, 2005). A study that was published in 2009 by Family Acceptance Project compared homosexual young adults who experienced strong rejection from their families with their peers who had more supportive families. A research conducted found that those who experienced stronger rejection were:

- 8.4 times more likely to have tried to commit suicide
- 5.9 times more likely to report high levels of depression
- 3.4 times more likely to use illegal drugs
- 3.4 times more likely to have risky sex (Ryan, 2009).

3.6.1 Hindrance of performance at school and workplace

Not only does hiding one's sexual orientation cause stress and anxiety, but when a gay man perceives discrimination, his work attitude becomes more negative, his accomplishments are reduced, gets fewer promotions and his level of status is decreased

(Diamant, 1993). This, in addition difficult for some individuals since the number of accomplishments and the status that a person obtains are often part of the individual's identity (Okie, 2007). In the U.S, the current federal government openly denies gays employment to federal institutions like the CIA, FBI, the Army or the National Security Agency.

3.6.2 Shorter life expectancy

Those gay and bisexual people living within communities where anti-gay sentiments are not only common, but are also accepted, have, on average, a shorter life expectancy in comparison to their peers who are fortunate enough to live in more open-minded communities (Chatel, 2014). A recent study which analysed tens of thousands of gay obituaries and compared them with AIDS deaths data from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), has shown that the life expectancy for homosexuals is about twenty years shorter than that of the general public (Life Site News, 2015).

3.6.3 Substance abuse or dependence

One factor which leads to substance abuse is minority stress from facing obstacles such as discrimination, stigma, and family rejection. Raised in an unsupportive culture, surrounded by homophobia and bullying, and lacking familial support, the stressors of individuals who identify as LGBT, especially youths, add up, and these youths often escape into substances just like their peers do. In addition, bars and clubs have a historical association as central meeting places for the LGBT community, creating easy access to substances and providing a fertile ground for impressionable youths. Several researchers (Greenwood, White, & Page-Shafer, 2001; Stall et al., 2001) found that alcohol and substance use occurs among homosexuals. Significant levels of "high-frequent" alcohol use were disclosed by 8%-13.6% of gay participants, while 12% reported three or more alcohol-related problems.

Alcohol use among homosexuals ranges from 73.7% to 85% (Shankle, 2006). Recreational drug use is also highly prevalent among gay men. For example, 37.5% of gay men admit to smoking. Up to 43% of the participants also engage in multiple drug use (Shankle, 2006). In addition, drug abuse symptoms were common among gays (Ritch & Williams, 2005).

3.7 Homosexuals reactions to negative criticism

Homosexual people react to negative criticism in different ways as discussed below. One obvious solution is to walk away from people who give negative attitudes. However this is not as easy as it sounds. While people can always walk away from a barber with a bad attitude or an airline agent with an anger-management problem, they cannot walk away from a parent, sibling, spouse, colleague, or friend with a negative attitude, and yet this could be a solution. A more practical approach to dealing with them is to start by understanding the reasons for their negativity. In brief, almost all negativity has its roots in one of three deep-seated fears: the fear of being judged by others for being close to a homosexual; the fear of not being respected by others; and the fear of not being loved. These fears feed off each other to fuel the belief that homosexuals are immoral and should not be accepted (Simmons, 2012).

Homosexuals need to maintain their positivity and composure. This involves doing what it takes to protect one's happiness. They must take personal responsibility for their own happiness. In a nutshell, it involves adopting a set of more positive attitudes, However that alone may not be enough to deal with a constant onslaught of negativity; they may need to take time away from the negative person on a regular basis to maintain their composure (Charkratborti, 2012).

3.8 Strategies that can be employed to support homosexuals

There are few strategies that the society can implement as a way of desensitisation. Society can reduce the mainstream's sense of threat to homosexuality by targeting places

such as schools, homes and other institutions and this can be achieved with the involvement of parents, principals and other stakeholders in the government and NGO institutions.

3.8.1 School environment

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a positive school environment can decrease depression, suicidal feelings, substance use and unexcused school absences among LGBT youth. A study found that in schools with LGBTI support groups (such as gay-straight alliances), LGBTI students were less likely to experience threats of violence, miss school because of feeling unsafe, or attempt suicide than those students in schools without LGBTI support groups (Tracy, 2015). Schools can decrease gay and lesbian suicide risks by doing the following:

- Encouraging universal respect and prohibiting violence, harassment and bullying of all students;
- Designating "safe spaces" where LGBT youth can receive support;
- Encouraging student-led groups (like a gay-straight alliance) that promote a safe, welcoming and accepting school environment for all;
- Ensuring health curricula that includes LGBT issues;
- Facilitating access to LGBT health providers in the community.

3.8.2 Family environment

A supportive home environment is clearly linked to decreased gay suicide attempt risks and youth that experience severe family rejection are more than eight times more likely to report having attempted suicide compared to those who experienced little-to-no family rejection (Tracy, 2015). One way to cope with the pressure from stigma and discrimination is through social support. Social support can be viewed as one such coping mechanism. Some studies show that homosexuals who have good social support from families, friends, and the wider community are prone to lead healthy and competent lifestyles.

Evidence suggests that increased social support reduces stress and the probability of depression (Ryan, 2009).

Social support refers to social relationships that are both positive and endorsing. Adequate and appropriate social support is integral to the alleviation of stress and has been shown to be a strong predictor of lessened depression among gay men and lesbian women. A negative reaction to an LGBT youth also increases rates of depression, use of illegal drugs and engagement in unprotected sexual behaviors (Ryan, 2009). Parents should talk openly about LGBT issues, gay suicide and also do the following:

- Be watchful of behaviors indicating the youth may be a victim of violence, harassment or bullying;
- Be watchful of mental health issues like suicidal thoughts or depression;
- Act immediately if any of the above are suspected; and
- Join with school personnel and other adults in the community to work through any issues.

3.9 Conclusion

The review of literature in this chapter concentrated largely on the challenges that society contributes towards homosexuals. It highlighted the prevalent challenges that homosexual people face every day, for example homicides, discriminations, abuse, to mention a few. These challenges predispose them to isolation and perpetuate their never ending battles with mental health problems such as depression, substance abuse, suicide, risky behaviors and self-esteem issues. To promote positive attitudes towards homosexuality, it is necessary that schools, hospitals, family environments and other institutions develop health curricula that include LGBT issues, encourage universal

respect and prohibit violence, harassment and bullying of all LGBTI students or employees. Access to LGBT health providers in the community should be facilitated and it should be every family member should make an effort to provide a supportive home environment if there is a homosexual person in the family.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methods that were followed in conducting this study. It provides information on the participants, that is, the criteria for their inclusion in the study, who the participants were and how they were sampled. The instrument that was used for data collection and the procedures that were followed in collecting and analysing data are also described. Ethical issues that were observed in the process are also highlighted.

4.2 Research approach

The study used the qualitative method. Qualitative research refers to inductive, holistic, emic, subjective and process-oriented methods used to understand, interpret, describe and develop a theory on a phenomena or setting (Neuman, 2011). It is a systematic subjective approach used to describe life experiences and give them meaning. This method is mostly associated with words, language and experiences rather than measurements, statistics and numerical figures. The qualitative method aimed at getting an in-depth understanding of participants' views (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

The primary goal of using the qualitative approach, in this study, was to describe and understand rather than to explain human behavior. This study applied the qualitative approach because it promoted research which is conducted in the natural setting of social actors (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). In this approach, participants' perspectives were emphasised. It was appropriate for the study of attitudes and behavior (Neuman, 2011).

4.3 Research design

This study used the phenomenological design which describes the meaning of experiences of a phenomenon, topic or concept of various individuals (Creswell, 1998). The phenomenological research approach was the most appropriate to the main aim of the study, which was to explore the impact of negative societal attitudes towards homosexual people in Thulamela Municipality. The purpose of the phenomenological approach is to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in the situation (Lester, 1987). This normally translates into gathering 'deep' information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, participant observations and discussions. The findings are from the perspective of the research participants. Phenomenology is concerned with the study of experiences from the perspective of the individual (Lester, 1987).

In this design, the aim of the researcher was to describe, as accurately as possible, the phenomenon, refraining from any pre-given framework but remaining true to the facts. This research design was applied to this study because it allowed the researcher to understand social and psychological phenomena from the perspective of the people involved (Krueger, 2000).

4.4 Location of the study

Six areas from Thulamela Municipality were included in the study. The areas included Thohoyandou, Muledane, Maniini, Shayandima, Maungani and Sibasa. When selecting these areas the researcher took into consideration the fact that these areas are semi-rural and that most of the homosexual people are located in suburbs rather than in deep rural villages. The selected locations of the study were all situated close to Thohoyandou CBD. Thohoyandou is situated in the south of Vhembe District, on the main road between Louis Trichardt and the Kruger National Park. It is a lush agricultural center, with banana plantations, subtropical fruit, tobacco and maize farms Limpopo Vhembe District Profile (2013).

Thohoyandou is surrounded by small rural townships such as Maungani, Ngovhela, Vondwe, Phiphidi, Muledane, Shayandima, Makwarela and Maniini. Thohoyandou is the main development node in Thulamela Local Municipality with approximately 70 000 residents within the boundaries of the town. It is further surrounded by numerous rural settlements situated on the outskirts of the built-up area. Thohoyandou consists of various races with Black Africans making up 95.5%, Coloureds 0.2%; Indian/Asian 4.1%; White 0.2% and other 0.1%. The first languages spoken in this area include Venda 84.7%; Tsonga 2.6%; English 2.1%; Northern Sotho 1.2% and other 9.4% (Statistics South Africa, 2011).

Thohoyandou's CBD was originally designed as a super mall with large walkways and water fountains, flowers and green areas. The parking lot was situated on the outskirts and people would walk to the shops. Unfortunately, the shortage of vacant land

within the CBD has slowed down its growth and kept it from expanding further (Statistics South Africa, 2011). The CBD has also suffered from a lack of maintenance over the past fifteen years. There is a big mall "Thavhani Mall", which is currently being built in Thohoyandou. Other towns which are next to Thohoyandou are Sibasa, 8 km away; Dzanani, 45 km; Malamulele, 45 km; Makhado, 85 km; Musina, 139 km; and Polokwane, 188 km.

4.5 Population

A research population is generally a large collection of individuals or objects that are the main focus of a scientific query. A research population is also known as a well-defined collection of individuals or objects known to have similar characteristics. All individuals or objects within a certain population usually have common, binding characteristics or traits (Hasaan, 2017). The main target population for this study comprised non-homosexual people who reside in Thulamela semi-urban areas. The sample of this study comprised 12 participants, five males and seven females. Five were between the ages of 25-35 and seven were between the ages of 35-55, six participants were from the Venda ethnic group, three from the Tsonga ethnic group, two from the Pedi ethnic group and one from the Swati ethnic group. In terms of qualifications, four had secondary school qualifications, while eight had tertiary qualifications.

4.6 Sampling method and sample size

The researcher selected 12 non homosexual people. The researcher used purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is when a researcher chooses specific people within the population to use for a particular study or research project. Unlike random studies, which deliberately include a diverse cross section of ages, backgrounds and cultures, the idea behind purposive sampling is to concentrate on people with particular characteristics who are in a position to assist with the relevant information. In this study, the use of purposive sampling was advantageous in that it produced relevant results which were more

representative of the population than would have been the case if an alternative form of sampling had been used (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981).

4.7 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion and exclusion criteria is the list of characteristics of the elements that the researcher determines beforehand. These elements are essential to determine the eligibility of an individual to take part in the study (Hassan, 2017). Only heterosexual/non-homosexual Individuals who were from the ages of 25- 55 years old, who reside in Thulamela Municipality were included in the study. This study included individuals with secondary school and tertiary education qualifications only those who spoke vernacular languages (Tshivenda, Sepedi, Xitsonga and SiSwati) as their mother tongue language were included. Homosexual individuals did not form part of this study. This study excluded people who were illiterate or had primary school qualifications and also those who were not from the Thulamela Municipality. People who were younger than 25 years and also those who were older than 55 years were excluded from this study. People who did not speak vernacular languages as their first language were excluded from the study.

4.8 Research Instrument

For the purpose of this study, the researcher used a semi-structured in-depth interview guide (refer to appendix 3) which involved direct questioning and the use of open-ended questions. This method gave the researcher and the participants much more flexibility to exhaust the topic and emerging ideas. The researcher was able to follow up particular interesting avenues that emerged in the interview, and participants were able to give a fuller picture (Smith, 1993). The researcher used some indirect questioning on sensitive questions.

The interview guide consisted of two sections; the first section (A) consisted of six closed-ended questions which sought the demographic information of the participants. The second section (B) consisted of four research questions eliciting information on the attitudes of non-homosexuals towards homosexuality.

4.9 Entry Negotiations

The researcher approached the participants two weeks before the commencement of the interviews. The researcher informed the participants about the purpose of the study, the ethical issues involved and also how their information was going to be used. When participants consent to be part of the study, a date for the interviews was scheduled taking into account the participants' availability. The researcher called participants three days before the interviews to remind them about the interviews. A suitable place where the interviews were to take place was arranged with each participant.

4.10 Pre-testing

Pretesting involves simulating the formal data collection process on a small scale to identify practical problems with regard to data collection instruments, sessions, and methodology (Hurst et al., 2015). It allowed the researcher to make corrective changes or adjustments before actually collecting data from the target population. Research projects that neglect pre-testing run the risk of collecting useless data. Pre-testing provides an opportunity to detect and remedy a wide range of potential problems related to the instrument.

The researcher administering the interviews to individuals that have similar characteristics to the target study population, and in a manner that replicated how the data collection session was conducted. During pretesting, the researcher administered the types of study materials i.e. (consent forms, demographic questions, interviews, etc.) that were included in the actual study process (Hurst et al., 2015). Pretesting provided an opportunity to make revisions to study materials and data collection procedures to ensure that appropriate questions were being asked and that questions did not make participants

uncomfortable or confused because they were ambiguous or they combined two or more important issues in a single question (Hurst et al., 2015).

Pretesting was conducted by the same researcher who was involved in data collection for the actual study. Researcher interviewed three non-homosexual participants before the actual study. These three participants did not form part of the final study. Pre-testing took place at the homes of the three participants (Thohoyandou Block-F and Block G). None of the questions was modified after the pre-testing.

4.11 Data Collection

A semi-structured interview guide was used as a research instrument to collect data. Permission was sought from the participants to tape record the interview and this was done using an audio tape recorder throughout the interview process. The researcher also used a note book to write down important responses from the participants. This was done to use as back-up in case the tape recorder broke down, as well. To highlight some important issues during data transcription. Participants who did not understand Tshivenda were interviewed in English and some in Tshivenda. The interviews or data collected were translated from Tshivenda to English by a language expert. Where the participants were not comfortable being interviewed in their natural settings, the researcher organised to conduct the interviews in her office. Twelve interviews were conducted in the researcher's office and each interview session lasted between 30 minutes to 45 minutes each.

4.12 Data Analysis

Data analysis is a process of inspecting, cleansing, transforming, and modeling data with the goal of discovering useful information, suggesting conclusions, and supporting decision-making (Sullivan, 1990). The researcher used thematic analysis to catalogue the emerging codes and looked for patterns in the codes. These patterns are called themes. Some of the themes were grouped under much broader themes called super ordinate themes. The final set of themes was summarised and placed into similar structures where

evidence from the text was given to back up the themes produced by a quote from the text (Smith, 1993)

The researcher analysed data using the following steps (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Step 1: The researcher read the text several times to acquire the overall understanding of it.

Step 2: The researcher went through the text again, underlining or highlighting words, phrases or sentences which were relevant to the research question.

Step 3: The researcher grouped different units of the same meaning into themes of meaning.

Step 4: The researcher gave appropriate titles to the themes according to the content of each theme.

Step 5: Lastly the researcher discussed the relationship between and among themes, thereby presenting what the whole text portrays.

Step 6: After the final themes had been reviewed, the researcher began the process of writing the final report.

4.13 Trustworthiness

The aim of trustworthiness in a qualitative inquiry is to support the argument that the inquiry's findings are "worth paying attention to" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Validity, reliability, and objectivity are criteria used to evaluate the quality of research in the conventional positivist research paradigm. However, for the qualitative study four concepts of trustworthiness are considered; namely credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability.

4.13.1 Credibility

To maintain the credibility of the study findings, the researcher prolonged triangulation. This involved the use of individual interviews, which formed the major data collection strategy for this research. Supporting data were obtained from documents to provide a background to help explain the attitudes and behavior of the group under study, as well as to verify particular details that participants supplied (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

The researcher also used a wide range of informants, participants' viewpoints and experiences. These were verified against others and a rich picture of attitudes and behavior of the participants were constructed based on the contributions of a range of participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Peer scrutiny of the research project by colleagues, peers and academics was also welcomed. Feedback that was offered when the researcher presented her proposal and research findings ensured credibility of the study.

4.13.2 Dependability

Dependability is showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated. Dependability is determined by checking the consistency of the study processes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to address the dependability issue more directly, the processes within the study were reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work. To allow readers of the research report to develop a thorough understanding of the methods and their effectiveness, the study included a description of the research methodologies and design.

4.13.3 Transferability

Transferability is the generalization of the study findings to other situations and contexts. Transferability is not considered a viable naturalistic research objective. The contexts in which qualitative data collection occurs defines the data and contributes to the interpretation of the data. For these reasons, generalization in qualitative research is limited.

4.13.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. Reference to literature and findings by other authors that confirm the researcher's interpretations strengthened confirmability of the study in addition to information and interpretations by people other than the researcher from within the researcher site itself (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

4.14 Ethical Considerations

The research complies with the following institutional ethical issues:

1. The proposal was presented in the Department of Psychology in the School of Health Sciences at the University of Venda for recommendation.
2. The research proposal was presented before the School of Health Sciences' Higher Degrees Committee for quality assurance.
3. The proposal was submitted to the University Higher Degrees Committee (UHDC) for approval.
4. The research was submitted to the University's Ethics Committee for ethical clearance.

After the institution had granted approval, the researcher sought consent from the potential participants. On the date of the interviews the researcher explained the aim of the study to participants and gave them an information sheet. When the participants agreed to participate, the researcher gave them the consent form to sign. It is the researcher's responsibility to consider whether any type of harm could occur when he/she plans for the research study and to ensure that mechanisms are instituted to remove it. It is, therefore, essential that researchers carefully evaluate the potential for harm arising and ensure that participants;

- Behave according to appropriate ethical standards;
- Consider how their research might negatively affect participants; and
- Protect themselves, their supervisors/teachers, and their institution from being placed in situations where individuals might make claims against them for

inappropriate behavior, thus resulting in public criticism or even the researcher being sued. The researcher ensured that participants were protected and that students, staff, and the university undertaking the research were protected.

- Voluntary Participation

The researcher explained to the participants the purpose of the study, the ethical issues involved and all the events that would occur during the study process. The researcher then requested for the participants' consent. The researcher did not force respondents to participate (Trochim, 2006). The Researcher remembered that participants were assisting her in the study, thus they were invited to participate with a clear understanding that they were under no obligation to do so and that there would be no negative consequences for them if they did not participate in the research (Trochim, 2006). In this study, no participant was forced to participate. Participants were informed that at any stage of the study they could withdraw without any negative consequences.

- Informed Consent

The most effective way to address the informed consent issue is through the use of an information sheet, which is provided to all those who are invited to participate. If possible, this should be on official university letterhead, as this not only increases the response rate, but also informs respondents that this is an official university activity. In situations in which there is a potential for participant harm occurring, participants should be given the invitation sufficiently in advance to enable them to carefully consider whether they will participate (Trochim, 2006). Participants were given a written information sheet (see appendix 1) at the beginning of the study and all informative explanations about the study were given to them. These included their right to withdraw from the study at any stage of the study (Trochim, 2006).

The researcher gave participants consent forms to sign after they had agreed to participate in the study (Creswell, 2006). Participants were given these consent forms to sign before the commencement of the interviews to indicate that they were not being coerced to participate in the study. The consent forms (see appendix 2) were also presented before the interviews were conducted.

- Confidentiality

Maintaining confidentiality of information collected from research participants means that only the researcher or individuals of the research team can identify the responses of individual subjects. Researchers must make every effort to prevent anyone outside of the project connecting individual subjects with their responses. Confidentiality means that the researcher knows who the participants are, but that their identity will not be revealed in any way in the resulting report (Baron, 1996). Confidentiality in this study was maintained through the use of pseudonyms for research subjects and keeping all notes in a secure location. The study did not reveal any participants' real name in the records, participants were referred to as participant 1, 2, 3, 4 etc.. It was also explained to the participants that no one except the researcher will have access to the information and that information obtained will be stored in a safe place.

- No Deception of Participants

Participation in all research should be voluntary, and there should be no coercion or no deception. Deception is defined as misrepresenting, tricking, or disguising. Deception is common in some research. Participants should be protected from deception (Dench, Iphofen & Huws. 2004). The researcher gave correct information about the purpose of the study and all the procedures that would be taken in the study. Participants were not deceived in any way to take part in the study. They were also informed that the findings of the study would be made available to the University of Venda.

- Protection from Harm

There are a number of ways in which participants can be harmed, for example physical harm, psychological harm, emotional harm, embarrassment (i.e., social harm), and so on. It is important for the researcher to identify any potential for harm and determine how this potential for harm can be overcome. Ideally, the research should have minimal, if any, potential for any harm to occur (Dench, Iphofen & Huws. 2004). This study did not pose any psychological harm to the participants. Great care was taken in planning the research so that the participants' wellbeing, dignity, privacy, beliefs and cultural values were respected. The researcher also strived to avoid harm not only to the immediate population of subjects, but also to their wider family, kin and community. This also applies to the participants' organisations or businesses which should not suffer detrimental consequences due to participation in the research study (Dench, Iphofen & Huws. 2004).

4.15 Conclusion

The researcher used qualitative research methodology and Interpretative phenomenological analysis design. In-depth information was collected using Semi-structured interview guide which consisted of four research questions. The purposive sample consisted of 12 non-homosexual males and females who were between the ages of 27 and 55 residing in the Thulamela Local municipality.

The researcher informed the participants about the purpose of the study, consent was sought from the participants, confidentiality, anonymity and avoidance of harm were further ensured during the research administration processes. Credibility was ensured by obtaining supporting data from documents and the processes within the study were reported in detail to assure dependability.

This chapter highlighted the research methodology that was used to conduct the study. It covered aspects such as research approach, research design, population, location, research instrument, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the description of the study sample followed by the description of the themes that emerged from the study. Transcriptions have not been edited; they are the exact words spoken by the participants who took part in the study.

5.2 Description of sample

The sample consisted of twelve (12) non-homosexual participants whose ages ranged between 25-35 years (42%) 36-45 years (42%) and 46-55years (16%). Participants in the study did not share the same level of education, socio-economic status and background.

This was done for the purpose of getting varied responses that are influenced by the participants' experiences.

Participants were included in the study because they all had a personal encounter, relations or knowledge about homosexuality and they all resided in the semi-urban area. Thirty-three percent (33%) of the participants had high school (secondary school) qualifications and 67% had tertiary qualifications.

Participants in this study resided in Thulamela Municipality, which is a semi-rural area, which is still developing. The majority of participants had negative attitudes towards homosexuality. Olsen (2013) found that students in rural areas more frequently experienced homophobic language and derogatory comments, as well as higher levels of physical harassment and assault related to their sexual orientation and gender expression than students in urban and suburban locales. Besides affecting their academic performance, these negative experiences also result in many LGBT students feeling less connected to school (Olsen, 2013). Table 5.1 below summarises the demographic profile of the participants.

Table 5.1 Socio-demographic profile of the participants

Participants	Age	Gender	Residential area	Home language	Highest level of education
1	42	Female	Thohoyandou	Tshivenda	Secondary
2	28	Female	Sibasa	Seswati	Tertiary
3	55	Male	Muledane	Tshivenda	Secondary
4	33	Female	Maniini	Tshivenda	Secondary
5	37	Male	Maungani	Tshivenda	Tertiary

6	27	Male	Shayandima	Xitsonga	Tertiary
7	49	Female	Sibasa	Tshivenda	Tertiary
8	44	Male	Muledane	Tshivenda	Secondary
9	36	Female	Maungani	Sepedi	Tertiary
10	29	Female	Shayandima	Xitsonga	Tertiary
11	38	Male	Thohoyandou	Xitsonga	Tertiary
12	27	Female	Shayandima	Sepedi	Tertiary

Table 5.2 below gives a summary of the themes and subthemes derived from data gathered from participants

Table 5.2 Summary of themes and sub-themes

MAIN THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Same sexual relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same sex intimate relationships and attractions • Gays and lesbians
Progressive attitudes towards homosexuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance • Tolerance
Anti-homosexual attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservative attitudes • Taboo or sin

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resentment • Stigmatisation • Labelling
Societal induced challenges faced by homosexual people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination • Suicide • Depression • Violence • Correctional rapes • Self-esteem and confidence issues
Strategies that non homosexuals can adopt to reduce the negative attitudes they exhibit against homosexual people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquiring enough knowledge about homosexuality • Developing tolerant attitudes towards homosexuality • Being supportive • Avoid blaming homosexuals • Stop condemning homosexual individuals

5.3 Same sexual relationships

The first theme cover the perceptions of participants towards homosexuality. These perceptions were motivated by their personal encounters with homosexual individuals. Some of the participants indicated that they had degree relatives, friends or acquaintances who were homosexual. The majority of participants, in this theme, indicated that they understood homosexuality to be the act of two people of the same sex having sexual relationships either in a marriage or just being intimate with other members of their same sex. All participants indicated that they had been in a situation where they had to work with, interact or be in the same place with a homosexual person who was either a lesbian or gay. The researcher came up with a few sub-themes to explain this theme better. And these sub-themes are discussed below.

5.3.1 Same sex intimate relationships and attractions

Most participants (55%) explained their perceptions of homosexuality. They defined homosexuality as a sexual relationship between two people of the same sex or gender that is when a man falls in love with another man or a woman with another woman. Some of the participants claimed that they had friends or close relatives who were homosexuals and that they fully understood what homosexuality really is. The following statements were made by the participants;

My understating of homosexuality is basically a relationship between two people of the same sex or the same gender. I just think it's people of the same sex who are in love with each other... (Rolls eyes). I think these people are born this way and they cannot change how they feel about being in love with someone of the same gender as you. It's just like "straight" or "normal" people, they also cannot change how they feel about someone of the opposite sex and yet we still judge these people. Participant 1

Uh...I know it's all about gays... men who fall in love with other men or women who marry other women. I know some of these people learn this from televisions and some learn this madness from friends at school. I mean have you seen an old Venda man men who is gay? This is just a trend of madness that is taking over this young generation of today and the society is promoting this behavior every day. Participant 2

I understand that it's people of the same gender who have sex with each other. I actually personally know some few people who are homosexuals, so it's not a big deal for me at all. Participant 5

It's exactly what happened in Sodom and Gomorrah, when men were marrying men or committing adultery with men... it's same sex relationships... I don't just mean any relationship... I mean sexual relationship... Participant 8

Uhhhhm... Okay, my perception about homosexuality is that its same-sex or same sex marriage... uhhhhm... it means people who get the sexual attraction to people of their same sex, uhhhhm... you know like a boy to a boy instead of a boy to a girl that kinda thing... (Giggles).... Uhm yeah it's a same sex attraction... men to men... (Laughs out loud). Participant 9

5.3.2 Gays and lesbians

Participants in this study explained their perceptions of homosexuality by stating that homosexuals are gay or lesbian people. Another participant added that she had a gay son herself and that to her homosexuality means gay people. She mentioned that, because of that, she has no problem with homosexuality at all. She explained that she knows what it feels like to have a homosexual person at home. This is stated in the following extract.

I have a homosexual child myself (laughs)... I know it all about homosexuality trust me. My son started behaving as a gay man or he came out as a gay person in 2007. This was not so popular back then so for me it was a serious shock, I didn't know what to do or how to react. I was so ashamed of him and I felt so embarrassed. So I understand everything about homosexuality, it's when two males have sex with each other. Participant 3

Most of the participants believed homosexuality means gays or lesbians, but some of them were not really clear what it really means to be gay or even to differentiate gays from lesbians or bisexuals or any other LGBTI individuals. They maintained lumped all these variations under the term gay.

I understand that it means gays or lesbians. I don't know if transgender people are also regarded as homosexuals but I understand it means gays. This is something new in our country, many people are still trying to understand what it really means to be a

homosexual and those who do not understand it seem to hate or misinterpret it.
Participant 4.

5.4 Progressive attitudes towards homosexuality

Theme two elaborated on the positive attitudes that non homosexual people in Thulamela Municipality have towards homosexual individuals in the area. Some of the responses that participants gave were mostly motivated or influenced by their personal encounters with homosexuals, some of whom were close relatives, friends or colleagues. Thus made them much more accepting or progressive in their attitudes towards homosexuals. Some participants indicated that they do not have issues with homosexuality or homosexual people. They further elaborated that homosexual people deserve to live normal happy lives like anyone else who is non-homosexual because they are not criminals and they are not harming the planet in any way. Even those who have not had personal encounters with homosexual people were also in support of homosexual people, emphasizing that it is their choice to be what they are. This is supported by the following quotes.

5.4.1 Acceptance

It became evident in this study that even though some participants are still reluctant of acknowledging homosexuality some are coming to accept the reality and the existence of homosexuality. Participants indicated that it is not an easy topic thus they are gradually getting desensitized to homosexuality daily simply because homosexual community is expanding and it is receiving a great deal of attention from media all around the world regardless whether the attention is brought upon by positive or negative circumstances. Acceptance of homosexuality in the society is currently a seemingly slow but assuring process.

Uhhhhm. I have already indicated before that I have a son who is gay...so it's not that easy you, know... to resent what you have at home... not that it's something that I can

say I love but I learned to be accepting and welcoming of homosexuality when my son confirmed to me that he was gay... you know what it's like? Uhm It's like when you see someone who has a mental problem at the street, you might laugh at them but if they were you family member, maybe your parent or your child then it becomes a whole different story... that's how it is with me... I acknowledge homosexuals because I have one under the same roof so you can imagine how i feel about that. I having a gay son has taught me to love and appreciate people who are different because I now understand that being accepted by the society does not make one perfect or God's favorites...He loves us all. Participant 3

I personally do not have any problem with homosexual people... in fact, I think that these people make the world a better place...Ehhh , have you ever been in the same place with a bubbly gay person. These people are just funny and I think they are God's gift to the world to cheer everyone up because we have too much stress as a world you know... (Laughs)... at least gay people are here to take the dull moments away from miserable people, including the ones who hate them... they need some few drops of gayness in their lives... Participant 5

Gay people are just amazing... I love them... They are wild, they speak their minds on the spot and I love most of their confidence, they are crazy good people...but lesbians are too serious, they scare me most of them but gays are good enough"... participant 9
"Uhm,,, I don't mind homosexual people,, I think it's none of my business what people do with their lives,,, really I do have a gay friend, he is not a problem to me as long as he does not try anything with me. I do not have any problem with these people at all. Participant 2

The society should just understand that these homosexual people are here and they are not going anywhere... they should just let them be who they want to be. Participant 4

5.4.2 Tolerance

Participants in this study appeared to be aware of the reality that everyday 10 in 100 homosexual people go through many of negative attitudes and harsh realities in their lives. They felt that they cannot be the reason that homosexual people tend to hate their lives or add more on the challenges that they are already faced with. These participants showed tolerance towards homosexual people and said that they do not mind being in the same space with them or having to share some responsibilities in places such as work places. However, some of these participants said that they can tolerate homosexual people as long as they do not have to live with them at their homes or as long as they were not or their siblings.

At my daughter's school the principal there is gay... uhhhhm first of all I don't have a problem with it if he is doing his job of being a good principal you know?...at the end of the day he does not throw his wedding in the classroom and his husband does not hold hands and parade with him around the school every day...as long as he is doing his job and not advertise his sexuality to our children, I think I can live with that... Participant 4

I don't mind gay people doing whatever they are doing, I can only have a problem if they are now getting in my church... Ehhh, imagine if your pastor just decide to inform the congregation that they are now gay or if your church starts making gay weddings... I mean I don't know... but I think I can have a problem with that". Participant 5

I can live with gay people... who am I really to judge, I don't mind them but I don't think I can feel comfortable having a gay friend.... Participant 9

5.5 Anti-homosexuality attitudes

Some participants in this study exhibited anti-homosexuality attitudes. They strongly maintained that they are resentful of homosexuality and that they are against homosexual practices such as men marrying another men and women who adopt children because they are married to each other. Most of them believed that being gay or lesbian is a choice that a person can control. Participants, in this study, argued that homosexuality is an act

that should be criminalised and that homosexual individuals do not deserve to be given rights or be protected by the constitution instead some participants felt that homosexuality is an act that should be made illegal and charged as a crime to those who practice it. Some of the participants indicated that homosexuality is un-African and that it is a new trend that was not there when they were growing up. They refused to accept it, claiming that it is foreign and against their practices. This is shown in following statements.

5.5.1 Conservative attitudes

Some participants who took part in this study had conservative attitudes against homosexuality. They indicated that homosexuality is not an African practice and that it was never there in their culture and traditions. They indicated that it is unnatural for people of the same gender to have sexual intercourse together because even in history none of their forefathers and mothers were lesbians or gays. In their view, this trends goes against what they have been told about life. This is supported by the following quotations.

None of my ancestors was gay, this is foreign, we do not have a gay ancestor... I would never take some trends that I do not know where they are coming from and adopt them and say they are mine. In Venda history we do not have gay recordings, all we were told was Venda great families and traditions that were passed from generation to generation, I will never accept homosexuality. It's a not my culture and is against my religion.

Participant 10

Homosexuality is not from our great-great fathers; it is not from our traditions... I don't like gays or lesbians. They are lost... Participant 11

5.5.2 Taboo and sin

In this study, it emerged that some people in society regard homosexuality as taboo or a sin because it goes against their beliefs, religions etc. Participants reported that, culturally, it is regarded as a taboo for a man to share a bed with another in an intimate way. Some of the participants reported that they regarded homosexuality as a taboo or

sin because it goes against their Christian religion. Christianity forbids a man from marrying another man because God created a woman for a man and not a man for another man. The following extracts support this argument.

According to Christianity it is not allowed for a man to marry or have sex with another men, because God gave man a woman and not another man. People should understand that when we allow homosexuality we are going against God's will and there are consequences for that. Participant 11

It's unspeakable for a man to fall in love with another; it's disgusting and forbidden. This whole thing should be criminalised and it is a taboo. Participant 7

5.5.3 Resentment

Participants showed attitudes of disapproval and dislike for homosexuality. Participants elaborated that homosexuality is bad behavior and that they can never change their minds about the practice because it goes against their values, beliefs and what they know. This is supported by the following quotes.

We don't need gays or lesbians in our communities... they are ruining this young generation. What do you think will happen in 100 years to come? Does it mean no kids will be born if everyone is turning gay...I mean really... do you see a need to have gays in the society because I really don't for obvious reasons. Participant 10

I hate homosexual people because they are all acting up... what do we say about those who have children then out of the blue they switch to say they are gays or lesbians,,, this behavior is unnatural and should be banned in every country... people do not need this much freedom that is driving them to madness. Participant 8

First of all, none of my ancestors was gay or lesbian and I am not going accept a certain practice because the government is saying it is okay for a man to get married to another man, it's against what I know and believe in. Participant 7

My attitude or what I feel about homosexuality or gay people is hatred, hatred, hatred and more hatred.... I mean, from where did they even originate... to prove that this whole act is unnatural we as humans should observe this from wild animals... have you seen a male donkey doing something with another male donkey... that should educate us as humans... gay people should be arrested and they should not be given all these ridiculous rights to marry and adopt children like non-homosexual people. Participant 11

I like countries like Nigeria or the Middles East where people actually get life sentences if they are found practicing homosexuality... that's only fair for the government to protect its citizens from the disease of the mind that makes people want to have sexual relationships with people of their same sex... participant 12

5.5.4 Stigmatisation

Some participants' responses showed that they stigmatised homosexual people. Participants indicated that most of these homosexual people are people who have unresolved childhood sexual issues and that they take them out by refusing to adopt expected sexual roles or identities. Some participants maintained that some of the homosexuals are just perverts who are sick in their minds and in need of help. This is supported by the following extracts.

For a person to actually just decide that I don't want to marry a woman, instead I will get married and become somebody's wife when that person is a man symbolises a very serious problem with that particular person,, what did that person experience or go through that made him change his mind about becoming who he is designed to be and choose to be something else? There is a problem there... Participant 6

Uhm Most of females who are lesbians were either raped when they were still young or they had a missing father; they cannot just man-up and become lesbians without going through a rough encounter somewhere in their lives. Participant 7

...I know that most of the people who turn gay or lesbians were raped during childhood. Participant 9

I... I once watched a certain movie and they were following this woman who grew up in a rough neighborhood and her stepfather used to abuse her... and she transformed and became a lesbian... Ehhh... it makes sense that these people have been through rough patches in their childhoods; they have been traumatized. Participant 2

This is a disease... I mean who would want to have an intimacy with someone of their same sex if that person does not have a problem... It's a serious illness that is spreading faster than cancer. Participant 10

I don't like gays because most of them are sick... Like really sick... most of them are HIV positive if not HIV positive because these are the most unfaithful people in relationships, and since the nature of their relationships do not permit them to openly date ... uhm... they spread all the sexual diseases because they date each other in the same circle and they do not come out and they are unfaithful,, they are unfaithful and they spread STI's very fast. Participant 11

5.5.5 Labelling

Some participants in this study displaying attitudes of labeled homosexual people or called them names that were offensive or insensitive. Participants mentioned that they make up some of these names which they use to describe homosexuals with their friends and that some are names that they hear from televisions or social media platforms. This is shown in the following extracts.

...Himshe, (giggles), I like to call gays Himshe because I feel they do not know where they belong, and they cannot decide or make up their minds if they want to be males or females...Participant 7

I don't have a problem with zwitavhane or gays... gays are trending and their population is growing big every day,,, we do not need plenty of gays in our societies anymore. Participant 3

All these Adam and Steve couples should be arrested for practicing homosexuality in our countries... the bible even created Adam and eve not Adam and Simon or Eve and Rose... Participant 10

These guys who want to be ladies need to acknowledge their manhood and stop hiding behind fake women pretenses... Why do they hate themselves so much to pretend to be women? That's why we call them Sharon or Lydia even though they are men; Ohh sorry do they feel offended? I feel offended every day when I see a gay man holding hands with another gay man; it's a disgrace. Participant 12.

I am a teacher myself, so sometimes when we see a gay boy I would just say to my colleagues,,, decoder, because,, they will understand what I mean because it's sort of a code that only us understand and the reason we say decoder it's because we say they can switch their sexualities like we switch television channels on the decoders... (laughs)... Participant 11

I call them many names... (giggles)... I find it funny that a man would run away from his responsibilities of being a man and try to be a woman, so what these people are basically saying is that God made a mistake when creating them. Participant 6

5.6 Societal induced challenges faced by non-homosexual individuals

The results of this study indicate that there are a multitude of challenges that homosexual individuals face which are mostly induced by non-homosexual people. These challenges are more likely to continue if these issues are not addressed in our societies. Some participants in this study seemed to understand the challenges that they impose on homosexual people when they give them strong negative attitudes. However some did not want to change these attitudes that posed challenges for homosexuals in society. Participants seemed to understand the effect that their attitudes had on homosexual individuals and some participants did not want to be responsible for the issues that these homosexual people face thus, they do not want to accept them. They were also concerned about those homosexual people who commit suicide because of the challenges that they face, challenges mostly caused by heterosexuals.

5.6.1 Discrimination

Participants believed that most homosexual people face discrimination every day because of their sexual orientation and that these challenges come mainly from non-homosexual people as shown in the following quotations.

Ehhh... this is a real story... my son one day came back crying from church... that was the saddest day of my life... he told me that they couldn't let him be the chairperson for the youth at church considering that he is gay. So, you know... homosexuals face lots of discriminations every day simply because they are homosexuals, I felt that was very cruel and unfair, especially done by people who are at church and yet they are very judgmental.

Participant 1

We once had parents' meeting at my daughters school and some parents started to complain about the principal saying that they do not feel comfortable knowing that their children are being led by a gay man because this sends a message to their children and that's not what they want their children to believe in and they wanted that principal to be fired because he was gay. Participant 4

One thing I know about us people who are not homosexual is that we treat these people differently. People always make homosexuals feel like they don't belong in the same world as us, which I think is not fair. Participant 1

5.6.2 Suicide

Most participants in this study acknowledged that they somehow play a part in the development of homosexual peoples mental health problems such as stress, depression and low self-esteem.

It's just that in our areas we do not have many homosexual people. That is why we might think that these things do not happen, but the harsh reality is that these people suffer a lot of psychological challenges that are mostly imposed by the society.... When we say mental health problems people might think we are referring to people who are crazy as the society might put it but this goes beyond that,, Ehhh when someone cannot go to work or to school because they are afraid of what they are going to face each day, then we know that is a problem,, uhm,, I think that we as society are guilty of causing these challenges for homosexual people. Uhm when someone attempts or actually commits suicide it is not because that person is weak; it's because that person has a mental problem and sometimes the problem is caused by society,, you know, this could be a result of discrimination; when we discriminate against them or when we call them names or give them these funny looks that they get for being something different. Participant 1

...Do you think that if the world accepted homosexuality we were going to have so many homosexual people committing suicide? These suicidal attempts and actual suicides are happening because of too much pressure and pain that comes with being a man who loves other men... Society fuels these deaths that face homosexual people.. They would not just kill themselves if they were content with their lives... Participant 4

Ehhh... The worst feeling in the world is when you are being rejected by your family... That can only lead to one getting lonely and suddenly thinking of a better way to escape their problems, which in this case can be killing yourself, most gay kill themselves because their families hate them. Participant 9

I know someone who was close to me, he wrote a suicide note saying that he couldn't continue to live in a world that hated him for being who he is,, but fortunately he is still alive. Participant 6

This society is very harsh. For one to be gay and live a full life, it requires bravery and perseverance,, most gays and lesbians kill themselves or at least to commit suicide because of the problems that are caused by people in the society. Participant 12

5.6.3 Depression

Participants who took part in the study acknowledged that homosexual people face a vast number of challenges such as depression and stress. Participants argued that whilst most of these problems are caused by people in society, personal challenges that an individual might be going through might be to blame society rather than societal imposed challenges. This is shown by the following quotes.

My son had serious issues. He once spent 3 weeks without talking to anyone and always stayed in his room and that's when I realized that he was going through a lot of problems in his life because it was also the time when I couldn't relate well with him after finding out that he was gay, I mean it was also hard for me. Society can sometimes worsen the problem of homosexual people and that is when it can lead to depression and stress to some people. Participant 3

Ehhh... some of these gays and lesbians are very old, mean and angry people and I think they get to be like that because of the attitudes that they get from society. They are angry

because they are stressed because of the negativity that they keep getting day in and out. Participant 10

We are responsible for the stress and other problems that most gay people suffer from... I mean for some of them to even become gays it was also because of the attitudes they received from their childhood... when they were molested, so we are safe to blame the people of the earth for all these problems. Participant 7

I was at a salon this other day when a certain gay man was also there and he was talking. He said that if other gay men are not brave they will be victims of this earth and its problems and that he will not suffer from stress, depression or any pressure that is caused by anyone because the people only care about themselves and it got me thinking that usually people who are not gays or lesbians are the ones who prove the feelings and emotions of homosexual people and cause them all these problems that they face. Participant 7

5.6.4 Violence

Participants admitted to recognize that regardless of the legislation that has been put in place to protect homosexual people in South Africa, homosexuals are still victims of violence around the country in general and in our local communities. In particular participants' acknowledge that, sometimes, they are the perpetrators of this violence against homosexual individuals because of their anger or hatred towards them. This is supported by the following statements.

Uhm,, violence is not only physical in this case,, in my language we have a saying that goes like 'u semiwa hu vhavha u fhira urwiwa' meaning words are more painful than being beaten. We, as the society, get violent towards homosexual people every day, when we stare at them and laugh at them. That says more than a thousand words. Homosexual people get violated every day of their lives. Participant 1

A few weeks ago a boy who was killed right here in Thohoyandou because he went to a bar dressed like a lady and he had braids. He was killed for being gay. Participant 12

Ehhh... the other time I was at a store standing in the queue and there was a local gay guy who was standing in front of me. He got off the queue and said he was going to get something and that he was coming back,, so when that guy came back, there were two men who were behind me and they addressed him as a man because he was wearing high heels and female leggings, and those two men were just rubbing it in to remind him that he was not a woman even though he was wearing heels. They were very offensives to him and I figured that they were harassing him and they were not supposed to remind him that he will never be a woman... society is responsible for the violence against homosexual people. Participant 6

People get burned or killed because they are gays, lesbians or transgender and society thinks that these people are cursed. Participant 3

5.6.5 Correctional rapes

Participants mentioned that they have heard of many women who were raped because they were lesbians or men who were forced to sleep with woman so that they can change and be “normal”. This is explained in the following quotations.

I remember when I would setup my son with some girls thinking that he would change and start loving girls, but that never helped in any way. Participant 1

People in society think that raping a lesbian woman will make her change and start loving man which is wrong, I have heard of many cases where lesbian women are raped in order to change their sexual orientation or a gay men getting ambushed by their families to marry a woman. Participant 3

5.6.6 Low self-esteem and confidence issues

Participants mentioned that the harsh attitudes that society exhibit towards homosexual people are a major factor for the low confidence and low self-esteem among of homosexual people. This is reflected in the following extracts.

I know a gay guy that I attended school with. That guy is very shy and has a very poor self-esteem. It is obvious that he has been criticised a lot and that is why he has so much self-doubt. Participant 12

They develop confidence issues because they are always stared at or victimized. This is bound to make them lose belief in themselves. Participant 5

My son was very good at debate at his school but since it got out that he is gay, people started , you know... treating him differently. He then changed and became very reserved and isolated; he doesn't believe he can do it anymore. Participant 1

5.7 Strategies that non-homosexuals can adopt to reduce the negative attitudes they exhibit against homosexual people

In this last theme, participants suggested strategies that can be adopted by non-homosexual people who have problems accepting homosexual individuals and also those who rigidly hold firm harsh attitudes towards homosexual people. Participants elaborated on things that people who seem to have problems with homosexual people can do to help them co-exist amicably with them. Some of this strategies were suggested by the participants who had close acquaintances, family members and friends who are homosexuals. The strategies were based on their own real life experiences.

5.7.1 Acquiring enough knowledge about homosexuality.

Participants mentioned that most of the people who are against homosexuality or people who commit sexually oriented crimes do so because they lack understanding and

knowledge of what homosexuality really is and that most people hate or fear things that they do not fully understand or do not know.

The truth is that if you ask all these people who say they cannot stand gays or bisexuals what homosexuality is the reality is that we might find that they do not even know what it means for one to be homosexual, transgender or intersex, Ehhh.. People need to know what they are dealing with before they prejudge and label homosexual people as bad people. Participant 1

The government should also make it a point that all the necessary and sufficient information about homosexuality reaches the people because if people are not fully educated about what they are dealing with, then negative attitudes and violence against homosexual people will never stop. People need to know what it means to be a homosexual men or woman Participant 2

Eish... uhm, okay... The thing is that, the information that we get about homosexuality on TV is just not enough and sometimes it is not even relevant and superficial. People need to acquire real and accurate information about homosexuality so that we can all be on the same page. A person's sexuality has nothing to do with the constitution or the rest of the world. Participant 6

Innocent people are dying every day or getting raped or somehow getting harassed by people who lack knowledge or who misunderstand their nature. People need to be educated about these concepts and what they really are. Participant 12

5.7.2 Developing tolerant attitudes towards homosexuals

Some Participants who took part in this study mentioned that their attitudes are not permanent and that they can change them if they wanted to and become more tolerant about homosexuals. This is supported by the following statements.

I believe we can all learn to live in harmony with homosexual people. I understand that this cannot be an easy or automatic process, but it is possible to actually teach ourselves love and accept them as they are. Participant 1

Ehhh... you know, for this world to be a much better place, we need to be tolerant towards homosexual people because that also liberates us knowing that we are not bothered about what other people choose to do with their lives. Participant 3

Attitude is a choice. This means that as a society, we can choose to be more tolerant, accepting and welcoming of homosexuals in our midst. Participant 12

5.7.3 Being supportive

Participants in this study explained that it is of vital importance to become supportive of those homosexual people who are close to them. They mentioned that acceptance can help non-homosexual people to face reality, acknowledge the presence of homosexual people and allow them to live and relate well with homosexual individuals. This is supported by the following statement.

If there is a gay person at home, next door or at work we need to be supportive of them and appreciate them as they are. This also makes us feel better about ourselves that we are not judging people when it's not necessary. All we can do is to give them support and free ourselves from hatred. Participant 3

Being supportive is not promoting, we need to be in support of those who are homosexuals already because these individuals are already facing a lot of challenges, so we as a non-homosexual community, we need to be there for them instead of attacking them or being harsh to them. Participant 4

What we can do as society is to be there for them even though this is not a very easy thing to do, but we need to be there for them. This can also prevent or reduce mental health problems that they might face and also stop suicides. Participant 12

Uhhhm ... I think we need to hold their hands, instead of throwing stones at them, they need us as a society, they need courage and hope and we can be that for them. Participant 1

5.7.4 Avoid blaming homosexuals

Participants, in this study, mentioned that society needs to stop blaming homosexual people for the challenges or problems that they face because it makes their lives even harder. That is why most homosexuals end up committing suicide and others developing mental problems such as depression. This is supported by the following statements.

Uhhhm... you know sometimes a gay person gets violated in society and the only place where he is supposed to get help does not assist him, instead, he gets mocked and condemned for his struggles,, I personally think this is not fair at all. Society needs to accept these people and stop saying they cause their own problems. Participant 2

5.7.5 Stop condemning homosexuals

This study revealed that the families and the society as a whole should stop their negative attitudes. They should stop condemning homosexuals because these people are already vulnerable to challenges. Society should stop judging these people instead. This is supported by the following extracts.

...how do people know what God will do to homosexual people. People need to get over these clichés of saying God will punish you and all of that stuff... it is not fair to God I think. Participant 3

When a boy child is gay, you will hear those people who are close to that particular child, for example his father always reminding him that he should be a man,,, I mean,, really, all that these homosexuals need is support and more support, not these condemnations that are done by us people who are not perfect or saints. Participant 7

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter analysed data and discussed the results that were found. Five major themes emerged from the study and these were broken down into subthemes that were also interpreted. These are discussed in the next chapter. Findings of this study showed that participants have an understanding of what homosexuality is through their perceptions about homosexuals varied. Some of the participants believed that homosexuality is ungodly, un-African, it is a sin, and a taboo. They believed that homosexuality is unnatural and that gays and lesbians act out. In their view this is not something that they were born with. Some made reference to the past, pointing out there was no homosexuality then and that they never saw gay men or lesbians. This was one of the reasons way some participants found it difficult to acknowledge or accept homosexuality in society. However, there were some participants who did not seem to be shaken by homosexuality. Some of them were more tolerant towards homosexuality; they had an open mind about it and they did not mind having homosexuals as either friends or acquaintances.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings about societal attitudes towards homosexuals in Thulamela Municipality of Vhembe District, South Africa. The researcher discusses the major findings of the study in relation to literature reviewed. Conclusions and recommendations for future research in the area of societal attitudes towards homosexuality are also made. In this study, the researcher found that most people in society have had an experience of being in the same place with a homosexual individual, and that most participants did not have a problem with homosexuals. They exhibited positive attitudes in those encounters. Though some were still very conservative with regards to homosexuality, they did not promote harsh and negative attitudes towards homosexual people. At the time of the study most of the participants did not have a close relative who was a homosexual however, they knew someone who was a homosexual at work, school or next door.

6.2 Socio demographic information

The findings of this study show that both young and elderly people have an understanding of what homosexuality is even though the dimensions of their understanding, encounters and relations with homosexual persons varied greatly. They expressed views and attitudes that were similar. Participants who were between 25 and 35 years showed more tolerant attitudes towards homosexuality than those who were between the ages of 35 and 55 years. This confirms the findings of the Pew Research Center (2013) which revealed that people aged 55 and older are less likely than those in the younger age groups (18-29) to accept homosexuality. In this study, younger participants did not express negative views about homosexuality compared to older participants who were intolerant of homosexuality. The latter group said homosexuality was new trend that was not there during their youth and that this is a behaviour that they do not approve of since it is immoral.

Participants who had tertiary education and those who are still at tertiary institutions were more accepting of homosexuality than those who did not have tertiary education. This could be because participants in tertiary institutions get more exposed to diverse lifestyles and cultures than those who only have secondary qualifications. Herek (1984) also observed that people who strongly hold negative attitudes towards homosexuality are likely to be older and less well-educated. Those with higher levels of education are more supportive of homosexuals. This was also revealed by the Pew Research Center (2013) study which found that a large majority of the public, with at least a college degree (68%) believed that same sex marriage should be legalized. In contrast, those with a high school education or less opposed homosexuality.

The findings of the study show that some participants who were affiliated to some religions had negative attitudes towards homosexuality because they regarded it as an abomination. This is congruent with the findings by Herek (1984) who found that people with negative attitudes towards homosexuality are more likely to be religious, to attend church frequently, and to subscribe to a conservative religious ideology. The Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam have traditionally forbidden sodomy, believing and teaching that such behavior is sinful. Most Christian denominations welcome people attracted to the same-sex but teach that homosexual acts are sinful (Landon, 2016).

Though most religions disapprove of homosexuality there is a contradiction with Satanism religion. The Satanist tradition is open to all forms of sexual expressions and do not preclude homosexuality (LaVey, 1969).

The findings of the study showed that participants who had a personal relationship with or were close to homosexual people displayed more positive attitudes towards homosexuality than those who did not know any homosexuals at a personal level. Herek (1984) reported that societal experiential attitudes develop when affects and cognitions associated with specific interpersonal interactions are generalised to all homosexuals. A person with positive experiences, therefore, expresses generally favorable attitudes and a person with negative experiences reports unfavorable attitudes because of his experiences. Thus, heterosexuals who know lesbians and gays (homosexuals) are better able than others to recognise stereotypes as inaccurate, and more likely to express tolerant attitudes towards them. Herek also stated that people who have negative attitudes towards homosexuality are less likely to have had personal contact with lesbians or gay people (Herek, 1984).

Participants were from different ethnic groups that is Venda, Tsonga, Pedi and Swati. Most Venda and Tsonga in this study, had negative and intolerant attitudes towards homosexuality. Literature shows that no study has been conducted about societal attitudes towards homosexuality among people in these four ethnic groups

6.3 Same sex relationships

It emerged, in this study, that society perceives homosexuality to be an intimate relationship between two people of the same sex. Nine out of ten people in society have been in a situation where they have had to work or interact with homosexuals, either lesbians or gay. The sub-themes for this main theme are discussed below.

6.3.1 Same sex intimate relationships and attractions

The study found that the society perceives homosexuality to be an act by two individuals of the same sex who are sexually attracted to each other or who have sexual relationships to an extent that they end up marrying each other. Participants emphasised that homosexuality is present both among adults and among children. This is in line with Cantor's (2012) findings which revealed that homosexuality is a predominant sexual interest in persons of the same sex unlike in heterosexuality where individuals have predominant sexual interests in the opposite sex.

6.3.2 Gays and lesbians

It was revealed, in this study that society understands homosexuality to refer to gays or lesbians. Some participants in this study emphasised that homosexuality means gays or lesbians because of the experiences they had had with homosexual people and the knowledge they had accumulated from the media, as well as their interaction with homosexuals. Participants, understood gays to be male persons who are sexually attracted to other males and lesbians to be females who are sexually attracted to other females. Some participants had gay children and because of that, they supported homosexuality. This is congruent with Bedenbaugh (2015), who indicated that gay men are men who are sexually attracted to men and lesbians are women who are sexually attracted to women. The difference is that gays are men, while lesbians are women, however, some people generally refer to lesbians as being gay as well.

6.4 Progressive attitudes towards homosexuality

Another major theme that emerged from the study was the progressive attitudes that society had towards homosexuals in the Vhembe District. This main theme had three sub-themes that are discussed below.

6.4.1 Acceptance

The study revealed that it is not every individual in society who is against homosexuality or who holds strong negative attitudes towards homosexuality. Instead it was discovered, in this study, that some people in society have very progressive attitudes towards homosexual individuals. Some of the participants who were more accepting of homosexuality were those who had homosexual children, relatives, siblings and friends. Most of the participants who approved of homosexuality were those who had relationships with homosexual individuals. This findings is in line with Herek's (1991) findings which revealed that people with positive experiences, therefore, express generally favorable attitudes towards homosexuals, while those with negative experiences report unfavorable attitudes because of their experiences.

Thus, heterosexuals who know lesbians and gays (homosexuals) are better able than others to recognise stereotypes as inaccurate, and are more likely to express tolerant attitudes as well. Participants who were more accepting of homosexuality, in this study, were those who were young (around the ages of 27 to 37); older people had negative attitudes towards homosexuality. This is similar to results of a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center (2013) which found that people aged 50 and older are also less likely than those in the younger age groups to say homosexuality should be accepted by society.

This study also found that people who are not accepting of homosexuality are mostly male or those individuals who have strong religious ties. This is confirmed by Finlay and Walther (2003) who indicated that, in countries where there is a gender gap, women are considerably more likely than men to say homosexuality should be accepted by society and that there is a strong relationship between a country's religiosity and opinions about homosexuality. People who are involved in church groups (as indicated by frequent attendance at church services) reflect the historical religious bias against lesbians and gays, and this is especially so for Christians. More frequently, church attendees as well as those who belong to more conservative denominations, are more likely to report prejudice against homosexual individuals (Finlay & Walther, 2003).

6.4.2 Tolerance

The current study found that it is not every non-homosexual person in society who has a negative attitude towards homosexuals. Attitudes of participants towards homosexuals were mostly motivated or influenced by their personal relations with homosexual individuals, for example close relatives, friends or colleagues who were homosexuals. This made them more accepting or progressive in their attitudes towards homosexuals. Participants, in this study, showed tolerance towards homosexuals. They claimed that they did not have problems with homosexuals in society as well as those that take significant roles in the societies such as being a school principal or any role that any non-homosexual individual can take.

Females and younger participants as well as people who are not religious showed more tolerant attitudes towards homosexuality than males, older and religious people. These findings were consistent with the findings of the Pew Research Centre (2013) which showed that age, gender, and religious affiliations contribute to attitudes towards homosexuality. Age is also a factor in several countries, with younger people offering far more tolerant views of homosexuality than older ones. In many countries, views of homosexuality also vary across age groups, with younger respondents consistently more likely than older ones saying that homosexuality should be accepted by society.

6.5 Anti-homosexuality attitudes

The majority of the participants exhibited conservative attitudes towards homosexuality. They strongly maintained that they were resentful of homosexuality and that they were against homosexual practices such as men marrying other men and lesbians adopting children because they are married to each other. Most of them believed that being gay or being a lesbian is a choice that a person can control. Participants, in this study, showed that homosexuality is an act that should be criminalised and that homosexual individuals do not deserve to be given rights or to be protected by the constitution. Instead, some participants felt that homosexuality is an act that should be made illegal and treated as a crime for those who practice it. Some of the participants indicated that homosexuality is unAfrican and that it is a new trend that was not there when they were growing up. They

could not accept it because they believed that the behavior was foreign and against their practices. This is consistent with Hughe's (2009) findings which revealed Africans see homosexuality as being both unAfrican and unchristian and that 38 out of 53 African nations criminalise homosexuality in some way.

6.5.1 Conservative attitudes

It was revealed, in this study, that some people in society still had conservative attitudes towards homosexuality. They believed that homosexuality is a practice that was not there in the past but is a new development. Participants showed great concern that homosexuality was going against their religious beliefs and they somehow felt violated, especially when the world expects them to accept homosexuals as normal.

It became apparent that even though South Africa is still among the countries that accept homosexuality as legal, many people in the South African society do not accept it. This is in line with the findings of the Pew Research Centre (2013) which revealed that People in Africa and in predominantly Muslim countries remain among the least accepting of homosexuality. Even in South Africa where, unlike in many other African countries, homosexual acts are legal and discrimination based on sexual orientation is unconstitutional, 61% say homosexuality should not be accepted by society, while just 32% say it should be accepted.

Participants who took part in this study were conservative and maintained that they cannot come to terms with homosexual people because homosexuality is a behavior that the modern or western society is introducing and making people accept it when it is abnormal for people of the same sex to have sexual relationships. It became apparent that some people in the society do not intend to accommodate homosexual people because they believe they do not belong in the same era as them. This is supported by Finlay and Walther (2003) who argue that people who are involved in church groups (as indicated by frequent attendance at church services) reflect the historical religious bias against lesbians and gays, and this is especially so for Christians. More frequent church attenders as well as those who belong to more conservative denominations are more

likely to report prejudice against homosexual individuals. It is clear from a lot of research that religious conservatives hold more negative attitude towards homosexuality. Negative attitudes towards homosexuality among religious conservative's stems from Biblical based moral judgments (Hood, Hill, & Spilka, 2009).

6.5.2 Taboo or sin

It came out in this study that most people in society regard homosexuality as a taboo or sin and that they believed that homosexuals will be punished by God. Most people who associate homosexuality with sin are people who are religious this is confirmed by Wike (2014) who found that the number of people who say homosexuality is morally unacceptable tends to be particularly high in nations where large numbers say religion is very important to them, pray at least once a day, and think it is necessary to believe in God to be moral. Meanwhile, acceptance of homosexuality is more common in countries with low levels of personal religiosity, such as the relatively secular nations of Western Europe.

6.5.3 Resentment

It was discovered, in this study that people in society resent homosexual individuals because they believe homosexuality is immoral. It was found, in the study that the majority of participants exhibited conservative attitudes towards homosexuality and that they strongly maintained that they were resentful of homosexuality. They were against homosexual practices such as men marrying other men and lesbians adopting children as a couple, maintaining that the only acceptable relationships should be heterosexuality ones. This was also noted in other studies such as Thompson and Zoloth's (1990) which found that homophobia is largely caused by social norms which dictate "correct" or social standards and norms which dictate that being heterosexual is better or more moral than being a homosexual, and that everyone is or should be heterosexual. This kind of homophobia is also called heterosexism. Most non-homosexual people exhibit harsh and negative attitudes towards homosexual. These findings are in line with the World Report

(2013) which found that when people execute homosexual activities, Heterosexual or homophobic people resort to criticising, classifying, discriminating, stigmatising, abusing and killing homosexual people .

6.5.4 Stigmatisation

In this study, it was revealed that society attach stigma to homosexual people, for example homosexuals are called perverts or insane people. It was discovered in the study that there are negative meanings that society attaches to homosexuality or homosexuals. This was confirmed by Teliti (2015) who argued that attributes of stigmatisation attributes are understood by the majority in society because they signify that homosexual people are immoral, or otherwise deserving of social ostracism, infamy, shame and condemnation. Thus, the stigmatised individuals are not simply different from others; society judges their deviation to be discrediting. The findings from this study indicate that most people in society believe that being gay or lesbian is a choice that a person has a control, and that it is an act that should be criminalised. This is supported by Meyer (2003) who found that some heterosexual people consider homosexuality as a voluntary act and behavior, which a person can act on. Some opponents go that far, since is from their point of view, homosexuality a matter of choice. Their sexual practices are viewed as “crimes” which make homosexuals criminals.

6.5.5 Labelling

It was found, in this study, that most people in society show their negative attitudes towards homosexuality by labelling homosexuals or calling them names. Most people in society play a part in name calling and labeling homosexual people. Participants mentioned that the labels that they give to these homosexual individuals can have serious impacts on their overall wellbeing and may also lead to the development of suicidal ideations, a low self-esteem and in homosexuals engaging in self-destructive behaviours. This is supported by Barris (2007) who explained that homosexuality labeling is a kind of experience that threatens the very sense of gay people’s meaning and reality because

social meanings constitute our substance as individuals. A violation of the general structures of meaning also violates the structure of what we most intimately are. Consequently, this kind of encounter also threatens the reality of the person herself as a coherent subject.

6.6 Societal induced challenges faced by homosexual individuals

Another major theme that emerged from the study pertained to the challenges that homosexual people face, challenges caused mostly by society. Society's attitudes and behaviours towards homosexuals perpetuate the challenges that homosexuals face. The sub-themes are discussed as follows:

6.6.1 Discrimination

This study revealed that most people in society tend to discriminate against homosexual individuals. Participants pointed out that the problems that homosexual people encounter are caused by discriminatory attitudes that they get from society, some from their homes, work places, police stations and so on. It became clear that some gays and lesbians live in the closets, afraid to come out as homosexuals and face discrimination from society. This was also found in another study by Hunt and Jensen (2007) who discovered that many homosexuals live in fear of discrimination that may come if they disclose their sexual identities to their families, friends, employers, and coworkers.

The levels of discrimination that homosexuals face can vary. Factors such as cultural values, schools, colleges, and universities can create an environment that decreases discrimination or promote these problems by minimizing the legitimacy of gay men. It was found, in this study, that there are some places or areas that have lower levels of discrimination, for example urban areas or universities.

6.6.2 Suicide

It was revealed, in this study, that some homosexuals, because of their own vulnerabilities and personal problems commit suicide or at least attempt suicide because of the challenges that are mainly caused by the people in society. Participants mentioned that the attitudes that they give to homosexual people impact a great deal of their emotional and psychological wellbeing. This is in line with Chakraborty's (2011) study which found that homosexuals who attempt suicide are disproportionately subjected to anti-homosexual attitudes, often have fewer skills for coping with discrimination, isolation and loneliness and are more likely to experience family rejection. This was also supported by Polders (2013) who explained that risk factors for gay men who attempt suicide include problems related to sexual orientation, parent's reactions, a hostile environment, and victimisation because of sexual orientation. Most gay men are verbally abused. Fifteen percent had been physically attacked, and more than one third reported losing friends because of their sexual orientation. The loss of friends is among one of the strongest predictors of suicide attempts.

6.6.3 Depression

Participants seemed to acknowledge that the harsh negative attitudes that they give to homosexual people are the main cause of depression and other mental problems that gays suffer. It was found, in this study that the attitudes that homosexual people receive from their close family members and also society result in a great deal of stress, pressure and depression. This is a very serious psychological problem also confirmed by Polders (2013) who highlights that social pressures are part of the reason why homosexuals develop depressive disorders. This is particularly so before or while "coming out". Gay people are under enormous pressure to act in ways that are not natural to them. The study is in line with the literature that states that if a gay man is not able to be himself in public situations, he may develop feelings of loneliness, worthlessness, low self-esteem, and increased internalized homophobia (D'Augelli, 2001).

6.6.4 Violence

Most people in the society commit violent crimes against homosexual individuals because they feel offended by them and because they believe that they are a disgrace to society. They argue that homosexuals have to be taught lessons on how to be “real men or real women” through violence. Participants, in this study, acknowledged that society acts violently towards homosexuals sometimes resulting in death, destruction of the homosexual person’s property or just harassment. This is supported by Mellstrom (2012) who revealed that, in some 38 of Africa’s 55 states, homosexuality is criminalised and that which prosecute it is still regarded as taboo. In some of these countries homosexuals are executed. There are 76 countries in the world which prosecute people on the grounds of their sexual orientation. Seven of these have a death penalty.

This study confirms the literature that argue that violence against LGBT persons tends to be especially vicious compared to other bias-motivated crimes. According to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (2007), homophobic hate crimes and incidents often show a high degree of cruelty and brutality, which include beatings, torture, mutilation, castration and sexual assault.

6.6.5 Correctional rapes

It was discovered, in this study that some people in the society engage in behaviors that can be considered inappropriate to others, for example, sexual harassment or forced impregnation. Some of the participants reported that they had been in situations where non-homosexual people have threatened a homosexual person and forced that person to have sexual intercourse with them or looked for a spouse for those homosexuals. In a study conducted by OSCE (2007), it was found that homophobic violence may be physical for example, murder, beatings, kidnappings, rape and sexual assault or psychological, for example, threats, coercion and arbitrary deprivations of liberty These attacks constitute a form of gender-based violence, driven by a desire to punish those seen as defying gender norms (see Altschiller,2005).

The study found that society commits these forms of abuse or violence as a way of punishing homosexual people or to make them straight.

6.6.6 Low self-esteem and confidence issues

This study discovered that the negative attitudes that society displays towards homosexuality result in a low self-esteem and low confidence among some homosexuals. Participants mentioned that when homosexual people have low confidence or low esteem they may start to live reckless lifestyles and engage in self-destructive or self-harming behaviors such as drug abuse, unprotected sex with strangers or irresponsible spending of their assets. This is congruent with the findings of Ostrow (2008) Study findings which show that, when compared with the general population, gay and bisexual men, lesbian, and transgender individuals are more likely to use alcohol and drugs and have higher rates of substance abuse. This behaviors can come as a reaction to homophobia, discrimination, or violence which they have experienced due to their sexual orientation. The behaviors can also contribute to other mental health and physical problems. They can disrupt relationships, employment, and threaten financial stability.

6.7 Strategies that non-homosexuals can adopt to reduce the negative attitudes they exhibit against homosexual people

This study revealed ways that non-homosexuals believe can be used to relate well to homosexuals. These strategies can also help those heterosexual individuals who find it difficult to associate or relate well with homosexual people. This theme has three sub-themes that are discussed below.

6.7.1 Acquiring enough knowledge about homosexuality

It was found, in this study, that people in society exhibit negative attitudes towards homosexuality normally because they do not fully understand it. Society needs to strive hard to understand homosexuality and what it means for a homosexual individual to live in the society that is full of hate for and discriminates against homosexuality. Participants highlighted that gaining enough knowledge about homosexuality can be the best remedy for homophobia. This is supported by Finlay and Walther (2003) who found that

homosexuality is still difficult for many heterosexual members in different societies. Elders in developing communities are less technologically influenced and are less advanced to understand homosexuality and new developments in society associated with homosexuality. Most of them cannot seem to step out of the past and away from stereotypes.

6.7.2 Developing tolerant attitudes towards homosexuals

It became evident from this study that society as a whole must learn to develop more accepting and tolerant attitudes towards homosexuality. Participants indicated that, for people to live well with homosexual individuals in society, they need to learn to accept homosexual people as this can bring peace and harmony between people. It also became apparent in the study that participants believe that positive attitudes in society towards homosexuals can reduce the challenges that homosexual individuals encounter as most of these challenges are caused by the negative attitudes that heterosexual people have towards homosexual individuals. This is in line with the findings of Davis (1997) who mentioned that people should accept that homosexuals deserve to live a life of acceptance in society just like everyone else. They are a part of the human race, just like everyone else. They are different from the "norm," just like people of different races and creeds who are different from each other.

6.7.3 Being supportive towards homosexuality

Participants argued that giving support to homosexual people can help them in the society, especially those who are more vulnerable to suicide and depression. Some of these problems appear because these individuals lack social support and they get isolated, thus leading to the development of suicidal ideations, eating disorders, substance abuse, risky behaviors and also depressive disorders. The society should

avoid rejecting homosexual individuals because this leads to the development of more problems that gays and lesbians. This is supported by Ryan (2009) who states that parents who have homosexual children should avoid harassing them or doing anything that would make them feel isolated or hated. Hitting, slapping or physically hurting one's child because of their homosexual identity creates more problems than solutions. People who have close homosexual family members or colleagues should avoid excluding them from work or school events, family events and family activities. They should not block their access to LGBT friends, events, and resources because of their homosexual identity.

6.7.4 Avoid blaming homosexuals

Society should avoid always blaming homosexuals for the challenges that they face. It was discovered, in the study, that people in society blame homosexuals for the problems or hate crimes that they encounter for example, abuse, rape, violence and also murder. They maintained that these are major challenges because, sometimes, homosexuals are denied access to public services such as reporting a crime or buying some things simply because they are homosexuals. Society needs to acknowledge homosexuals and not blame them for problems that they encounter. This is supported by the literature of Ryan (2009) who mentioned that parents should avoid verbally harassing or calling their children names because of their LGBT identity or blaming homosexual children when they are discriminated against because of their homosexual identity.

6.7.5 Stop condemning homosexual individuals

This study revealed that society must avoid condemning homosexual individuals that is calling them names, harassing them or trying to force them to act their "expected roles" because this can cause a lot of damage on these individuals. Society needs to accept homosexual individuals as they are without putting pressure on them to become what society thinks is acceptable or normal.

This argument is consistent with Ryan's (2009) who argued that society or families of homosexual individuals must stop pressurising homosexuals to be more (or less)

masculine or feminine, telling homosexuals that God will punish them because they are gay or telling homosexuals that they are ashamed of them or that how they look or act will shame the family, organisation or society as a whole. Ryan (2009) further maintained that the society should not force homosexual individuals to keep their LGBT identities a secret in the family or prevent them from talking about their identities with others outside the family environment.

6.8 Conclusion

This chapter discussed various challenges that society contributes to homosexuals' lives. However, participants indicated that society can do something in support of homosexuality, for example, family members supporting those who are homosexuals and people in the society acquiring sufficient knowledge about homosexuality. This will enable them to understand homosexuality and reduce negative attitudes towards homosexuals.

CHAPTER 7: LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introduction

The final chapter of this study presents a summary of the findings, discusses the limitations and implications of the study, gives corresponding recommendations and draws conclusions from the findings of the study.

7.2 Summary of findings

This study aimed to examine societal attitudes towards homosexuality in Thulamela Municipality in Vhembe district, South Africa.

This study was guided by the following objectives:

- To describe societal perceptions of homosexual individuals.
- To identify societal attitudes towards homosexuals in Thulamela Municipality.
- To explore challenges posed by society towards homosexual people in Thulamela Municipality
- To make recommendations that will be used to reduce negative societal attitudes that homosexual people face.

The aim and objectives of the study were achieved through the use of the following research questions:

- What are the society's perceptions of homosexuality?

- What attitudes does society have towards homosexual people in Thulamela Municipality?
- What challenges do homosexual people in Thulamela Municipality face as a result of society's attitudes towards them?
- What can be done to prevent or stop negative societal attitudes that homosexual people experience?

The findings of this study show that participants perceive homosexuality as a sexual or intimate relationship between either males or two females.

Findings of this study show that participants did not have the same attitudes towards homosexuality and that there are various factors which lead to the development of either negative or positive attitudes towards homosexuality. This study found that most people who hold strong negative attitudes towards homosexuality did not have a close family member who is a homosexual or that they are very religious, elderly, not sufficiently educated or had their own personal reservations about homosexuality. However, those participants who were closely related to a homosexual or who were younger and more educated showed more positive, tolerant and accepting attitudes towards homosexuality.

Name calling, abuse, harassment and homicides are some of the challenges that the society exhibit towards homosexuals in Thulamela Municipality suffer at the hands of society. Some of the participants indicated that they engage in name calling as a way of showing that homosexuality is not moral. This study found that there are people who are targeted for verbal abuse and sometimes they get killed because of their sexual orientations.

Participants indicated that eliminating negative attitudes towards homosexuality can be a process that can take at least a decade to accomplish however society can, in the meantime follow some steps to reduce homophobia in society. Participants indicated that government institutions, such as schools, universities and hospitals, should implement policies that include and protect homosexuals. Participants, in this study, emphasised that

families should start to be more accepting and supportive of homosexual family members because “charity begins at home”.

7.3 Limitations of the study

It is crucial to understand the interpretations of the results of this study in the light of its limitations which are as follows:

- The sample consisted of participants who were residing in semi-rural areas. Because of this, the results cannot be generalised to those who live in rural areas or urban areas
- The sample of the study was very small to warrant generalisability of the results to the whole population. This study was limited by its small sample size and sampling methods. The researcher should have included a larger population and should have considered the employment of snowball sampling method. In this way, a more homogenous population would have been identified and this would have benefitted the study.
- The study should have considered diverse ethnic groups of participants to allow various responses that would warrant the generalisability of the research findings to the majority of the population.
- The study was limited by its research approach, since it was qualitative in nature. It couldn't have been possible to have a larger sample that would warrant the eligibility of the findings to be generalised to the whole population. Therefore it is recommended that future research studies should consider having a large sample to allow the results to be generalised to the society as a whole.
- The study focus was on societal attitudes of non-homosexual individuals. It would be ideal for future studies to consider sampling homosexual participants to gain an

understanding about the attitudes that they get from society or non-homosexuals. This would also help to confirm the findings of this present study.

7.4 Recommendations

Following the findings and the conclusions made for the study, some recommendations were suggested:

- It is recommended that schools should implement non-bullying policies so that they can be inclusive for homosexual students also. School must be safe for all students. The Department of Education must implement strong anti-bullying policies which will protect all students and teachers as well as members of the governing bodies who are homosexuals.
- It is recommended that counsellors and counselling centers in senior high schools and tertiary institutions should be well-resourced to enable them to handle issues of student sexuality, including homosexuality.
- This study recommends that training workshops on sexual orientation should be intensified for teachers, police officers, nurses and other public service employees as well as school administrators to enable them to be well-informed on homosexuality in schools.
- It is also recommended that student accessibility to appropriate and accurate information regarding students' sexuality should be increased at the early stages of their schooling through library and Internet resources, as well as workshops and forums.
- Government and NGOs should hold awareness campaigns to educate society about homosexuality and to improve the attitudes of towards homosexual individuals.

- Government should implement hot lines that will assist homosexuals who are facing challenges or those who have a crisis and need counseling or daily guidance or skills.

7.5 Conclusion

This study achieved its aim which was to explore societal attitudes towards homosexuality in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. However, to conclude, it is recommended that researchers in this field should expand the study to other parts of the country and other ethnic groups. In that way, more attitudes of people in the society can be analysed and this will result in better explanations of societal attitudes. The findings of the study indicated that society is still conservative when it comes to homosexuality. However, participants discouraged harsh negative attitudes towards homosexual people arguing that society needs to develop more accepting and tolerant behaviors towards homosexuality. Education about homosexuality in the community can assist in reducing the stigma, discrimination, prejudice, violence and all negative attitudes against homosexuals.

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Appendix 1: Information sheet

I am a Masters student at the University of Venda. I am conducting a research about the societal attitudes towards homosexuality in the Thulamela Municipality.

I am requesting you to participate in this study. Please understand that your participation is completely voluntary. Moreover, if you agree to participate in the study and then later change your mind, you may withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. This will not affect you in any way whatsoever.

The information that will be collected during the interviews will be kept confidential. The study will not contain any mention of your name or any identifying information.

The results in this study will be presented in a dissertation and they will be seen by the researcher's supervisor, co-supervisor and the external examiner.

Your participation will be highly appreciated

Yours faithfully

Mushome Vhahangwele
Researcher

Date

Prof T Mashamba
Supervisor

Date

Mrs M Mushwana
Co- supervisor

Date

Appendix 1: Vhurifhi ha khumbelo ya thendelo (Tshivenda Translation)

Ndi mugudiswa wa Masitasi gudedzini la nthha la Venda. Ndi khou ita thoduluso ngaha ndila ine vhatu vhano funana nga tsha mbeu nntihi vha fariwa ngayo mivhunduni ya havho kha vhadzulapo vha fhasi ha Thulamela Municipality.

Ndi khou humbela uri vha dzhenelele kha thoduluso iyi. Khavha pfesese uri u dzhenelela havho kha thoduluso iyi azwi kombetshedzwi. Arali vhangata tenda u dzhenelela kha dzi inthaviyuu dza thoduluso iyi fhedzi nga muraho vha shandukisa muhumbulowavho, vhangata dibvisa kha thoduluso iyi tshifhinga tshinwe na tshinwe naho thoduluso isaathu u fhela. Hezwi azwinga vhwakwami nga ndila isiya vhudi na luthihi.

Mafhungo othe ane ado dzhiwa nga tshifhinga tsha thoduluso hanga dzumbululelwi muwe muthu. Thoduluso iyi ainga dzumbululi madzina avho kana ubvisela khagala vhubha havho.

Mbvelelo dza thoduluso iyi dzido sumbedziwa kha manwala adzibugu, dzido dovha hafhu dza vhone nga mulangula wa mutodisasi, muthusi wa mulanguli wa mutodisasi. Dzibugu dzido dovha hafhu dza vhaliwa nga manwe matshudeni adaho kha thero yeneyi, vhadivhi vhazwa mihumbulo na vhanwe vhadivhi vhazwa mutakalo.

Mushome Vhahangwele
Mutodisasi

Date

Prof T Mashamba
Mueletshedzi

Date

Mrs M Mushwana
Muthusa-mueletshedzi

Date



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Appendix 2: Consent Form

1. I have read and understood the information sheet for this study and have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in detail.
2. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.
3. I am participating voluntarily.
4. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time.
5. I agree to provide information to the researcher under the conditions of confidentiality set out in the information sheet.
6. I wish to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

Researcher's signature

Date

Participant's signature

Date



University of Venda

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Appendix 2: Consent form (Tshivenda Translation)

1. Ndo vhala nda pfesesa ngaha mafhungo a thoduluso iyi, nda dovha hafhu nda talutshedziwa nga vhudalo ngaha tshipikwa na lushaka lwa thoduluso iyi.
2. Mbudziso dzanga ngaha thoduluso iyi dzo fhinduliwa lwau fusha, ndia pfesesa zwauri ndinga vhudzisa ndi tshiya phanda tshifhinga tshinwe na tshinwe.
3. Ndi khou dzhenelela kha thoduluso iyi ngau funa ndisa kombetshedziwi.
4. Ndia pfesesa zwauri ndo vhotholowa udibvisa kha thoduluso iyi tshifhinga tshinwe na tshinwe.
5. Ndi khou tenda u nekedza mafhungo kha mutodulusi nga fhasi ha mutheo wausa bula dzina langa kana usa bvisela vhuvha hanga khagala
6. Ndia tama u dzhenelela kha thoduluso iyi ndodi sendeka nga mitheo yo talutshedzwaho kha bammbiri la mafhungo a thoduluso iyi.

Tsaino ya mutodisisi

Datumu

Tsaino ya mufhinduli

Datumu



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Appendix 3: Interview Guide

Section A: (Demographical Information)

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Home Language.....
4. Level of Education.....
5. Residential area

Section B: Research Questions

1. What are the society's perceptions of homosexuality?
2. What attitudes does society have towards homosexual people in Thulamela Municipality?
3. What challenges do homosexual people in Thulamela Municipality face as a result of society's attitudes towards them?
4. What can be done to prevent or stop negative societal attitudes that homosexual people experience?



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Appendix 3: Interview Guide

Section A: (Zwidombedzwa zwa thaluso)

1. Minwaha
2. Mbeu
3. Luambo lwa damuni.....
4. Pfunzo.....
5. Vhudzulo

Section B: Mbudziso dza Thoduluso

1. Ndi zwifhio zwine vhazwi pfesesa nga vhathu vha funanaho ngalwa mbeu nthihi?
2. Vhadipfa hani nga avha vhathu vha u funana ngalwa mbeu nthihi?
3. Ndi dzifhio khaedu dzine vhathu vha u funana ngalwa mbeu nthihi vha itelwa dzone ngavha dzulapo fhanu Thulamela Municipality wa Vhembe District?
4. Vha vhona unga ndi zwifhio zwine zwanga itiwa u thivhela khaedu dzine vhafunani vha mbeu nthihi vha tangana nadzo?