

**Learners' constructions of polygamy: Narratives from one  
KwaZulu-Natal high school**

By

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degree of

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**(Social Justice Education)**

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## **Supervisor's Statement**

This dissertation has been submitted with /without my approval



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Professor Pholoho Morojele

05 April 2018  
Date

## Declaration

I **Melodious Sazise Qinisile Ndlovu**, do hereby declare that:

The content in this Master's dissertation entitled: **Learners' constructions of polygamy: Narratives from one KwaZulu-Natal high school**, is my own work in context, style and execution.

I am familiar with the consequences of plagiarism as stipulated by the University of KwaZulu-Natal and that all sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

The dissertation has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University.

Signed



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Student: Melodious Sazise Qinisile Ndlovu

\_6 April 2018\_

Date

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## **Dedication**

This study is dedicated to my children **Luphelele** and **Masiteng Ndlovu** for their love and support, the sacrifices they had to make when their mother was busy with the “book” as they called it. **Nonkanyiso Ncubeni** for providing a homely environment for everyone in the family and a pillar when the lady of the house was busy putting the “book” together.

## **Abstract**

The study sought to investigate the schooling experiences of high school learners who are directly or indirectly affected by polygamy. Focus was on the context of the dominant societal discourse that privileges monogamy above polygamy, and tend to render polygamy non-existent despite its prevalence in society. The study was particularly interested in finding the voice of the child regarding polygamy as a marriage system. Theoretically, the study was guided by Children's Geographies and New Sociology of Childhood Studies which are concerned with children's agency as well as space and places that children occupy in the hierarchy of social relationships.

The study adopted a qualitative narrative research design, and utilised focus group and individual group interviews as its data generation methods. It was conducted with grade eight (8) to grade ten (10) learners from one High School in Molweni area, KwaZulu-Natal. A total of eleven (11) learners, five (5) boys and six (6) girls aged between fourteen and seventeen participated in the study.

The findings revealed that participants mainly cited the unfair treatment of wives and children as the major concern and reason they are against the practice. Even those that are in favour of polygamy agreed with the fact that most fathers do not manage their households in a fair and equitable manner. Most of the participants cited the spread of HIV/AIDS as being exacerbated by polygamy and thereby making it difficult to provide solutions for the pandemic that has ravaged society for almost three

decades. Participants also indicated that as children, they have resorted to getting menial jobs even before they finish matric in order to maintain themselves.

The findings further indicate that not all participants were against the practice as others pledged their support for the longstanding practice. They cited family growth, alleviation of spinsterhood and the benefit of having many mothers as their main reasons for supporting polygamy. Some of the participants, especially boys, were brave enough to admit that they are fond of girls and therefore would like to be in polygamous relationships when they grow up. Although customary law makes provision for senior wives to consent to the husband's decision to take another wife, however, participants indicated that women are usually dependent on men, financially and therefore, despite that the law protects them in principle, they remain subordinate to male authority.

These findings suggest that schools must actively empower children, both girls and boys about their sexuality and have empowerment programs for the girl child. Some boys have indicated that they want to practice polygamy for sexual gratification and have a wider choice of sexual partners. This kind of thinking is obviously fractured for obvious reasons and society cannot afford it. Girls on the other hand need to be empowered and be encouraged to participate in business and in positions of power to turn the tide. The department of basic education must reinstate school counsellors in all schools so that there are programs that are put in place to assist learners who might be adversely affected by polygamy. Partnerships with community structures and parents should be promoted and encouraged with the aim to have community-based care centres for children who might be negatively affected by polygamy.

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# **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

## **1.1 Introduction**

The study set out to investigate the schooling experiences of children who are either directly or indirectly affected by polygamous marriages. Focus was on the context of the current dominant and hegemonic discourses which privilege monogamy as the ideal form of marriage. The study was particularly interested at finding the voice of the child regarding polygamy as a system. This chapter gives an overview of what the study is all about and what it aims to achieve in the end. The study objectives, the rationale, the conceptual framework and the background to the study are presented in this chapter. Moreover, the key research questions that are informing the study are introduced and finally, a summary of the individual chapters forming this dissertation is presented.

## **1.2 Background to the study**

One would wonder why I have an interest in polygamy which is such an old phenomenon. The photograph below is evidence that polygamy is alive in the South African society. The Mseleku family below consists of four wives and ten children. The photograph features businessman Musa Mseleku and his four wives, MaCele, Mayeni, MaKhumalo, and Mangwabe (first to fourth wife respectively).

*Figure 1.1: The Mseleku family*



*Source: Drum magazine (June 8, 2017)*

Polygamous marriages are normally judged according to the dominant discourse in society. The practice is often viewed as something belonging to the past, some out- dated phenomenon that resembles the ancient human incivility, mostly criticised by many as an infringement on women's human rights and marital equality (Pleck, 2002). Yet, the assumption that polygamy no longer exist in modern society, has not actually stopped its prevalence, rather this has ensured that this practice thrives under the false assumption of its non-existence (Cheal, 2002). The result is that little attention is given to it and thus very little knowledge we have on its impact, especially on the schooling experiences of children born out of polygamous marriages. As long as polygamy remains a part of our lives, more research on it has the potential to shed light on the nature, extent and implications of polygamous marriages on the experiences of children who attend school.

The focus of this study is on how children who are directly or indirectly affected by polygamy experience their lives and how they adapt and navigate the school context where most of the children come from what is regarded as “normal” (monogamous marital) relationships. Understanding these experiences may enable us to have a basis to either discourage or improve our perceptions of these relationships in ways that may enhance the experiences of children born out of these polygamous marriages. The aim was to have a deeper understanding of the effects of polygamy on children’s experiences of schooling and to learn from the ways through which children’s experiences could be enhanced within the broader agenda of social justice, inclusivity and equality in education.

### **1.3 Rationale and objectives of the study**

The past years has seen a rise in the prevalence of cases involving children and therefore suggestive of more research in the field of children’s geographies and geographies of the youth. The broad problems and issues surrounding this study are embedded in a variety of parental problems on children’s well-being. These problems may be complex and include issues related to child abuse, neglect and child abandonment. Children however, do not have the platform or opportunity to articulate these problems, particularly through their own personal life experiences. Their experiences remain hidden and may resurface later in life either negatively or positively, depending on the experience or on the nature of the child. This study therefore seeks to understand the children’s geographies in their multi-faceted spaces and places. It is my belief that children can be agents of change in their intricate spaces and places.



Motalinguane–Khau (2010) claims that one's environment is a point of reference and thus an imperative setting that helps to understand an individual's life experiences. This study looks at capturing the reality of learners' lived experiences concerning polygamy whether direct or indirect experience. The study seeks to fill the gap on this subject because many studies have been conducted but neither one of them seeks to get the voice of the child who has no choice in the type of union they find themselves in. The study strives to explore how polygamy influences their thinking and behaviour and what can we learn from these little voices as adults.

#### **1.4 Research questions**

1. What are learners' understanding of polygamy in one KwaZulu-Natal high school?
2. What are learners' experiences of polygamy in one KwaZulu-Natal high school?
3. What are the factors that affect learners' understanding and experiences of Polygamy?
4. What can we learn from the above in to support or enhance the schooling experiences of learners affected by polygamy within the school?

#### **1.5 The geographical and socio-economic context of the study**

The study took place at a semi-rural area which is situated in the outskirts of Pinetown, in the Mageza area, Molweni, KwaZulu-Natal. The research was conducted in a high school with learners ranging from fourteen to sixteen years of age. The school was chosen purposely because the neighbourhood is known for practising polygamy. The community consists of a semi-literate to illiterate population. Some members of the community practise polygamy and therefore consequently have children born of these marriages. Most women survive by farming or belong to the lower middle class. Most men in Molweni occupy the lower-middle rank of the employment sector.

### **1.6 Theoretical context of the study**

The study was guided by Children's Geographies and New Sociology of Childhood Studies (James & Prout, 1997; Morojele & Muthukrishna, 2012). Children's geographies is concerned with the space and places that children occupy in the hierarchy of social relationships (Cele, 2006). The study used this theory to understand how the phenomenon of being affected directly or indirectly by polygamy, which is normally relegated as primitive and out-dated, positions such children in socio-spatial relationships within the school environment. For example, if these learners are equitably accepted as other children born out of monogamous marriages or if these children have other social or academic barriers that they must contend with due to them being affected by polygamy directly or indirectly. Such social positioning, which involves the power laden spaces and places in these children's lives is what is referred to here as the geographies (Campbell –Sills et al., 2009).

New Sociology of Childhood studies is concerned not only with how children are positioned in socio-spatial hierarchy in human relationships. Instead, this theory is more interested in the creative and innovative ways through which children navigate, negotiate, subvert or even transcend their positioning in socio-spatial hierarchical relationships (Holloway & Valentine, 2000). The New Sociology of Childhood studies views children as active members of society who need to be understood and respected for who they are. Unlike the dominant discourses of childhood which regard children as immature, adults in the making, sexually innocent and so forth, to a point where they are not involved in the aspects which affect their lives.

The New Sociology of Childhood Studies advocates for children to be respected as human beings on their own right who do have the agency to determine their own lives (Morojele & Muthukrishna, 2011). This theory was used in this study to understand how children affected directly or indirectly by polygamy navigate and negotiate the social positioning relegated to them by their society, peers and teachers to determine their lives in the school. The aim was to learn how children navigate their challenges, and use this as a basis to inform strategies aimed at improving the quality of schooling experiences for children to support their education.

### **1.7 Methodological context of the study**

The study adopted a qualitative research design, and is located in the interpretive paradigm. Since the experiences under investigation are experienced by learners themselves, it was crucial therefore to conduct the research in the natural setting of

these social actors. Unlike positivism which focuses on process rather than outcome the qualitative research methodology, places more emphasis on the actors' perspective. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), the primary aim of qualitative research is in-depth narrative descriptions and understanding of actions and events which form the basis for children's experiences in respect of the objectives of the study. The authors further contend that the main concern of qualitative research approach is to understand social interactions in terms of the specific context rather than attempting to generalise to some theoretical population.

Lastly, in its quest for knowledge, the qualitative research design seeks to engage in detail with the object of study and uses a small number of cases to be studied from a larger group. The nature of the study used focus group interviews and individual group interviews as a data collection method. This is perfectly in line with the study as it enabled an in-depth engagement with the participants. It also allowed for a more profound understanding of the actions and events that informed the participants' experiences in their specific contexts.

### **1.8 Significance of the study**

Many studies have been conducted about polygamy, but the gap is in the voice of the child who happens to be part of this equation. As indicated above, the theoretical background of this study points out that, children are a very important part of our lives. Unlike in the past where children were a non-entity or were regarded as minors in the true sense of the word, children today have a lot to teach us as adults. Their

experiences and thoughts can contribute a lot to the body of knowledge. As a society, we might get to understand their thinking and expectations which may help us shape future generations. Hence, the significance of the study is to inform policy and practice regarding how to improve the schooling experiences of children affected by polygamy through drawing on these children's voices, as opposed to using other voices or actors to represent these children's voices.

## **1.9 Structure of the dissertation**

### *Chapter 1: Introduction to the study*

This chapter provides a broad overview of the research study conducted. The aim of this chapter is to indicate to the reader, the purpose, significance and objectives of the study.

### *Chapter 2: Literature Review*

This chapter presents a review of current and historical literature relevant to the current study. The literature consulted addresses both local and international viewpoints about polygamy. The chapter also focuses on current issues of polygamy and how society receives it with special reference to the reality show, Uthando nesthembu (Love and Polygamy) that is aired by Umzansi magic television channel.

### *Chapter 3: Research Methodology*

This chapter presents the research paradigm and conceptual framework that guided the study. It also discusses the research design and the justification for the choice of methodological approach.

### *Chapter 4: Data Presentation and Discussion*

This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected and the findings of the study are discussed. The discussion of the findings is presented in relation to the relevant literature reviewed.

#### *Chapter 5: Recommendations*

Chapter Five concludes the study and puts into perspective the implications of the current study. Further, the limitations of the study are also discussed with the researcher providing recommendations for future studies on the subject. The chapter concludes with a reflective discussion of the journey during the research study.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

It is quite fascinating as a social justice scholar to notice the existence and resilience of polygamy, a practice that used to be prevalent in the past. Even though society may seem to be moving towards the opposite direction due to globalisation, advancement of technology, the emergence of a vibrant civil society and education across all sectors of society, one may be tempted to assume that certain phenomenon would run its course and loose space in the public domain. Like many other phenomena e.g. *isiko lokuthwala* (marriage by girl abduction), male and female circumcision, payment of lobola which may be adversely affected by the many advances experienced by society today, polygamy is one such social phenomenon that is still being practiced despite advances in modernity and human development.

It is therefore not surprising that in most first world countries such as the United States of America and Britain, polygamy is unlawful (Faucon, 2014). The author contends that the practice remains taboo in the eyes of the law, as second and third polygamous wives are left without any legal recognition or protection. The British government's view of marriage, which is common to most Western countries, is that the union of marriage must be monogamous (Nwagbara, 2014). Many scholars, both internationally and locally have found interest in the topic in question as they have also been amazed by the resilience of polygamy particularly within the African societal space. In Southern Africa for instance, polygamy continues to be practiced even by statesman such as Mr Jacob Zuma and the Monarchs of Swaziland and KwaZulu

Natal; King Mswati Dlamini and King Zwelithini Zulu, respectively (Nyathikazi, 2013). The South African constitution recognises plural marriage as a legal union that can be practised and is protected by the justice system of the country. It must be acknowledged that South African law recognises polygamy and lobola (bride price) through the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act 120 of 1998 (Mubangizi, 2012, p.42).

## **2.2 Defining polygamy**

According to Ali (2012) there are three different kinds of polygamous marriages as follows:

1. Polyandry, where one woman marries multiple men,
2. Polygyny, where a single man marries multiple women simultaneously
3. Polyamory, where multiple men and women enter a marital association with each other.

The current study focuses on polygyny also known as polygamy, as it is the only one recognized by the South African constitution as stated above. Polygamy refers to the most common sub-form of polygamous marriage in which a husband has two or more wives (Bamgbade & Salovita, 2014). According to Thobejane and Flora (2014), polygamy is deeply rooted in the early lifestyles of our ancestors. Miller (2015) further states that polygamy is legally practiced in various countries in the Middle East, Asia and Africa, although not practiced by all. According to a study conducted by Lazim (2010) in Malaysia, polygamy has been considered as an important issue in public, political and academic arenas for the past 20 years. According to Sultana and Lazim



(2010) it is estimated that between 20 000 and 60 000 people still practise polygamy in sub-Saharan Africa.

## **2.3 Brief historical origins of polygamy**

Polygamy has been practised, from time immemorial. The practice has roots in various religious sectors such as Christianity and Islam. This section briefly focuses on polygamy in the context of the two religions, and patriarchy as a social system.

### ***2.3.1. Polygamy under Christianity***

The practice and the origins of polygamy are found in the Holy Bible and the Quran which are books used as a life guide by Christians and Moslems across the globe, respectively. Even though the bible does not specifically quote any law regarding the practice, many trusted men of God practiced it. Abraham is documented as having had more than one wife, King David had one hundred wives and King Solomon is documented to be one of the greatest polygamist with a highest record of 700 wives and 300 concubines (Thobejane & Flora, 2014).

### ***2.3.2 Polygamy under the Islamic law***

Under the Islamic law, the practice is enshrined in the Quran verse 4:3 which states that “if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry the women of your choice, two or three or four. But if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with them, then only one” (Ali, 2012, p.22). Muslim jurists have generally interpreted justice to mean treating the wives equally. This equality has generally been restricted to the fair division of goods. The origins of polygamy suggest that even

modern society may not free itself completely from the claws of this practice, instead in my opinion, it disguises itself in the form of prostitution (financial transaction for sex), “blesser-blessee relationship” (glorified prostitution) and mistresses (unofficial polygamy).

### ***2.3.3 Polygamy and patriarchy***

Many studies have found that polygamy historically tended to thrive in societies where patriarchy was the order of the day and women depended more on men for survival. “Since Johanne Marange is a highly patriarchal religion, males have control over women and children and believe that a good wife will produce many children, especially male children” (Chikwature & Oyedele, 2016, p.27). Women were merely treated as minors who needed to find shelter from a male figure either a father, brother or husband. Several critiques are given regarding the practice for example, “another critique of polygamy is its seemingly inherent patriarchal structure and its alleged negative effect on the progressive push toward more contract based marriages as opposed to status based ones” (Faucon, 2014, p.4). According to Hayase and Liaw (1997), polygamy has long co-existed with a primitive system of agriculture in which women and children do most of the farm work. Men are motivated to have more than one wife and many children who in turn provide or serve as cheap labour and a means to expand their ownership of farmland.

The current study recognises that the parties involved in polygamy are consenting adults who choose to be part of the union willingly. The study partly discusses the reasons that have resulted in the resilience and re-emergence of polygamy even

amongst the church. Mainly, the study seeks to find out how polygamy affects children who find themselves party to the union they never really consented to. The study does not assume that the children are positively or negatively affected by having been born of polygamous families, but seeks to identify those positive or negative factors and how they can be enhanced or eliminated respectively for the sake of children who are party to the union.

## **2.4 The legal constructions of polygamy in South Africa**

According to De Vos and Freedman (2015), the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act, 120 of 1998, came into operation on 15 November 2000, and gives full legal recognition to customary marriages in South Africa. According to this law, customary marriages can be either monogamous or polygamous. Polygamy means that a male older than 18 years of age can marry more than one wife. A customary marriage according to these authors can only be concluded in accordance with customary law. Customary law is defined as the customs and usages traditionally observed among the indigenous African peoples of South Africa, which forms part of the culture of those people (De Vos & Freedman, 2015, p.1). The authors further opine that section 7 of the Act attempts to mitigate the negative effects of polygamous marriage on existing wives and states that a husband in a customary marriage who wishes to enter into a further customary marriage with another woman must make an application to the court to approve a written contract which will regulate the future financial arrangements of the marriages and that the existing spouses must give consent to the further marriage.

According to the Marriage Act of 1961 a man and a woman between whom a customary marriage exists may enter in a civil union of marriage if neither of them is a spouse in another subsisting customary marriage with any other person. It is however against civil law to have more than one wife and therefore one cannot enter a customary marriage and civil marriage simultaneously (Jones, 2011, p.1).

## **2.5 Social constructions of polygamy**

In the introduction above, it is clear from many scholars and what is happening in the public domain that polygamy is still a concept that society is still grappling with. It seems to be receiving attention from various scholars and action groups. Some scholars are supporting the phenomenon whilst some are against it for various reasons. According to Hayase and Liaw (1997), the prevalence of polygamy in sub-Saharan Africa as a type of marriage has declined substantially especially in the southern part of the region where the adoptions of plough cultivation and commercial livestock raising as the basic economic activity, have reduced the importance of the participation of female labourer's and hence have reduced the incentive to have multiple wives.

Historically, according to Caldwell and Caldwell (1987) as quoted by Hayase and Liaw (1997), the main goal of the practice is to have many descendants so that the family line is strengthened, and the deceased ancestors are given the opportunities of rebirth within the family. It is therefore expected of women to be treated poorly and be regarded as form of property and have a much lower status than men. Even though there are still some women who are willingly participating in polygamy today especially if grounded by religious beliefs, the proportions of polygamy tend to be lower for more recent cohorts (Hayase & Liaw, 1997 p.309).

According to Mubangizi (2012), polygamy is one of the phenomena that are protected under cultural rights in sections 30 and 31 of the South African constitution, although there are limitations accompanying those rights. The author further states that these rights are negated by the right to dignity as enshrined in section 8(d) of the promotion of equality and the prevention of unfair discrimination on the grounds of gender, including any practice which impairs the dignity of women and undermines equality between men and women. The human rights committee of the United Nations has categorically pronounced that:

*It should be noted that equality of treatment with regard to the right to marry implies that polygamy is incompatible with this principle (the right of women to marry only when they have free and full consent) violates the dignity of women. It is an inadmissible discrimination against women. Consequently, it should be definitely abolished wherever it continues to exist (page??)*

The above statement attests to the negative perceptions surrounding polygamy, which this study argues that it may have adverse implications on children affected by this phenomenon. Hence the need to understand these possible implications with the aim to find ways of protecting and enhancing the schooling experiences of such children within the spirit of social justice and inclusivity within South African schools.

## **2.6 Current trends of polygamy**

This section looks at what is happening today in as far as the practice of polygamy is concerned. Since humanity is still practicing polygamy, this section attempts to view the current trends of the practice and the reality of consent from the first wives as enshrined by the customary law.

### ***2.6.1 Painting the present picture***

In a study conducted by Nurrohmah (2003), it was found that, of the nine women in polygamous marriages, all had experienced psychological abuse; five of them suffered physical, economic and sexual abuse. However, the author contends that it would be a mistake to believe that all polygamous marriages are abusive. However, again there are media reports about physical abuse in the Swaziland royal household which it is believed to be one of the reasons for wives to have fled. President Zuma's wife Kate Mantsho killed herself in 2000, after describing her marriage to him as "24 years of hell", according to the Guardian (4th January 2010). The media has reported on cases of infidelity by the wives of the so-called polygamists. According to the SA Breaking News, (June, 2016) rumours that MaNtuli, the estranged wife to President Jacob Zuma had been ousted surfaced, with sources claiming that she had been cast out of the president's controversial Nkandla home due to backlash over an alleged affair she had. Three of King Mswati's wives have been in media reports for the same reason and have allegedly left the royal palace (Maclean, 2012). However, some women even encourage their husbands to marry additional wives (Chambers, 1997, p.73-74). Certain anecdotes reveal genuine love and companionship among polygamous spouses and within their entire family unit, leaving us to question whether polygamy is intrinsically damaging to the spousal relationship, (Palmer & Perrin, 2004, as cited by Thobejane & Flora, 2014).

Though many studies seem to paint a grim picture about the practice but some scenarios seem to be painting a positive picture. The Mseleku family below has brought a fresh angle into the debate.

*Figure 2.1 Businessman Musa Mseleku and his four wives, Mamkhulu, Mayeni, MaKhumalo and MaNgwabe (first to fourth wife respectively)*



Source: Drum magazine (June 8, 2017)

They are depicted as a family which respects protocol, the first wife has the final say in important matters and the junior wives respect her position without any animosity or jealousy. Their lifestyle has managed to fuse culture and modernity without any signs of a clash between the two.

### **2.6.2 The reality of consent**

The notion that women consent to the practice of polygamy is challenged by Jonas (2012). He sees it necessary to address the argument that women exercise their free will and consent to enter polygamous marriages and therefore no human rights

violations arise where there has been consent on their part. This argument, is specious; its outward look is very attractive, yet it is fundamentally flawed (Jonas, 2012). The author further contends that social decisions, such as the decision to get married, are not made in a vacuum. According to the same author, it is often made within the context of the value system obtaining in that society. She believes societal forces and dynamics are too overwhelming for a woman's anti-polygamy conviction to withstand them. Consequently, according to the learned writer, a woman's so-called consent to a polygamous union is clearly illusory and amounts to no consent at all. Vallenga and Mbula (1975) as cited by Nyathikazi (2013) concur with this argument by stating that women do not willingly enter polygamous marriages, but are forced into it by circumstances to avoid a lesser status of concubinage.

According to the writers, this status is shameful and looked down upon by society. Mangena (2015) agrees with this assertion that traditional polygamy has since spiralled out of the control of culture. She further mentions that its modern version in Shona culture manifests when a man has multiple unofficial extra-marital affairs that are a result of unfaithfulness, all the while pretending to be monogamous (Nnaemeka, 1997 as cited by Mangena, 2015, p.182) termed this practice as "polygamised monogamy". Glaser and Glaser (2004) on the other hand asserts that most observers of black sexuality in South Africa, from anthropologists to welfare workers and Christian activists, have assumed a close link between the tradition of polygamy and contemporary male 'promiscuity'. This is an indication that many current social scientists have viewed the practice as favouring men and in fact a way of concealing their insatiable sexual appetites.



## **2.7 Factors affecting polygamous marriages**

The following section discusses factors that may affect polygamous marriages in South Africa and elsewhere today either positively or negatively. It navigates on the position of men and women in society and how that positioning influences decisions on marriage and other important decisions.

### **2.7.1 Gender relations**

It is evident from most African marriages that men seem to play a dominant role with women being regarded as inferior to men. Feminist sociologists refer to this kind of power as patriarchy (Cheal, 2002). Even the Bible which is used as a fundamental basis upon which the marriage is formed states clearly that the man is the head of the woman. Discourses legitimising patriarchy for example, “We must recognize the continuing salience of tradition and assumption that it is legitimate for husbands to wield authority in the family” (Lamanna & Riedman, 1993, p.289).

The Bible further states that the woman must submit to the man, an instruction that places husbands above women and not next to them as equal partners. The men have more power and more say in the marriage and this, in many instances, leads to abuse as many men tend to abuse their authority which is believed to be God given. Social scientist Pleck (1995) has argued that society has encouraged men to give primacy to the work and to let their family relationship come second. This according to the author

has led to an absent father/husband syndrome i.e. fathers and husbands who are absent from home for an extended period.

According to Cheal (2002) in the Palestinian Muslim tradition, a man can marry up to four wives and that this form of marriage was found mainly among the wealthier households whose male heads made decisions for their wives and children. The Qur'an encourages polygamy for 'a restorative function' for the protection of orphans and widows in a post-war context when a substantial number of male populations has exterminated or wiped out during warfare (Yusuf, 1983).

In Africa, our 'African certified polygamist' King Mswati III is married to fourteen wives, South African President Jacob Zuma is married to four so far Yaya Boni of Benin (who is also current African Union Chairperson) is married to two wives, Mwai Kibaki, former President of Kenya has two, (Maclean, 2012) just to cite few examples. In the Sudan, the President of that country, Omar Hassan al-Bashir encouraged polygamy to increase the population of that country, according to Revesai (2011), and further reports that the then Liberian President Charles Taylor sparked an outcry in 2002 among human rights movements when he declared that one of the duties of his then wife Jewel Howard was to look for co-wives to woo them to their marriage. Mr Taylor's conviction according to this author, is that as a traditionalist, he is entitled to marry up to four wives at a time. Being an HIV and AIDS generation, the appropriateness of such acts invites debates from the civil society groups and broader society.

Culturally, it is unacceptable for a woman to refuse her husband's sexual advances or ask him to use a condom even if she knows he had been unfaithful (Nyathikazi, 2013). Chances are that women are exposed to sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

especially because the polygamous relationships today, unlike in the past are coupled with infidelity from both parties concerned.

In South Africa, the Nazareth church is known for practicing polygamy. In an article published by Isolezwe Newspaper on November 19, 2013, Pastor Mathunjwa aged 88 from Mandeni, (KwaZulu-Natal) of the Nazareth Baptist Church, also agrees that polygamy has many challenges nowadays. He further states that as a pastor in the Nazareth Baptist Church, the reason he and many men of the Shembe Church are still able to be in polygamous marriages is the respect and obedience they have for rules of the Shembe denomination. Pastor Mathunjwa therefore encourages his children to be in polygamous marriages because they are also in this church.

However, Chairperson of the Treatment Action Campaign in KwaZulu-Natal Patrick Mdletshe said they discourage people to enter polygamous marriages because it places those involved at the risk of contracting HIV.

*It is not that we are against polygamy or tradition, but it would be a real danger to encourage people to enter into polygamous marriages because this places them at the risk of getting HIV. We cannot compare nowadays with the days past where this tradition was rife and successful (Isolezwe Newspaper, November 19, 2013).*

In the article where the above quote was extracted, Patrick Mdletshe further opines that modern customs have changed drastically and people are no longer faithful.

In another study by Chavunduka (1979) as quoted by (Jonas, 2012), wives marrying in a polygamous set-up are thought to compete to be economically productive to gain the husband's favour. According to another study conducted by Moller and Welch

(1985), sexuality needs in societies practicing polygamy is deemed to be one of the reasons for polygamous culture. In such societies, according to these authors, the couple is expected to wait for almost two years before engaging in sexual activities. This is clear evidence that men in polygamous marriages are not seen as equal partners who need to participate in the nurturing of their off-springs and care for their partners who are obviously going through the nursing period. Their sexual needs take primacy above the needs of the spouse who certainly need their intimacy the most during this time.

The above clearly indicates a disregard for the women's needs as they are denied of the right to be intimate with their partners and worse knowing that instead the husband is intimate with another woman. Such acts show less sensitivity and care for women species and have no understanding of what women may go through due to pregnancy. According to a publication on healthy living by Rearick (2017), women may suffer from a condition called postpartum depression which seems to be brought on by the changes in hormone levels that occur after pregnancy. Any woman according to this report is prone to this condition in the months after childbirth, miscarriage or stillbirth.

According to a study conducted by Moller and Welch (1985) focusing on polygamy and well-being among Zulu migrants, the study found that polygamous men were more above average in well-being than those from monogamous marriages. These findings suggest that polygamy is more beneficial to men than women. This is further alluded by a newspaper article by Sun News Publishing (28 April, 2015) about Doctor Nkeli Nzweke Kelly from Nigeria who has five wives. He (Doctor Nkeli) pointed out that if a

man has only one wife, he will have more than ten problems, whereas if a man has ten wives he will have one trouble in the house because instead of the wives fighting the man, they will fight each other. He further said that all of them (wives) will be fighting to get your attention and your love; you will stay quiet in your house and live long. These are clear-cut cases of men using their masculinity and dominating power to manage their homes.

Women, especially where polygamy is thriving, conform to the practice of polygamy and make it work. Thobejane and Flora (2014) agree and state that while women might initially feel uncomfortable and envious when a new woman joins the household but these sentiments usually fade away to ensure harmonious relationships in the home. Whether the women are happy about the status quo is not an issue of importance to the husband. In a nutshell, polygamy allows men to wield their power and as Jonas (2012) puts it; it objectifies women, reducing them to subservient status and perpetually exhibits them as members of an inferior order.

### ***2.7.2 Exploring the social position of women in society***

As discussed in the introduction, polygamy seems to thrive in societies where patriarchy is the order of the day. Even though we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, reality is that women liberation is in many countries only in principle; the situation is even worse in countries such as Nigeria and India where women's rights are grossly violated without any consideration. Nigeria is known worldwide with the abduction of girls by Boko Haram, while India is also known for early forced marriages. According to UNICEF

(2013), 48% of women in South Asia are forced to marry before they are 18 years of age. In its General Recommendation Number 24 on Women and Health, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) noted that:

*Adolescent girls and women in many countries lack adequate access to information and services necessary to ensure sexual health. Because of unequal power relations based on gender, women and adolescent girls are often unable to refuse sex or insist on safe and responsible sex practices. Harmful traditional practices, such as polygamy may also expose girls and women to the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and other Sexually transmitted Diseases (Jonas, 2012, p.145).*

In many countries, it is still a reality that women are not allowed to own property just like in the case of a report that was commissioned by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (1989) which purports that women are not customarily allowed to own property or to inherit directly, however, widows would always be given access to land, housing and other assets to provide for themselves and their children.

The report further says that one of the biggest problems is that inheritance issues are seen as a private, family matter. This means that despite strong condemnation of individual cases of property grabbing from widows or orphaned children, there is little active opposition from community members or leaders who do not want to interfere unless asked. Women, because of the gender role attributed to them, often feel they are not able to oppose (male) relatives or to ask outsiders for help when their rights are being violated after the death of their husband. What this means is that many societies position women under male figures and are sometimes treated the same way

as children. Owning land is empowerment and without it, women are susceptible to entering oppressive relationships in quest for shelter.

Politically, yes in the somewhat new dispensation some strides have been made to liberate women and put them in position of power for instance they now hold cabinet positions, however, we yet to see a woman president in South Africa. Globally, the world is still found wanting in its attempts to truly liberate women, in the judiciary where policy decisions are made, we still see more men in those superior positions of influence. According to Geiger and Kent (2017), most Americans believe a woman will be elected president within their lifetime, a milestone that would add the U.S. to a growing list of countries that have had a female leader. According to these writers the picture is grim as the overall number of countries that have been led by women remains relatively small. There are currently 15 female world leaders, including 12 female heads of government and 11 elected female heads of state (some leaders are both, and figurehead monarchs are not included), according to World Economic Forum Report (2014) as cited by Geiger and Kent (2017), women account for about one-in-ten of today's leaders of United Nations member states.

The report further states that, while the number of female leaders has more than doubled since 2005, a woman in power is hardly the norm around the world. Sixty-three of 142 nations studied by the World Economic Forum have had a female head of government or state at some point in the 50 years up to 2014, but in nearly two-thirds of those nations a woman was in power for less than four of the 50 years. It is reported that where polygamy is permitted, it always operates as a bar precluding

women from operating as full citizens and enjoying their civil and political rights (Howland & Koenen, 2014, p.14). Within the cultural setup where polygamy is practiced, women are socialized into subservient roles that inhibit their full and meaningful participation in family and public life (Cook & Kelly, 2006).

In an article based on tracking progress on customary law in post-apartheid South Africa, Nhlapho (2015) found that there is no protection for women and their right of participation in local affairs. The author contends that even though the Bill is not silent on the matter, but the protections provided are weak and meaningless. The author further mentions that the protection is more theoretical than real.

### ***2.7.3 Socio-cultural factors***

This section discusses social and cultural factors that affect polygamous marriages in South Africa and elsewhere. It attempts to bring to the fore how powerful institutions like the church, judiciary etc. are contributing either positively or negatively to the existence and perpetuation of polygamy in society.

#### ***2.7.3.1 Polygamy, the church and social order in the present dispensation***

It is not surprising that even in the context of the church, we hear of pastors who are not only defending but also practicing polygamy. In an article published on 13 April 2015 by SA News, Pastor Nala of the Plentian church has allegedly recently married



a second wife. His reasoning is that, “If every man had only one wife, it would mean that more than 60% of women would never have a man in their lives.”

According to Duncan (2008), polygamists in the United States even though it is prohibited, are generally Mormon fundamentalists who believe that a man needs three wives to attain the fullness of exaltation in the afterlife. These Mormon fundamentalists are mostly Muslim Americans who either grew up in polygamous households or converted to Islam and then took up the practice as a part of their religion (Faucon, 2014). Culturally and even religiously, men are given a superior position to women. If one looks across all sectors of society, men are still positioned such that they are leading in many spheres of life.

#### *2.7.2.2 Polygamy, politics and the judiciary system*

When we grew up, we were taught as girls that we are being prepared to serve our men. It is likely therefore that some women enter such marriages because of their socialisation. Musumbi Kanyoro (1993) as quoted by Thobejane and Flora (2014) states that in the African context before marriage, a woman did not have an independent identity, she was the daughter of her father. After marriage, she is the wife of her husband. Women are found to be objects that are not able to exercise their own independent thinking and decision making. It is therefore likely that men will exercise their power and authority whether justly or unjustly is another story.

According to a study conducted by Yang (2003) among Hmongs who immigrated to America in the late 1970's but originally are from South-East Asia. Polygamous marriages according to the study, comprised about 17, 5% of all marriages, society is highly patriarchal with strong gender differences delineating men and sons as superior and prevailing over women and daughters. It is not surprising that according to the study, relationships with husbands and fathers were described as neglectful and that a wife's level of life contentment was statistically correlated to her wife order. Senior wives were significantly less happy and satisfied with their lives than junior wives. Husbands tended to give more attention to junior wives and their children because in most instances new wives are younger and more beautiful.

Another classical example is that of the former public protector who issued a report on the popular Nkandlagate but was not heeded by the state president. In her (The Council for the Advancement of the South African Constitution 24 March 2014) report on the upgrades at the President's private residence at Nkandla, the then Public protector found that the President violated the Constitution. One is tempted to think that Thuli Madonselas' decision was not heeded on the grounds of gender. Rather it was viewed as a clear-cut case of a man abusing his position as a head of state and as a male chauvinist. Related to this is the fact that the taxpayer is responsible for the upkeep of the presidential household. According to an article by Times live (October, 2014), there are four officially recognised first ladies now: Bongi Ngema, Sizakele Khumalo-Zuma, Nompumelelo Ntuli-Zuma and Tobeka Madiba-Zuma. The article further reports that it costs South Africa R54.6million to support the country's first ladies during President Jacob Zuma's first term in office. The practice is therefore imposed on South Africans as we also must pay for it.

According to a public lecture on *The impact of the role of women in the advancement of the judiciary: tilting the scales of judicial transformation* held on 2 August 2016 at the School of Law (UKZN) Justice Mandisa Maya (Deputy Judge President of the Supreme Court of the Republic of South Africa) Ms Nonduduzo Khanyile-Kheswa (Councillor: KZN Law Society Managing Director: TKN Incorporated) and Advocate Thandi Norman (Senior Counsel: Society of Advocates, KZN) were all in agreement that women still lag behind in terms of holding meaningful positions in the judiciary. They held the view that the system is still White, and male dominated.

#### **2.7.4 Socio-economic factors**

As stated in the introduction, polygamy is a phenomenon that is as old as mankind. Whilst there is a marked decline in the practice due to factors such as urbanisation and education (Thobejane & Flora, 2014), its prevalence is still found in certain corners of the world especially in Africa. Most studies that have covered the topic refer to economic reasons as the major push towards polygamy from both men and women. According to Chavunduka (1979) polygamy is considered the most efficient means of producing a large family in each time. In Africa, a large family is an economic asset. Wives and children provide the main labour force and the latter provides social security for the aged. This author further opines that the largeness of clans has associated economic advantage and is also a source of power and prestige in African societies. Therefore, the numerous children produced from a polygamous union can assist in building and strengthening a power base.

In another study conducted by Yang (2003) in China, women and children were viewed largely as labourers and producers. According to this study, wives produce children and gardens, while girl children produce dowry, provide personal service, and are valuable for increasing garden income. The cash income from all a man's gardens belongs to him exclusively and he shares as little as possible with his wives. Wives have a great desire to own property, and if they do not find that they receive an equitable proportion of the cash income from their labour, they are anxious to 'seek other means of securing money'. The wives may do so by encouraging and helping the husband to secure other wives. This gives each wife an opportunity to free herself from the close control of her husband, to sell her garden produce in a market town, to find employment, and to have financially rewarding extramarital sex relations."

However, in today's society such large families emanating from polygamous unions may put a strain on the financial resources of that one family as modern day life is proving to be very expensive. As Thobejane and Flora (2014, p.1063) puts it:

*The standard of living is higher today and consumer items and other basic necessities of life such as education, medical care, shelter, and clothing, are much more expensive than they used to be, marrying an extra wife may put strain on resources that at times are already woefully inadequate for the man and his existing wife or wives.*

It is unfortunate that the very poor countries are the ones practicing polygamy. Many are times we often hear of reports pertaining to the Zulu Monarch's funds being exhausted. According to an eNCA report (26 July, 2014) each wife has her own royal home, and that it costs the taxpayer over R63million per year to maintain the royal household.

Mbirimtengerenji (2007) concurs with the above argument, the author reports in his study that an Ethiopian man with 11 wives and 77 children has been urging people not to follow his example and gave advices on family planning and contraception. The man learnt a lesson after seeing his fortune disappear under the competing demands of his enormous polygamy family. The study further states that the sub-Saharan Africa is home to 70% of the poorest people in the world.

Below is a picture of Mzansi magic new reality show, Uthando neSthembu about businessman Musa Mseleku and his four wives and ten children navigating a polygamous relationship. The man loves and spoils his wives. Each wife has a house and a car with a monthly allowance. The huge family lives an expensive life and got many South African men supporting polygamy. On the other hand, the South African women were just having mixed emotions about polygamy (Times Live, 20 July 2017). The researcher found this family very relevant to the current study as it epitomises the modern version of polygamy and that it demonstrates how real polygamy is in the modern era.

*Figure 2.2 The Mseleku family posing for a photo.*



*Source: Times Live, 20 July 2017.*

Polygamy has been cited as a possible contributor to Africa's low savings rates, widespread incidence of HIV, high levels of child mortality and to female depression (Fenske, 2012). According to Sultana and bin Lazim (2010), many men in both lower and middle economic groups, are unable to contribute to the economic maintenance of their family members. Therefore, polygamy may contribute to the increase of poverty levels and may be unsustainable in the long run as the family grows.

#### ***2.7.5 Exploring the economic position of women in society and how it positions them in polygamous marriages***

According to President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the United Nations Foundation, women are not less capable of achieving economic success than men,

but they are more likely to encounter circumstances, norms and laws that limit their full economic participation (Kathy Calvin, 2016). Economic inequity according to this author creates opportunity costs that are substantial and global—because research suggests that when a woman's economic status improves, so does that of her household, her community and, potentially, her country. Thus, this report was pursued to identify the most promising strategies for maximizing investments in women's economic empowerment. Led by UN Foundation Senior Fellow, Mayra Buvinic, this first-of-its-kind report recommends approaches to help women become economic agents who benefit from capital, markets, information and opportunities on fair and equitable terms.

It is contended that all women on the African continent have a sacred memory drawn from the long battle to free themselves from, racism, bigotry and the so-called civilizing agendas aimed at modernizing Africa through capitalism (Fanon, 2005; Pheko, 2002). Pheko (2002) argues that African women's ability to fully enjoy human rights is integrally linked to their economic empowerment, and that the starting point should be with poor women. In this article, Pheko (2005) largely contends that the New Partnership for Africa's Development, (NEPAD) which is supposed to provide economic emancipation for women but instead has sacrificed them on the altar of neo-liberalism and global capitalism. He continues to say that besides the fact that NEPAD is gender blind, it has experienced a very low profile among the rank and file at the national and even continental level. African women therefore, Polygamy, as highlighted above, is a phenomenon that is mostly practiced in African states hence this study finds it necessary to draw in notions like NEPAD into the discussion. Whilst there is a dire need for Africa to develop due to its history of colonisation, it is important

to take cognisance of the fact that women experienced both racial and gender discrimination. Whilst NEPAD attempts to emancipate people of Africa generally, there is even a dire need to emancipate women.

This document suggests that women are still short changed regarding policies and implementation geared towards their economic development. They are not consulted and made to be part of the debate in policies that are meant to improve their lives. This according to Pheko (2005), further perpetuates the already fractured policies which are governed by the same men who oppress women. If women are not liberated economically, they will continue to depend on men for survival and hence polygamy being practised and supported by many African leaders. One may even wonder if the status quo of women is not left adequately attended to because it favours those who benefit from it. Pheko (2005) believes that NEPAD is far behind, when it keeps women in areas of the economy that perpetuate exclusion from the macro-economy, NEPAD's lack of reference, in terms of analysis and experience of the African women and people regarding these policies, is a glaring omission resulting in a rather twisted conclusion.

#### ***2.7.6. Women's role in career and professional activities.***

By having climbed the ladder of success professionally, women have contributed to a complete overhaul in the marriage debate. It has given them an upper-hand and power to decide where their fate is concerned. According to Booth, Johnson and Whip (1984) although it may not make marriages less happy, employment may nevertheless contribute to a divorce by giving an unhappily married woman the economic power,



the increased independence, and the self- confidence to help her decide divorce. However, one may argue that some men are enticed into polygamy by the financial and material benefits that come with professional women, hence the need to marry many wives. However, other studies like the one conducted by Mkhize and Zondi (2015) bring an interesting twist into this debate.

Although studies have shown that polygamy declines with education and women's participation in the boardroom, however we see some professional women participating in polygamy. According to the study women are not always forced by circumstances like financial neediness to be in polygamous relationships. In a recent study on why "enlightened" women willingly practised polygamy in Hammarsdale, South Africa the findings asserted that "marriage would afford women respect and recognition in their communities" (Mkhize & Zondi, 2015, p.9). In a nutshell, sometimes the financial standing or professional position of a woman does not necessarily guarantee fulfilment especially as they grow older.

#### ***2.7.7 Infidelities, extra-marital relationships and polygamy***

It is a common trend that most marriages are plagued by infidelity from either party as discussed earlier. This negatively affects marriages as spouses tend to spend time outside the matrimonial home instead of spending it with spouses and children. With men especially, society tends to think that it is acceptable for men to have extramarital relationships. As Lamanna and Riedman (2015, p.261) put it "males are generally more tolerant of a man's infidelity than woman's and women themselves are more

tolerant of man's infidelity than woman's". This also has historical beginnings and was given a term polygamy which unfortunately condones the act as if it is an acceptable phenomenon. Unfortunately, in the modern society, such acts are not as acceptable, and spouses are aware of this fact and are empowered with knowledge of dealing with it instead of being submissive and complacent. Extramarital affairs according to Lamanna and Riedman (1993) are not prompted by deep emotional dissatisfaction with one's spouse nor by the desire to find new partner but by the curiosity or a desire for variety and the opportunity often presents itself at the right time.

## **2.8 Children's constructions of polygamy**

This section discusses how the various authors navigate how children have been affected by polygamy across the world. It appears that quite a number of authors and those within the education system have written on the subject and have reflected on how children need to be supported. The missing link is the fact that very little has been found on the reflections from children themselves, but they are from the voices of the educators, or those from the community structures.

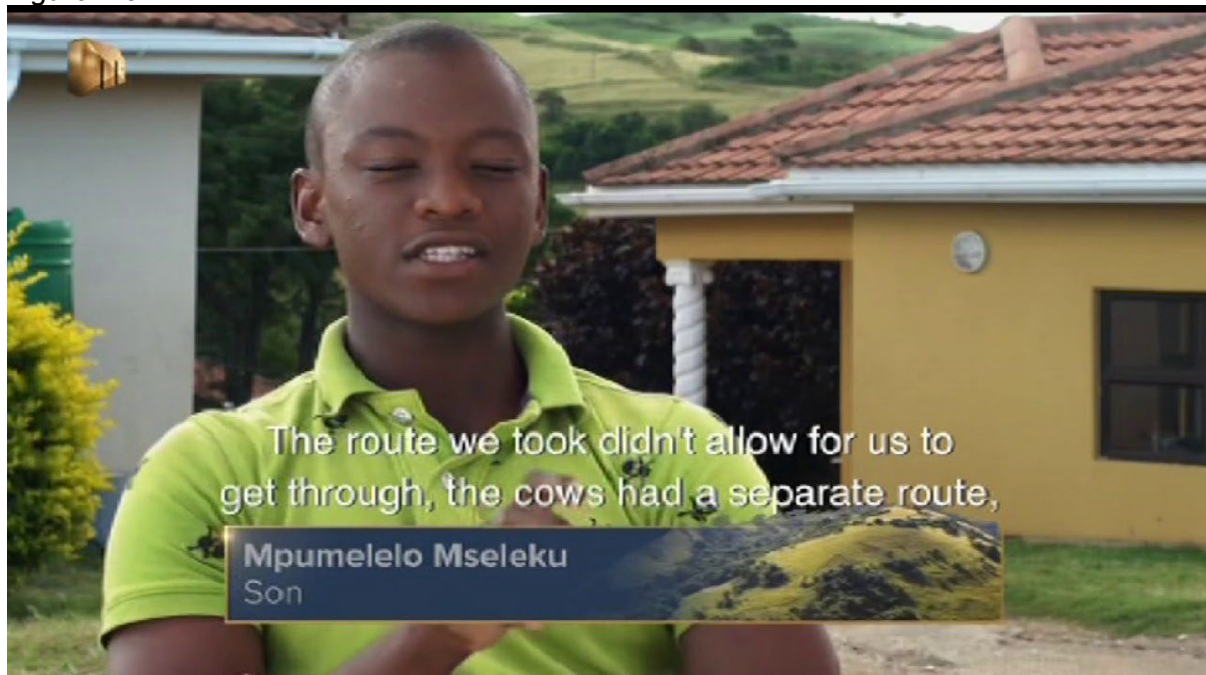
### ***2.8.1 Children's understanding of polygamy***

Most of the studies consulted, have covered the experiences of children born in environments of polygamous relationships but have not necessarily attempted to draw their understanding as such. It became clear from studies that most children are adversely affected by polygamous marriages. The rivalry between the co-wives often proves damaging to the children.

According to Ward (2004, p.149), as cited by Campbell et al,(2009) the thoughts and beliefs children encounter are controlled, allowing them only to learn polygamist beliefs, thus “blinding children from the existence of life outside polygamy.” Such children tend to believe that the polygamous lifestyle is the only way out and hence, they often end up attached to a polygamous life style. Children attached to polygamous lifestyle view polygamy as the only key that can lead them to the happiness that they aspire to have in life (Nhlapho, 2015).

The picture below is taken from the South African reality show called Uthando neSthembu (Love and Polygamy) that is broadcast every Thursday on Mzansi Magic (Drum Magazine, 08 June, 2017). The boy is captured in the show expressing his support for the plural marriage and in fact wants to double the number of wives his father has.

*Figure 2.3*



*Source: Drum Magazine 08 June 2017*

### ***2.8.2 Children's experiences of polygamy***

The study found that many studies have covered the experiences of children from polygamous families which indicated that many social scientists are concerned about how polygamy may affect children. According to Elbedour, Onwuegbize, Caradine and Abu-Saad (2002) as cited by Mohammad Al-Sharfi et al. (2015), family variables and hypothesized risk factors associated with polygamy that could influence children's developmental outcomes include marital conflict, marital distress, father absence, the happiness or distress of the wives in polygamous marriages, financial stress and parental education. Duncan (2008) revealed that children from polygamous families frequently feel discontented with their families

## **2.9 Effects of polygamy on children's schooling experiences**

Polygamy affects children's schooling experiences in several ways. The following aspects are explored in detail, and are illustrative of how polygamy affects children's schooling experiences.

### ***2.9.1 Factors affecting children from polygamous marriages in school***

According to a study by Oyedele and Chikwature (2016), the Johanne Marange Apostolic Sect which is highly polygamous, revealed that learners lack parental material and motivational support to continue in school. The study further revealed that the main focus of adolescent girls and boys is to get married and start a family,

and parents encourage and even arrange marriage for their girl children in school even without their consent. In that regard, very little options to extricate themselves from the ills of polygamy even in their future life are available.

According to a recent study conducted by Dissa (2016) in Mali, children born in polygamous families are affected by challenges such as conflicts, which the current study has proven that they are a common feature of polygamous unions. Dissa (2016) further mentions that in Mali, men are the head of the family, so they can take decision any time to marry as many as four wives. The author further mentions that polygamy in both wealthy and poor families is painful for females and leads to co-wife jealousy, negative competition, unequal distribution of financial and emotional resources and can generate conflict between co-wives and between the children of different wives.

Sachiti (2011) as quoted by Chikwature and Oyedele (2016) argues that having many wives and children can create a great deal of conflict, particularly on issues to do with the payment of school fees. Children in polygamous marriages may face abuse, psychological distress, low self-esteem, and marital discord. According to Elbedour et al. (2012) the frequent marital conflict and distress can cause emotional harm to these learners through conflict, tension, unequal treatment by the polygamous father and jealousy. They are often unable to receive the necessary emotional support from their father.

According to Chikwature and Oyedele (2016), children of polygamous marriages are often faced with a confusing family structure and competition for their father's attention.

Furthermore, changes in the family structure that occur when a new wife is added may create problems in a developing child. These authors argue that these problems could challenge a developing child's sense of trust, security, and confidence. Children from polygamous marriages are influenced by the conflict and/or stress experienced by their mother. Mothers may be less affectionate and involved with their children if they are experiencing problems with their marriage or with co-wives, which ultimately affects the children.

Research has also indicated that children from polygamous marriages are exposed to increased levels of violence and conflict between their parents (Elbedour et al., 2012). These children tend to have fewer opportunities to interact with their parents and may not receive as much support as they deserve. These children may also experience jealousy and rivalry with their half siblings. A study conducted by Elbedour, Onwuegbuzie, Caridine, and Abu-Saad, (2002) indicated that children of polygamous families have slightly lower levels of cohesion than children of monogamous families. According to the same study, these children are also more likely to display psychopathological symptoms and socialisation problems.

According to Al-Krenawi (2012), learners in polygamous families usually face family stress and mental health issues than those in monogamous families. The risk of psychiatric illness is particularly acute for first or senior wives in a plural marriage and the children are undoubtedly educationally affected in such scenarios. In their study of polygamous wives living in Gaza City, Al-Krenawi et al. (1997) noted that senior wives and their children expressed great psychological distress and a sense of mourning or

loss when their husbands took second or subsequent wives. More specifically, they experienced feelings of failure and low self-esteem, feelings that were often reinforced by family and community perceptions. Senior wives also experienced other mental health difficulties, such as anxiety and depression, more frequently than junior wives and children take these feelings unconsciously into school and this affects their academic performance seriously.

A husband's marriage to a subsequent wife is often perceived as traumatic and unsettling by preceding wives and their children. This development results in a major change in the family structure and a likely decline in the financial resources and attention that a man can provide his wives and children in school. In some cases, the first wife might be in a preferred position, since she alone is recognized as a spouse by law (Duncan, 2008). Subsequent spouses married under religious law would be deprived of spousal recognition and spousal benefits, and might have to conceal their conjugal relationships out of fear of criminal prosecution and thus the learners in such families lack the expected father figure who should constantly fine tune the educational path of the family through being available for the children in terms of educational support.

Elbedour et al.'s (2012) research on adolescents is inconsistent with one of their studies examining the developmental impacts of polygamy on younger, elementary school-aged children within the same community (Elbedour et al., 2012). This latter study found that younger children tend to experience higher levels of attention deficit and behavioural problems than children from monogamous families. The researchers

posit that these younger children might be more affected by polygamous life than adolescents since they are likely to be more attached to their parents and their immediate home environments, and probably have not yet developed the necessary social networks and mental ability to cope with a stressful home environment (Elbedour et al., 2012).

Many researches on the African wives of polygamous men living in France seem to support the above finding that younger children are adversely affected by polygamy than adolescents. They noted that because mainstream French society is both unwelcoming of immigrants and disapproving of polygamy, women and their children are ostracized and isolated. In schools, children feared mockery by classmates and delinquency rates among them were reported to be relatively high (Yang, 2003).

In her study of polygamous families in Mali, Dissa (2016) found a marked increase in infant mortality rates among children in polygamous families when compared to rates for children of monogamous parents. The author noted the risk that children may fall victim to co-wife animosity. The author further reports of the animosity going to the extent that co-wives were even poisoning each other's children. An alternate theory Strassmann (2009) as quoted by Chikwature and Oyedele (2016) postulated for the differential rates of child mortality between monogamous and polygamous families is that the latter might invest less in their children, at least in the Malian context. Since polygamous fathers produce a greater number of offspring overall, each child becomes less important to his lifetime reproductive success. Moreover, polygamous



families according to the same study may be less inclined or able to pay for treatments and school fees for learners.

Although there are many negative impacts of polygamy academically, some positive impacts can be noted. According to Elbedour et al. (2012) as quoted by Chikwature and Oyedele (2016, p.26), “the benefits of getting along in a polygamous marriage include; sharing household workload, companionship and socializing with other women and greater autonomy because other wives will take care of the children and other responsibilities”. Furthermore, the author contends that relationships, between wives and husband, father and his children, and relationships among siblings improves when the relationships between wives is harmonious. According to the author, it is reported that sometimes, first wives convince their husband to marry a second wife, perhaps because they have reproduction problems. The author opines that marriage to a second or third wife is usually out of choice or love rather than necessity or force. Sachiti (2011) as quoted by Chikwature et al. (2016, p.28) has the view that an additional benefit to women is the feeling that they are fulfilling “God’s wish or destiny” by marrying into a polygamous family. Children also gain self-esteem from their tribe, which happens when families follow the traditions of the culture and society around them (Chikwature, 2016).

## **2.10 Support mechanisms for children from polygamous marriages in schools**

According to Pfeffer and Miller (2015) most research on polygamy has focused on the adults rather than the children in the family, particularly the wives. It is clear from many

studies that intervention strategies for any challenges facing children will have to start with mothers. According to the Gendernet Document (2012) which was reporting on women's economic empowerment matters for pro-poor growth higher female earnings and bargaining power translate into greater investment in children's education, health and nutrition which leads to economic growth in the long term.

Some studies are of the view that education is a critical factor in how the community responds to polygamy. According to Fenske (2012) empowering women through education may encourage them to avoid polygamous marriage. The importance of women education is also supported by the study conducted by Kachere (2010) as quoted by Chikwature et al. (2016) in Zimbabwe on how religion has destroyed the lives of young girls. The study purports that some adolescent girls as young as 14 years are married off to older men customarily.

Society seems to accept and promote under age polygamous marriages for religious reasons. Society in Marange district does not frown upon what modern society would deem as blatant violation of children's rights (Kachere, 2010). Though it is criminal to marry off these underage girls but according to the writer it is difficult to stop these marriages from happening. In order for this community to understand the damage caused by this practice on the future of its youth, attempts would have to be made to educate its people. Thobejane and Flora (2014, p.1060), also is in agreement, "polygamy is less prevalent where there are higher levels of education and urbanization".

Chikwature et al. (2016) recommends that teachers need to understand and encourage learners from polygamous families to do well in school. These authors also

recommend that such learners need to be exposed to role models with better life. Though this study supports any attempts aimed at supporting the academic performance of any learner with specific reference to children affected by polygamy, however, it distances itself from ideas that undermine the practice.

### **2.11 Theoretical frameworks of the study**

This study is guided by Children's Geographies and New Sociology of Childhood theory, Prout (2002). Children's geographies are concerned with the space and places that children occupy in the hierarchy of social relationships (Cele, 2006). The study uses this theory to understand how the phenomenon of being born of polygamous marriages, which are normally relegated as primitive and out-dated, position such children in socio-spatial relationships within the school. For example, if these learners are equitably accepted as other children born of monogamous marriages or if these children have other social or academic barriers that they must contend with due to them being born of polygamous marriages. Such social positioning, which involves the power laden spaces and places in these children lives is what is referred to here as the geographies (Campbell –Sills et al., 2009).

New sociology of childhood studies is concerned not only with how children are positioned in socio-spatial hierarchy in human relationships. Instead, this theory is more interested in the creative and innovative ways through which children navigate, negotiate, subvert or even transcend their positioning in socio-spatial hierarchical relationships (Holloway & Valentine, 2004). This is because the new sociology of

childhood studies views children as active members of society who need to be understood and respected for who they are. Unlike the dominant discourses of childhood which regard children as immature, adults in the making, sexually innocent and so forth, to a point where they are not involved in the aspects which affect their lives, the theory recognises children as agentic and autonomous beings.

The new sociology of childhood studies advocates for children to be respected as human beings in their own right who do have the agency to determine their own lives (Morojele & Muthukrishna, 2011). This theory is used in this study to understand how children affected by polygamy directly or indirectly navigate and negotiate the social positioning relegated to them by their society, peers and teachers to determine their lives in the school. The aim is to learn from how children navigate their challenges, and use this as a basis to inform strategies aimed at improving the quality of schooling experiences for these children in order to support their education if it is at all necessary to do so.

## **2.12 Conclusion**

The above review of literature of the subject of polygamy found that society may be advancing towards a direction that seem incompatible with phenomenon like polygamy it seems be resilient and very present in our day to day life. It transpires that though strides have been put in place to promote women and support them in various aspects, they still lag behind.

Looking at the number of studies that have researched the subject, one can only draw a conclusion that the subject at hand will add value to the academic body of knowledge

and help society have an objective outlook. Even though it appears to be belonging to the by gone era, but it still finds a way to exist within societal space. South Africa has experienced major changes in the political landscape, economic transformations and so forth and yet we find ourselves still struggling to deal with phenomenon that is as old as mankind.

It appears that many studies conducted on the subject give an impression that polygamy has negatively impacted society. However, other writers are supporting the practice for various reasons. We still have a proportion of women who willingly enter into this kind of marriage today. This is an indication that there are many other factors at play where polygamy is concerned. Whether there is no space for such phenomenon to exist and whether it is up to the consent of mankind for such phenomenon to exist as per human rights activists is yet to be seen.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter was concerned with theoretically laying the foundation for the current study, discussing the debates in the field and how other researchers view the topic in question. The present chapter is concerned with the research approach from which the researcher views the topic in question, down to the methods used at answering the research questions. Scientific research differs from other forms of knowledge production in the sense that it must be credible and transparent regarding how data was produced including all the processes surrounding its production. In this regard, I tried to ensure that all the processes from the beginning down to their finality prove beyond reasonable doubt that they were not simply constructed from the researchers own subjective bias or belief system, to increase the credibility of the research findings.

This chapter therefore explains how the researcher made decisions on the research approach down to research tools used such as research methodology, the sampling procedures data-generation methods, types of interview methods selected etc. It also describes how the data collected was analysed, how trustworthy the study is, which focuses on issues of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability, ethical issues, limitations of the study, and finally the conclusion.

### **3.2 Research paradigm**

The perception of reality is quite a complex process if one reads many scholars who have written about arriving at a certain truth. According to Krauss (2005), the term epistemology is the philosophy of knowledge or how we come to know. Whilst ontology involves the philosophy of reality, epistemology addresses how we come to know that reality, methodology identifies the particular practices used to attain knowledge. Ogilvy (2006) and Venkatesh (2007) as quoted by Aliyu, Bello, Kasim, & Martin (2014), reveal that paradigms are more concerned with models, mythology, frame of mind and descriptions.

Neuman (2006) also contends that a paradigm is a general organising framework for theory and research that includes basic assumptions, key issues, models of quality research and methods for seeking answers. For Jonker and Pennink (2010), a research paradigm is a set of fundamentals and principles as to how the world is observed, which serves as a thinking framework that guides the behaviour of the researcher. A research paradigm represents a particular world view that explicitly defines for the researcher who carries that view what is acceptable to research and how to carry out research (Christiansen, Bertram, & Land, 2010). After carefully considering all the research paradigms on offer, because the study attempted to understand a particular social reality, it became clear that this study fitted in perfectly with the interpretive qualitative approach.

The central endeavour in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). These scholars contend that “to retain the integrity of the phenomena being investigated, efforts are made to get inside the person and to understand from within” (Cohen et al., 2011, p.17). The imposition of the external is resisted, since this reflects the viewpoint of the observer as opposed to that of the actor directly involved. In tandem with the objectives of this study, Cohen et al. (2011) state that, interpretivism, is characterised by its concern for the individual and views the social world as being much softer and personal in nature.

Researchers who utilise the interpretivist approach select from a wide range of recent and emerging techniques, such as participant observation and personal constructs (Babbie & Mouton, 2013). These personal constructs were relevant in the current study which was seeking to get inside the participants whereby they shared their life and family experiences. Furthermore, it also required that the participants dig deep in their hearts and share feelings, emotions, thoughts and actions that might be sensitive and very personal.

The advantage of this approach is that the researcher is not able to influence or know much about the responses of the participants as the experiences are strictly those of the participants. No one can claim to neither know nor understand someone’s experiences, even those experienced by one’s own children. This approach therefore enabled the researcher to delve deep in the participants’ lives to elicit information about their experiences on the topic as children. The interpretivists’ view, does not aim



to predict what people will do, but rather to describe how people make sense of their realities (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Learners were therefore given enough opportunity to express themselves on what they understood about the topic and how they felt about it. The researcher ensured that learners were not influenced in anyway by her views and convictions on the topic.

### **3.3 Researcher positioning**

The researcher has been motivated by pure observation and contact with families and students who come from polygamous homes. It was out of curiosity to find out at this day and age how young people view polygamy and how they are directly or indirectly affected by polygamy. It is interesting to note that although polygamy dates back to the origins of mankind, but it is still practiced in many marriages in South Africa. Mkhize and Zondi (2015) indicate that in recent years, polygamy has become very relevant, visible and controversial in South Africa and the public has been vociferous about it.

### **3.4 Sampling procedures/techniques**

There comes a time for the researcher to decide on the sample size to be used for the study. Babbie and Mouton (2001) contend that the purpose of sampling is to select a set of elements from a population in such a way that descriptions of those elements accurately portray the parameters of the total population from which the elements are selected. In simple terms, sampling is when scientists select a few people for study and discover things that apply to hundreds of millions of people not studied (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). However, in qualitative research, representativeness is not a primary

concern in selecting participants (not sampling) because results generated are not to be generalized. Polkinghorne (2005) even discourages qualitative researchers to use the term sampling and suggests that they must talk about selection of participants since sampling is mostly used in quantitative research and carries connotations of representativeness.

After consulting several sources, it became apparent that the sampling method that was suitable for this study is purposive non-probability sampling. Carter and Little (2007) assert that qualitative research samples purposively. Purposive sampling is method is where the researcher samples elements judged to be typical, representative or relevant to the study (Ary et al., 2002, p.169). This sampling method was suitable for this study because participants were selected on purpose and not randomly. The researcher made a concerted effort to select participants who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation, either directly or indirectly.

The authors above however, warn that the critical question in purposive sampling is the extent to which judgment can be relied on to arrive at a typical sample. Conrad and Serlin (2006, p.419) also mention that a full description of the setting or settings being studied, including why the researcher selected the case is critical in making a case for transferability in qualitative research. The authors further mention that it is good to ask whether the description includes only what is relevant. The researcher made a concerted effort to ensure that the sample meets the criteria as mentioned by the authors.

### **3.5 Research methodology**

#### ***3.5.1 Qualitative research methodology***

The study adopted qualitative research methodology as the study design. Qualitative research methodology was relevant since the experiences under investigation were experienced by learners themselves; hence it was crucial to conduct the research in the natural setting of social actors (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). These authors argue that, unlike positivism which focuses on process rather than outcome, the qualitative research methodology, places more emphasis on the actors' perspective. They contend that the primary aim is in-depth narrative descriptions and understanding of actions and events which form the basis for children's experiences in respect of the objectives of the study. They further state that the main concern of the qualitative research approach is to understand social interactions in terms of a specific context rather than attempting to generalise to some theoretical population. Whilst the research process is often inductive in its approach, resulting in the generation of new hypotheses, the qualitative researcher is the main instrument in the research process (Babbie & Mouton, 2001, p.270; Kvale, 1996).

Lastly, these authors stipulate that qualitative research design in its quest for knowledge seeks to engage in detail with the object of study and uses a small number of cases to be studied from a larger group. This has allowed the current study to use flexible design features which allowed the researcher to adapt and make changes to the study accordingly. This was perfectly in line with the current study and has enabled an in-depth engagement with the participant in detail. It has also allowed for a more

profound understanding of the actions and events that informed the participants' experiences in their specific individual contexts.

### **3.5.2 *Narrative inquiry***

According to Lit and Shek (2007), narrative research is a term that subsumes a group of approaches that in turn rely on the written or spoken words or visual representation of individuals. The authors contend that these approaches typically focus on the lives of individuals as told through their own stories. Because of its nature, this study adopted what Bell (2002) refers to as a narrative approach to research. The intention was to provide space for the participants to tell their stories concerning the subject matter as they understood it whether they were directly or indirectly affected.

According to Bell (2002), narrative inquiry has been used across many disciplines and research areas, to establish the truth under investigation. Langellier and Peterson (2004), state that a narrative inquiry is most appropriate when the researcher wants to examine deeply personal accounts of people's lives experiences. These authors further indicate that through stories, participant's reflections and interpretations enable them to reconstruct own images of their realities and these may be images that they were previously unaware of. This approach was viewed as appropriate for this study because the topic studied is both personal and sensitive, especially for those children who are directly affected.

### **3.6 Study participants**

The study population is defined as that aggregation of elements from which the sample is selected (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). These authors further state that in practicality one is seldom able to guarantee that every element meeting the theoretical definitions laid down has a chance of being selected in the sample. Cohen and Manion (2011) contend that the specifications of the population to which the enquiry is addressed, affects decisions that the researcher must make both about sampling and resources. They also seem to have a similar stance in that this issue is not as simple as it appears. They argue that usually the criteria by which population are specified are difficult to operationalize. They continue to say that populations vary considerably in their accessibility. Bearing all these factors in mind, it is apparent that the study population needs to be given a careful consideration.

The study population was selected from grade eight to grade ten learners who showed interest in the topic and were willing to participate in the study. Participants were drawn from one rural school in KwaZulu-Natal. The researcher then selected a smaller group from the original group i.e. those who seemed to be more knowledgeable and affected either directly or indirectly. Some learners were coming from polygamous families and some were relatives or neighbours to polygamous families. Cohen et al, (2011) caution that the weakness of purposive sampling is that the researcher cannot select participants that do not have specific knowledge of the phenomenon to take part in the study. This is true for this study because participants needed to be aware of the phenomenon at hand and hence this selection method.

### 3.7 Methods of data collection

As mentioned earlier, the study adopted a qualitative methodology which according to Mertler (2009) utilises a much broader, more holistic approach to data collection. The author further mentions that qualitative method does not attempt to control or manipulate any variables, the researchers simply take the world as it exists and as they find it. Marshall and Rossman (2011) concur by saying that qualitative research is more focused, and is concerned with quality, human events, beliefs, feelings, emotions and experiences within naturalistic settings. Data was collected using semi structured group interviews, focus group interviews and individual interviews.

Neuman (2011) mentions that the data in qualitative study should be directed at discussions and the researcher must ask deep and relevant questions that would produce quality data. It is no coincidence that this methodology utilises interviews as one of its data collection instruments. Cohen et al. (2011), is of the view that interviews range from formal interviews in which set of questions are asked and the answers recorded on a standardised schedule, through to less formal interviews in which the interviewer is free to modify the sequence of questions, change the wording, explain them or add to them, to the completely informal interview where the interviewer may have many key issues which are raised in conversational style. The above authors define interviews as a two person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research relevant information, and focused by him/her on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation. It is an unusual method in that it involves the gathering of data through

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### ***3.7.1 Semi structured group interviews***

The type of interview that was used is the face-to-face semi structured group interviews. This type of interview was used to set the tone and select from the larger group those that seem to know about the phenomenon in question. Conrad and Serlin (2006) contend that data gathered from face to face interviews for qualitative research have the potential to yield a gold mine of insights into the people's lives and situations. The authors further mention that semi structured interviews are when participants are asked a set of questions but the interviewer may also probe as needed for additional information (Conrad & Serlin, 2006).

Semi-structured interviews, according to Merriam (1998), permit a researcher to respond to a situation as it unfolds and probe where necessary. Churton (2000) also states that semi-structured interviews tend to provide valid data, thus creating opportunities for reflection, probing and clarifying ambiguity. Cohen et al. (2011) further indicate that semi-structured interviews allow flexibility, providing the person being interviewed the freedom to relax and give more information as the researcher



probes for more responses. The researcher according to these authors, allows participants to respond in the language in which they are most comfortable.

According to Nieuwenhuis (2007) semi-structured interviews are useful for producing rich descriptive data that help to understand how participants construct knowledge and their reality. The author further states that semi-structured interview is commonly used in research projects to validate data emerging from other sources. Considering the sensitivity of the topic, interviews were much more suitable for this study because people are much more willing to talk than to write Best & Kahn (1986). It was easier therefore to establish rapport, clarify the question, which was otherwise misunderstood, and most importantly, the participants had a better understanding of the researcher using non-verbal communication. Ary et al. (2002: 382) are also in support of interviews and mention that with interviews the response rate is very high at 90 percent or better.

Although the single group interview conducted was meant to purposively identify participants, the data gathered was not discarded. The initial focus group was conducted with twenty-one participants, consisting of nine boys and eleven girls. The researcher was on the lookout for those who actively participated, were interested and had the knowledge of the subject. Thereafter, the number was reduced to eleven participants. It comprised of six girls and five boys. The researcher utilised field notes to write down the information discussed and voice recorder for retrieval at a later stage.

### **3.7.2 Focus group interviews**

According to Salkind (2012), a focus group is an interview of a group of participants facilitated by a researcher. Thus, a focus group interview according to this author could be described as a purposeful discussion of a specific topic or related topics, taking place between people with similar backgrounds and/or common interests. These interactions bring various viewpoints together. Focus group discussion with the Grade eight to ten learners was conducted to get a collective view of their experiences regarding polygamy. Niewenhuis (2007) contends that a focus group is a two-way conversation in which interviewers ask the participants questions to generate data and the participants also ask questions to increase their understanding.

According to Cassey (2000), the advantage of group interviews is that they draw out a range of opinions and perspectives. The author further contends that focus group interviews access collective accounts and participants are encouraged to discuss and interact with each other rather than the researcher. The role of the researcher is, in a sense, that of a facilitator. Thus, as Kvale (1996) and Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) explain, participants are engaged in an on-going process of collaborative meaning-making on a topic of mutual interest. The researcher conducted three focus group interviews and six individual interviews. The focus groups did not separate girls with boys, as the groups were quite comfortable to discuss the subject together.

### **3.7.3 Individual interviews**

Participants were given an opportunity to share their individual experiences of the phenomena at hand. It is only natural that some people respond better individually than in a group. It was for this reason that once the participants were selected, a one-on-one session was also conducted with each participant. It allowed learners to talk about their experiences and understanding of the topic. The researcher had to probe for details and clarity where necessary. The researcher encouraged participants to elaborate, give accounts and examples of their experiences whether they had direct or indirect experience of the phenomena. The interviews were conducted in *IsiZulu* and lasted for approximately 15 minutes each.

### **3.8 Trustworthiness of the study**

As a researcher, one might be tempted to manipulate the process as it may not be an easy journey. This is where these two terms come into play to avoid that manipulation and trust so that the research findings can be valid and reliable. According to Conrad and Serlin (2006), findings are reliable when various researchers using the same approach would find the same result. Lincoln and Guba (1985) as quoted by Conrad and Serlin (2006) contend that qualitative researchers establish the trustworthiness of their findings by demonstrating that they credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable.

The researcher employed the concept of 'triangulation' to ensure that data collected is valid. Shenton (2004) cautions researchers that they need to meet the criterion of dependability, which according to the author is difficult in qualitative work. The author further mentions that researchers should at least strive to enable a future investigator

to repeat the study. Finally, the author cautions that, to achieve confirmability, researchers must take steps to demonstrate that findings emerge from the data and not their own predispositions. The researcher in the current study ensured that the data is purely the views of the participants and was not manipulated in any way and that if another investigator were to repeat the research, they would arrive at the same conclusion.

According to Cohen and Manion (1989) triangulation is described as the cross checking of the existence of certain phenomena and the veracity of individual accounts by gathering data from many informants and many sources and subsequently comparing one account with another to produce as full and balanced account of the participants' experiences in the study as possible. The data collected from semi-structured group interviews, focus groups and individual interviews were matched and crossed checked to ensure that the information that appears in all instruments matches.

### **3.9 Data analysis**

Data collected by any means e.g. questionnaires, interviews, diaries or any other methods mean very little until they are analysed and evaluated. Cohen et al. (2011) and Maree (2010) describe data analysis as a close or systematic study, or the separation of a whole into its parts. These authors further argue that, in qualitative data analysis, the researcher must make sense of the data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, by noting patterns, themes, categories and irregularities. Bell (1993) mentions that it is all a case of working within your limitations and selecting research methods which are suitable for the task and which can be readily analysed,

interpreted and presented. This author further argues that a hundred separate pieces of interesting information will mean nothing to the researcher or the reader unless they are placed in categories and that there can be dangers in placing too much reliance on pre-conceived ideas.

Data analysis, in simple terms involves organising, accounting for and explaining the data and making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns , themes, categories and regularities, Cohen et al. (2011). Another content analysis technique used in the study is known as thematic analysis. This is an approach described as a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data, Vaismoradi et al. (2013). According to Ary et al. (2002), the analysis provides evidence that supports or fails the hypotheses of the study.

In the case of this study, the data collected consisted of tape recorder and field notes. This information was organised, categorised, described and interpreted so that it has a meaning which addressed the study enquiry. Robson (2002) also states that naïve researchers may be injured by unforeseen problems with qualitative data which may occur during collection of data where overload is a constant danger the author contends that the main difficulty is in their analysis. The study utilised a software package called the thematic approach. This approach is characterised with using words or phrase frequencies and inter-correlations as key methods of determining the relative importance of terms and concepts, Robson (2002). This analysis was appropriate for the current study because of the type of data collected; it is full of words, constructs and thoughts and therefore requires an approach that has a human element in it.

### **3.10 Ethical considerations**

In the introduction, the researcher alluded to the fact that research differs from fiction in the sense that it must comply with certain ethical standards to be credible. This is more so in instances where children are involved, or the study is of sensitive nature like in health-related studies. Morrow (2008) stresses that research with child participants requires negotiation with adult gatekeepers before children can be approached for their consent. Ethical issues refer to moral principles or rules of behaviour that researchers must take into consideration before, and when conducting research, particularly with the research involving humans (Cohen et al., 2011).

It is therefore of vital importance that researchers follow certain ethical principles when conducting a study (Christiansen et al., 2010). Ethical principles should include the right to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity, the right to withdraw or terminate participation and the right to access information (Neuman, 2014). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) have outlined four guidelines to ensure that researchers are ethically considerate toward the participants in their research:

- Informed consent (subjects must voluntarily agree to participate after being informed about the nature and results of the research)
- Avoidance of deception (deliberate misrepresentation must be avoided)
- Respect for privacy and confidentiality (the participants' identities and the research location must be protected) and
- Accuracy (the data must be free from omissions and contrivance).

The authors maintain that anonymity and confidentiality are the cornerstones of academic research. Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014) concur with these authors, and they define confidentiality as the agreement between the researcher and the participant as to what may be done with the data. They further state that anonymity is the absence of identifiers in the study. Prior to commencing the study, I applied for ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's (UKZN) Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, and was granted (see appendix1). Permission to conduct this study was also sought from the school principal, parents, teachers and learner participant (appendix2-5). All participants were assured that participation was voluntary, their proper names will never be used and that they were free to withdraw at any time should they have feel uncomfortable during the course of the study.

### **3.11 Limitations of the study**

The challenges encountered included the unwillingness of some learners to share the information with the researcher. This is a sensitive topic and some participants were somehow uncomfortable to participate in the study. It transpired that some learners, even those who were part of the study, were not free to talk about their families and they did not want to divulge the fact that they came from polygamous families as they felt it was a private matter. The data was collected just after examinations and learners were not in the mood to do some work. Parents too were not willing to allow their children to go to school during this period as some learners were getting involved in bad behaviour. The researcher had to write letters to request permission from parents

to release their children to come to school. Lastly, some learners were either not interested or did not know much about the subject especially the younger children from grade eight. This was experienced during the first phase of selection, but finally the researcher managed to get a good sample from the higher grades.

### **3.12 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter is the crux of the entire study. It is a chapter that separates research studies from fiction or creative novelty. The study based its foundation on the interpretivist paradigm, which according to Henning, Rensburg and Smith (2004) allows for the participants to function as “knowledge systems” as they recollected their childhood life experiences and shared their narratives. Children in this study were given a voice to express their views and opinions on the topic in question.

Culturally, children are seldom heard especially in societies where polygamy is practiced. This is evident even in the previous chapter where many studies cover the role polygamy plays in their schooling, but we hardly hear through their own voices. The perceptions come either from teachers or their mothers. Many children therefore suffer in silence and have no platform to voice their feelings and opinions especially in such matters. It is for this reason that I chose this paradigm which automatically suggested this kind of methodology. It allowed my participants to share their experiences and their perceptions of the subject in question. It is important to note that qualitative methodology is subjective but so are people’s experiences. Each one of us perceives reality differently from one another. Hence, the methodology and methods



used in this study only allowed for context specific, not generalizable findings to be gathered, as indicated in the following chapter four.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The aim of this study was to have a deeper understanding of children's constructions and experiences of polygamy, the effects of polygamy on children's experiences of schooling and to learn from children's understanding and experiences. It also sought to explore ways through which schooling experiences of children affected by polygamy could be enhanced within the broader agenda of social justice, inclusivity and equality in education.

The previous chapter addressed the research methodology, research methods, and trustworthiness of the study, data analysis and ethical considerations. This chapter presents the findings of the study, which were guided and have been thematically organised based on the objectives of the study, children's understanding of polygamy, children's experiences of polygamy and children's opinions on polygamy. The chapter also addresses the factors that affect understanding and experiences of polygamy in this school, as well as the lessons that could be learnt from the above to support schooling experiences of learners affected by polygamy.

### **4.2 Learners' understanding of polygamy**

Children are the centre of this study and therefore it is vital for the researcher to establish how they understand the subject at hand. This section, therefore discusses how children understand polygamy as a concept and what influences their understanding like the media, peers, community structures and the school.

#### **4.2.1 Polygamy as married man with multiple wives**

The study found that the majority of children have similar interpretations of polygamy. Majority of the participants' interpreted polygamy as a male partner married to multiple female partners. The other participants interpreted it as male or female partner married to multiple male or female partners. They were aware that in today's society, even women are allowed to marry multiple partners. Their influence according to the participants was attributed to the local popular soapie, *Generations*. The soap opera depicts a woman (Karabo Moroka) being married to two men at the same time.

*Polygamy is whereby the man of the house has more than one wife even the women usually does polygamy just like Karabo in generations [Anathi, girl aged 15].*

In terms of gender there seems to be no relationship between boys and girls. It appears that both girls and boys interpreted polygamy as a man married to multiple partners. However, there seems to be correlation where roles are reversed. More girls than boys defined polygamy as male or female partners being married to multiple partners. The data below from the questionnaire further illustrate this:

*Polygamy is a family situation where a man marries more than one wife and they stay together in the same household [Nikeziwe, girl, aged 17].*

*I think polygamy means one man with many wives, due to many reasons [Bonginkosi, boy, aged 17].*

The participants' interpretation of polygamy is dominantly a situation where a man marries many wives, could have been influenced by the African (in this case Zulu)

tradition, which sanctioned polygamy as part of the Zulu people's cultural custom. However, with the advent of democracy, gender equality and other influences such as the media, it appears that some participants began to conceptualise polygamy as also involving a woman marrying many men, as further illustrated below.

#### ***4.2.2 Polygamy as married women with multiple husbands***

Other participants understood polygamy in terms of what could normally be understood as polyandry. Their view was that even women can be in polygamous relationships, as the South African law advocates equality between men and women. The central point that cut across these children's understanding was that marrying more wives or more husbands is a matter of choice generally made by the person who wishes to marry. There is very little mention of the consent by the other married partners or that of the person agreeing to get married, as illustrated below:

*By my understanding, polygamy is whereby a man is married to two or more wives, and if he is a King, he has a choice of taking more wives and this is very acceptable in the communities. It is even enshrined in the constitution. Even a woman can have more husbands [Anathi, girl, aged, 15].*

*Polygamy is when a married man decides to marry more than one wife and if it is a wife that is polyandry, she will be married to more than one husband*

[Londeka, girl, aged 17].

The participants in this study showed a complex understanding of this subject as they approached polygamy from a human rights perspective. Some even mentioned the

need to expand our understanding of polygamy to include the possibility of women being generally allowed to marry many husbands if they so wish. The following was said:

*Polygamy is when for instance a man has more than one wife. Now even women can be polygamists because there is gender equality. Before the 21<sup>st</sup> century, only men were allowed to be polygamous [Phindile, girl, aged 15].*

The above findings indicate that the participants in this study understood polygamy from an egalitarian point of view; one of equality between men and women. The dominant view appears to be one that if a man can marry many wives, why could it not be socially acceptable for a woman to marry many wives? Such a view is an indication of the participants' consciousness regarding issues of gender equality and equal opportunities between women and men. We need this kind of critical consciousness among the children; it holds hope for shaping the future constructions of polygamy in ways that are responsive to the imperative for gender equality.

#### **4.2.3 Learners' views on polygamy**

The participants held divergent views regarding the acceptability of polygamy in their communities. In fact, most of the girls were against the practice while there were a few boys who also expressed their dislike for the practice. Most of the participants who disliked the practice mainly cited two major concerns. One reason being the unequal treatment of both the wives and children depending on who the favourite is or who is senior or junior, and this was mainly regulated by the standing of their mother in the hierarchy of a polygamous family set up.

*In my opinion as a learner, I see polygamy as something that is not good. This is because if a man has many wives, he will not be able to love all of them the same way. There will always be that favourite wife amongst all the wives* [Dumsile, girl aged 16].

However, when it came to the quality of treatment amongst wives, the logic of seniority by virtue of being the first wife in the marriage was not clearly defined. In some instances, younger wives enjoyed better treatment simply by being the newer wives in the family. This was only limited to the unofficial socially informed treatment. Yet, when it came to the dominantly accepted way of treating wives in a polygamous family, the first or senior wives had more social rights and protection than the younger ones. As illustrated below, older wives by virtue of their position enjoyed better treatment.

*In my opinion, I do not think polygamy is a good thing, there is no peaceful co-existence at home because children tend to quarrel amongst each other especially those from the first wife, and they are the ones who tend to cause trouble* [Phindile girl, aged 15].

*I do not like polygamy because even if the father loves his women, striking a balance and treating them the same way is always a problem. That leads to family feuds as wives fight for attention from the husband* [Bonginkosi, boy, aged 17].

*I do not think polygamy is the right thing because there is no peace, most of the time family members quarrel* [Andile, boy, aged 16].

The inability of fathers to treat their families the same way is, according to the participants the main cause of family feuds ravaging polygamous families, which inherently goes down to generations. Many families go to the extent of bewitching each other as they fight for inheritances.

*When a man has more than one wife, he will have a favourite wife. This causes hatred amongst wives and they end up bewitching each other trying to get attention from the husband* [Snazo, girl, aged 16].

The second reason cited by participants why they were against polygamy is the issue of illnesses such as HIV and AIDS. Some of the participants raised HIV/AIDS as a serious concern for them where multiple partners are concerned.

*I do not think polygamy is the right thing to do; there are many sexually transmitted diseases if you engage in unprotected sex* [Nikeziwe, girl, aged 17].

Most girl participants expressed their concern over whether women consent to their husbands taking second wives as they felt that financial demands force women to stay in these marriages even if they are not in agreement with the decision of taking another wife. They felt that most men are stronger financially by comparison to their female counterparts; hence they thought that women end up being forced to remain in polygamous marriages.

*I don't see anything right about polygamy because other men take many wives because they have money and some women they are forced to marriage they do not have power. The women see maybe she cannot take care of her children and she is forced to stay even if she sees it is tough* [Mpho, boy, aged 15].

*Yes, they get permission but at times it looks like they are being forced because the father would say that if you do not agree then you are the one who is going to leave. The wife will realise that she will not be able to go and leave her children, and there will also be pressure in terms of who is going to take care of her children* [Xolani, boy, aged 15].

The above findings indicate contestations regarding seniority among the wives, who get treated better than others, whose children enjoy better rights than whose children as some of the challenges surrounding polygamous marriages. The creation of favourite amongst the wives, in the form of who get more attention appears to mire polygamy as a practically contaminated form of marriage. This is particularly so due to contestations amongst the wives over positions of power and dominance within the marriage system. When poorly managed these contestations could be a potential source of grief and unhappiness associated with this form of marriage, affecting not only the married wives, but their children and those around them as well.

#### ***4.2.4 Learners' views and reasons in support of polygamy***

Some of the girls were in support of polygamy for different reasons. Some think that such a union helps in situations where the mother dies and children do not lose a mother figure in their family lives.

*My grandfather had two wives, one died and the other one took the children and raised them as her own children but if he was alone that would never happen* [Nikeziwe, girl, aged 17].

*I am in support of polygamy because I will have many mothers and it helps to have many mothers because you will get different ideas* [Anathi, boy, aged 15].

Whilst many participants took a certain stance whether they support polygamy or against it, some think it has both positive and negative sides.

*For women polygamy gives the opportunity of marriage so it is good because men can take more than two wives* [Nikeziwe, girl, aged 17].



*I think polygamy is a good thing though it is hard sometimes, but all families have problems. Men take more than one wife out of choice, but one good thing is that he cannot take another wife without permission from the first wife. She is the one who makes decisions [Andile, boy, aged 17].*

Some of the boys however, were not against the practice as they felt that it is better than cheating. They were brave enough to mention that they are fond of women and did not see themselves with one partner in their lifetime. When asked whether they want to practice polygamy when they grow older, the boys mentioned that they did not like the idea of being confined to one partner; they wanted to have the choice of having sex with different partners.

*Polygamy is important because I do not like the idea of being married to one partner; I want to be able to have sex with different partners*

[Siphelele, boy, aged 14].

*I would like to practice polygamy when I am older because I am fond of women and I find myself attracted to many girls [Xolani boy, aged 17].*

*I think it is better to be in a polygamous marriage than to have mistresses or side chicks*

[Mpho boy, aged 16].

Some boys were of the view that there is an imbalance in the ratio between males and females and therefore think polygamy will resolve this;

*The reason why I would like to be a polygamist when I grow up is because there are too many women out there as compared to men [Siphelele, boy, aged 14].*

They think all women want to get married but there is not enough man to marry all of them.

*It is every woman's dream to get married one day and that if my first wife is unable to bear children, I will not leave her, but I will find another one who will bear children for me to increase my family [Xolani boy, aged 15].*

Children also attribute polygamy to African cultural customs and therefore do not see anything wrong with it.

*This is a culture where a man has more than one wife. Even the Zulu king practices polygamy because it is our tradition, inherited from our forefathers*  
[Sphelele, boy, aged 14].

*By my understanding polygamy is whereby a man is married to two or more wives, and if he is a king, he has a choice of taking more wives and this is very acceptable in the communities, it is lawful and part of our culture*  
[Anathi, girl, aged 16].

The findings indicate that polygamy was deeply infused in heterosexual gender relations where a man may marry more than one wife. There seemed to be no contestation in how the participants viewed this. The unequal gender relationships in how this phenomenon is constructed are clearly ordaining power and privilege to males who are thought to have the prerogative to have many wives when the same is not the case with the women. In the *isiZulu* culture, although the husbands were the ones to have many wives, there was an emphasis on obtaining consent from the existing wife or wives on whether the husband can have more other wives. Perhaps

this was meant to avert the absolute power and privilege that men derived from this by ensuring that the wives' views were respected in the processes.

However, the wives' involvement in deciding, agreeing or even actively participating in the recruitment of new wives did not absolve the question of male supremacy as a principle of polygamy. Indeed, the extent to which wives stood to benefit from their husbands getting more wives is contested and questionable, as it generally does not matter who participates in the recruitment, if the end result is men with many wives. There is no way that this scenario could be justified as empowering and reformative for women involved in polygamy, as it could well be understood as a tactful way in which women labour and sexuality is exploited.

Delius and Glaser (2002) as quoted by Mkhize and Zondi (2015) argue that throughout the twentieth century, observers of Black sexuality in South Africa have assumed a close connection between the tradition of polygamy and contemporary male promiscuity. Polygamy, according to Pato (2010) as quoted by Mkhize and Zondi (2015, p.21) is "purely a male-serving situation with no gain for women". It appears that, what was aimed at addressing and redressing social ills of society such as balancing the marriage equation, avoiding the existence of illegitimate children etc., through the practice of polygamy, ended up being abused by those who wanted to serve their own interests.

### 4.3 Learners' experiences of polygamy

The study found that children experience polygamy in different ways. It is evident from data gathered that, although most children understood polygamy very well, not all of them have a first-hand experience. Some knew about it from their extended families, relatives, from neighbours or from their peers. This section attempts to answer question two, namely: What are learners' experiences of polygamy in one KwaZulu-Natal high school?

*I do not like to be in a polygamous marriage when I am older because I have observed that sometimes it is not nice to be in this kind of marriage, it happens that the man will have one favourite amongst the wives. That causes wives to hate and bewitch each other*

[Snazo, girl, aged 16].

*I do not like the experience I had when I was part of a polygamous family, because our father would cater more for the children of the junior mother. We would ask for materials such as new clothes, for example and our father would tell us that there was no money left, would remind us that we were not the only children in the family. Apart from that, there is always competition amongst the children based on the mothers' seniority, and the younger mother is perceived as a new comer who is not as well accepted by the children of the senior wife*

[Dumsile, girl, aged 16].

*I do not like to be in a polygamous marriage in my adulthood because I have learnt that fathers are not able to treat their children the same way. Children are not able to get the proper care, love and attention they deserve from their father and that leads to hatred and jealousy amongst the children. Some children are not able to contain themselves as it sometimes happens that some mothers will ill- treat their step-children and that causes friction in the family* [Phindile, girl aged 15].

*I do not like to be in a polygamous marriage when I become of age because from my experience, wives tend to suspect each other, that one is bewitching the other. Furthermore, usually there is always a favourite wife amongst the wives and those that are not favoured will lead a difficult life. It also happens that children are not treated the same way which causes friction in the family*  
[Nikeziwe, girl, aged 17].

*I do not like polygamy because I think it causes a lot of problems especially once there are too many children. Each wife would want to put the interests of her children first at the expense of the others and this causes abuse on the side of the children*  
[Sphelele, boy, aged 14].

*If I ask for something she would just say that she will start with her children before she does it for us. However, the other one would just do it for us. This is the one we got along with amongst my fathers' wives but unfortunately, she died a few years later*  
[Bonginkosi, boy aged 14].

*Life is not so good because if we ask for something from our father's first wife she does not do it for us, as she would say that she must do it for her children first. As a result, we as children came with a plan that if anyone of us needed something we will discuss it amongst ourselves first. This has helped us ensure that there is fairness in the household as we end up taking turns to get the things we need. We have also learned to hustle for things we need ourselves in case our mother is unable to provide for what we need. We have learnt to resort to this option because our father will often say he will either feed us or give us the things we need*  
[Mpho, boy, aged 15].

When participants who came from polygamous families were asked if they were comfortable to talk about it with their friends and peers, most of them felt that they were comfortable since polygamy was acceptable in their communities.

*I am open to talk about my family because I come from a big family and do not have many friends. My family consists of 14 children including my aunts' children who are staying with us. We are mostly boys and we get along as a family. If we talk, we are comfortable even if our friends are around, we do not have a problem* [Bonginkosi, boy aged 17].

When participants were asked what they would like to change in their families if given a chance, it was clear that many participants were not comfortable with their family set up and they wished they could change it. It was also clear that the issues they were faced with were brought on by parents or siblings and they wished that parents could listen to them.

*I would like the woman that is married to my father to accept that we get along with her children because we have the same father anyway. She does not want us to have a good relationship as siblings. She does not like us as the children who are born outside marriage. Even if we come to visit, she would chase us away* [Londeka, girl, aged 15].

*I wish that if my father would give us a chance to talk to him as we are boys. As boys, we have certain issues which we cannot raise with our mother. Our father is never willing to listen to us and he always refers us to our mother. He tells us that there is nothing he wants to hear from us he will only hear from our mother the time they are together. You find that I can't talk with my father about my problems and I end up talking to my brothers* [Bonginkosi, boy aged 17].

*I wish that everyone in my family were born within the marriage and not out of wedlock. I think that it is the main reason we do not get along as children. Some of us are born outside marriage and some are born inside marriage and that causes us not to get along as family members and children* [Dumisile, girl, aged 16].

When participants were asked if they knew children living under polygamy, and what are their living conditions were like, participants indicated that they know them and living conditions are mostly not so good from their observation. They were of the view that the relations between the parents and siblings were strained and that the treatment between parents and children differs from house to house.

*I know children from polygamous families from my community. Most of them don't look happy, while some of them look happy, of course. What I observed about them is that they like to gossip about one another. They seem to be largely divided as a family* [Anathi, girl, aged 15].

*I think that the parents do not get along because in my friend's household, the mother will be angry with the father after having visited the other wife. My friend has even resorted to staying permanently with his father* [Mpho, boy, aged 15].

*I think that the life of my friend who is coming from a polygamous marriage is not so good. I have observed that my friend has a negative attitude towards the step parent. This is sometimes manifest in the way they speak, for example; when the step parent is talking to my friend she will speak anyhow, and you will see that she is not the biological parent but if she is speaking with the biological parent you will see that the attitude changes* [Andile, boy, aged 16].

*I have observed that sometimes fathers do not love their children the same way and that causes hatred and conflict among the children. I think some children even get abused because of lack of care from fathers as they do not seem to have enough time with all their children* [Snazo, girl, aged 16].

*In polygamous settings have observed that children are not treated the same way for example some wear expensive clothes and others do not. Other children they don't live with the father but when they are visiting, you can see the way they dress that they get all they want compared to others we are living with* [Xolani boy, aged 15].

In addition to the above, the participants further indicated the need for parents to manage their marriage commitment in a manner that does not negatively affect the children.

*For me, if you are a parent, do not do polygamy so that your children will live peacefully and will get all love they need. What I am saying is directed to the fathers. Fathers they must learn to be truthful, they must tell their wives to love children equally*

[Mpho, boy, aged 15].

*What I can say to children from polygamous unions is that they must respect, they must not gossip, and mothers must not hate each other because they cause children to be psychologically abused and they will grow up knowing that they must not love other people*

[Nikeziwe, girl, aged 17].

The narratives above are an indication that children especially today are opinionated and have a lot that they can teach parents and adults. It is important that they be given an opportunity to be heard through community structures.

#### **4.4 Lesson for supporting learners affected by polygamy**

The study has found that children value being treated fairly by the parents including step parents. They have also expressed their opinions on how this marriage should be conducted as per below:

*I would like to plead with parents that if they decide to practice polygamy, they must ensure that they strike a balance in terms of how children are treated. What I can say is that because I am born in this situation I would plead with other family members that they love us in a same way, there must be no one who is special*

[Anathi, girl, aged 15].



*I wish that everyone in my family were born within the marriage and not out of wedlock. I think that it is the main reason we do not get along as children. Some of us are born outside marriage and some are born inside marriage and that causes us not to get along as family members and children [Snazo, girl, aged 15].*

*I would like to change the hate and jealousy among my family members. I wish that there could be love and respect between siblings; I think that if we can love each other, we can face any problem and overcome it [Nikeziwe, girl, aged 17].*

Children realize and accept that they have neither choice nor voice in the marriage but would like to ensure that there is peace in the family.

*For me if you are a child who is born under polygamy, you have to accept the situation; you cannot choose for your father what he must do. You must respect, love your parents so that they can also love you [Andile, boy, aged 16].*

*For me, if you are a parent, do not do polygamy so that your children will live peacefully and will get all the love they need. What I am saying is directed to all the fathers. Fathers must learn to be truthful; they must tell their wives to love children equally*  
[Mpho, boy, aged 15].

*I am saying to those who are already in polygamy they must follow the rules set in your families by your parents so that they will be peace in the family [Snazo, girl, aged 16].*

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

It is clear from the current study that children are an important part for every family structure and that it is crucial that a platform is created for them to voice their opinions in a respectable way. It seems apparent that parents have done so much damage

either directly or indirectly to children in their quest for self-realisation. As mentioned earlier, what was intended to grow family, provide children with a wider support system, and reduce the number of orphans or illegitimate children amongst many, proved to be doing the converse as seen in the many responses from the participants. Polygamy as an old phenomenon that is still prevalent in the modern-day society seems to be causing problems than providing solutions for the modern-day child.

Society still owes children answers where polygamy exists as the family structure in terms of the kind of solutions to provide. Polygamy is a concept that drew much of its strength from patriarchy. Although it still finds space to linger around in society, but it seems not to be compatible with many other factors at play such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the changed expectations that fathers today are expected to play, the civil society that protects women and children etc. makes it difficult for such phenomenon to co-exist in society.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The study sought to explore secondary school learners' understanding and experiences of polygamy. The aim was to learn from these children's understanding and experiences, the ways through which to enhance the schooling experiences of children born in polygamous marriages or affected by polygamy. The study was informed by the notions of Children's geographies and the New Sociology of Childhood (Morojele & Muthukrishna, 2012). It adopted qualitative narrative research methodologies to elicit subjective narratives and interpretations of the children's live experiences regarding polygamy.

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. What are learners' understanding of polygamy in one KwaZulu-Natal high school?
2. What are learners' experiences of polygamy in one KwaZulu-Natal high school?
3. What are the factors that affect learners' understanding and experiences of Polygamy?
4. What can we learn from the above in to support or enhance the schooling experiences of learners affected by polygamy within the school?

This chapter focuses on the summary of the study findings, theoretical and methodological reflections, limitations as well as the recommendations of the study.

## **5.2 Summary of key findings**

The study indicated that participants had a clear understanding of the concept and that they wish they had a platform where they could be heard. It was also clear that most of the participants were not in favour of the practice and they expressed their concern in the way they are treated or other children are treated by parents in this family structure.

### ***5.2.1 Children's understanding of polygamy***

The study found that most children have similar interpretations of polygamy. According to the findings of the study, most participants understood polygamy as a male partner married to multiple partners. Although a small number of them mentioned polyandry as a related concept, hence it can be concluded that participants draw from what they see around them and what represents reality that more men marry multiple partners than the other way round.

### ***5.2.2 Learners' views and reasons against polygamy***

The findings indicate that the participants held divergent views regarding the acceptability of polygamy in their communities and families. In fact, most of the girls were against the practice but there were a few boys who also expressed their dislike for polygamy.

#### ***5.2.2.1 Unfair treatment of children and wives***

Participants mentioned that the unfair treatment of wives and children is the major reason they are against the practice. Even those that are in favour of polygamy agreed with the fact that most fathers do not manage their households in a fair and equitable manner. In some households, the first wives hold the power in terms of how resources are distributed and in some cases, the younger wives get more attention and favour as they are still new in the family and still favoured by the husband. The children will be treated the same way as their respective mothers.

#### *5.2.2.2 The HIV/AIDS epidemic*

Most of the participants cited the spread of HIV/AIDS as being exacerbated by polygamy and thereby making it difficult to provide solutions for the pandemic that has ravaged society for almost three decades. Participants raised their concern that polygamy involves multiple wives marrying the same man and therefore may contribute to the spread of the pandemic.

#### *5.2.2.3 Poverty*

Participants also indicated that as children, they have resorted to getting menial jobs even before they finish matric. It is clear from the findings that fathers as breadwinners sometimes do not afford to maintain the big families. This too has been supported by other studies on polygamy. Some fathers resort to this kind of union yet they do not have the means to do so.

#### ***5.2.3 Learners' views and reasons in support of polygamy***

Findings indicate that not all participants were against the practice as others pledged their support for the longstanding practice. They cited family growth, alleviation of spinsterhood and the benefit of having many mothers as their main reasons for supporting polygamy. Some participants expressed their desire to have large families when they become of age, but realised that such targets will not be easy to achieve with one wife. Others felt that the ratio between men and women in many societies is not balanced and therefore, they felt that polygamy will solve the equation. Some participants who were in favour of the practice expressed that polygamy provided them with many mothers for their children and gave them with opportunities for gaining insight into the challenges encountered in life.

#### **5.2.4 Polygamy as *"The truth will set you free phenomenon"***

Some of the participants, especially boys, were brave enough to admit that they are fond of girls and therefore would like to be in polygamous relationships when they grow up. They expressed that it is better to be out in the open about your choice of multiple partners than to hide it and then hurt some people in the process. Some participants even mentioned that they wanted variety in terms of sexual partners.

#### **5.2.5 Children's experiences of polygamy**

The findings of the study suggested that some of the children who participated are not in favour of polygamy due to the negative experiences they have endured in their lives. Participants cited lack of father love, friction between siblings, witchcraft, jealousy and non-peaceful co-existence between co-wives as the main reasons for being against

polygamy. Other studies conducted on polygamy supported this notion that children who are raised in absent father homes seem to be affected adversely. Consequently, some participants even indicated that they cannot wait to grow and gain self-independence.

#### ***5.2.6 Polygamy and consent from the first wives***

Although customary law makes provision for senior wives to consent to the husband's decision to take another wife, the participants have indicated that some fathers seek consent from the first wives. However, others do not seek consent from the first wife. According to the participants, the consent part exists in principle, but not in practice. Participants indicated that women are usually dependent on men, financially and therefore, despite that the law protects them in principle, they remain subordinate to male authority.

#### ***5.2.7 Lessons from children's understanding and experiences of polygamy***

According to most participants, polygamy makes life more challenging for the children in today's era than it used to be in the past. Although some of the participants who came from polygamous homes were free to talk about their families with their friends, the majority indicated that they are not free as they felt that their families were different from what society perceive as the "normal family". The current study also revealed that fathers who are practicing polygamy may not be able to be always there for their children especially when the family is large.

Various studies conducted on the role of fathers have proven that they (fathers) play a very significant and pivotal role in the upbringing of the child. Studies have indicated that a large percentage of fathers are absent in our society and many authors attribute that to the many social ills that are confronting the youth (Vilanculos & Nduna, 2017).

The current study revealed that there is no peaceful co-existence among members of polygamous families hence children are adversely affected. It is quite important to note that being raised in a polygamous family does not necessarily suggest that the child is different from any other children; however, it suggests that schools need to be equipped with strategies of dealing with behaviour that may arise because of background of polygamy. Schools are an extension of the home and therefore, they should attempt to understand each child as an individual and particularly in the context of the environment they are coming from. Owusu-Bempah (2007) also alluded to the fact that parental conflict causes children to behave in a distressed manner. Pears, Kim and Fisher (2008) mentioned that children who suffered ill treatment at home projected lower cognitive functioning.

### **5.3 Limitations of the study**

The study was conducted in a semi urban area in Durban, therefore generalising findings to urban areas will be a challenge as one would not be sure about relevance in terms of proximity of factors affecting children in the same situation but residing in urban areas. The main limitation of the study was in getting willing participants especially those that were directly affected. As some of the participants mentioned



that they were not free to discuss their families with strangers especially with other children who might mock them later. It is not a subject that children would be proud of and therefore it was a challenge to get to the bottom of the matter.

The researcher however managed to allay the fears of participants by assuring them that they do not have to divulge information that they think is sensitive and that they were free to leave the group if they feel uncomfortable. Fortunately, the richness of the data was derived from those who had no problem sharing their experiences and even divulging their names.

Data was collected just after examinations and some learners were not attending classes as parents were not allowing their children to go to school as a measure to exercise control. In terms of gender, most of the participants were female which I think contributed to the negative tone of the study, more girls were against the practice than boys for obvious reasons.

### ***5.3.1 Limitations related to researcher identity and positionality***

My position as a South African woman who has been groomed by the liberation movement finds it hard to be objective in such subjects that seem to be undermining women and their intellect. The study has proven that some women enter polygamy willingly especially those that are financially stable. It appears that polygamy is not always preferred for material gain only, but there are also other factors at play.

My position and outlook on life is challenged when I must be objective and understand that some women are not coerced into polygamy, but instead, they are willing participants. (Pato, 2010) as quoted by Mkhize and Zondi (2015) concurs by saying that South African feminist authors believe that culture is often unfairly used to justify such practices. Polygamy is “purely a male-serving situation with no gain for women. It is a situation that breeds male bravado, lack of commitment and use of women as objects of trade and male pleasure [and] women who believe otherwise are in denial” (Pato, 2010) as quoted by Mkhize and Zondi (2015, p.121).

It appears therefore that I may not be the only researcher who finds it difficult to view polygamy in an objective light. It is against this backdrop that my intellect and objectivity is challenged yet as a researcher and social scientist, I owe it to humanity to allow some phenomenon to exist and for people to participate in any custom as they see it fit. The researcher nevertheless tried to remain objective and consulted as many studies as possible to ensure inclusivity for those that are pro polygamy and those that are against. It is unfortunate that many studies even those from Africa seemed to shun the custom. They seemed to be supporting the Western view of the concept which advocates that the practice is anti-civilization and violates women’s rights yet the study has proven that not all women enter polygamy unwillingly. Some are financially stable yet they are part of the custom.

## **5.4 Recommendations of the study**

### ***5.4.1 Recommendations for policy and practice***

Polygamy draws a lot from our cultural practices and some of them are enshrined in South Africa's constitution. South Africa has a rich cultural heritage, which makes us unique to other nations. However, there might be a need to revisit some of the practices or how those practices are done so that they do not lose their value. In my opinion, polygamy has missed the plot and some men are no longer playing the game by the book. It might help for the justice system to regulate the customary law where polygamy is concerned and ensure that the children are protected from injustices such as poor maintenance and neglect by fathers and unfair treatment from step mothers.

Schools must actively empower children, both girls and boys about their sexuality and have empowerment programs for the girl child. Some boys have indicated that they want to practice polygamy for sexual gratification and have a wider choice of sexual partners. This kind of thinking is obviously fractured for obvious reasons and society cannot afford it. Girls on the other hand need to be empowered and be encouraged to participate in business and in positions of power to turn the tide. The custom of paying *lobola* (bride prize) among Africans instils a sense of inferiority in women that they are a commodity and this encourages men to treat them that way.

Further, the findings of the study suggest the following as recommendations:

- Schools need to keep a file of each child and keep information about the family of each child.
- The department of basic education must reinstate school counsellors in all schools so that there is confidentiality in as far as family information is concerned.

- The said school counsellors will further identify learners who are troubled and in need of help and assistance.
- An inclusive education and training system will be necessary to meet the needs of all the learners in schools including this cohort of learners affected directly or indirectly by polygamy.
- School service delivery and social services (SDSS) should be allocated to all schools by the department of basic education.
- Partnerships with community structures and parents should be promoted and encouraged to look out for those negatively affected by family backgrounds such as polygamy.
- Children should be monitored closely in schools and during breaks and sporting activities to identify those who seem to be reserved or unwilling to participate or do not bring lunch for various reasons.

It will be unrealistic for the father to have enough time for all the children and still be able to attend to the matters of the family. The schools, churches and the government are left to pick up the pieces. It is for this reason that I think, society needs to rethink how these cultural practices would be conserved without damaging the very same society we trying to build, i.e. the future of the children.

#### ***5.4.2 Recommendations for further research***

Some of the scholars in the study mentioned that there are many unregistered polygamous marriages even in the urban areas. It may be interesting for other studies to use a sample from urban areas. Polygamy is still practiced by urban men and women; it is only that some of the marriage unions are not officially documented.

According to Mangena (2015), traditional polygamy has since spiralled out of the control of culture. Its modern version in Shona culture manifests when a man has multiple unofficial extra-marital affairs that are a result of unfaithfulness, all the while pretending to be monogamous. It will also be interesting to get a male perspective on the subject.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

Every journey must come to an end, and this study too has arrived at its conclusion. The study recommendations and findings suggest that there is so much in store regarding this subject. It is a very slippery subject that brings a whole host of other issues that society is grappling with. It is not as simple as one may think. It was an interesting journey yet difficult at times, but it has widened my horizons in as far as this subject is concerned. It is a subject that will keep unfolding and as a diverse society, it will be interesting to see how such phenomena will continue to co-exist in the fast-paced changing society.

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## 7. Appendices

### Appendix 1a: Informed consent document: Permission letter to the school principal



17 May 2016

*School of Education  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Edgewood Campus  
P/Bag x03  
Ashwood  
3605*

*The Principal  
Ingqungqulu High School  
Mageza Area  
Molweni  
5270*

#### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dear Sir

My name is Mrs Sazi Ndlovu, an MEd student in the school of Education and Social Justice at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I plan to undertake a study entitled: **Grade eight learners' constructions of polygamy: A narrative study in one KZN school**, as part of my degree fulfilment. I hereby seek permission to conduct research in your school.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To explore high school learners understanding of polygamy.
2. To investigate grade high school learners experiences of polygamy.
3. To learn from above how we could support / enhance the schooling

experiences' of children affected by polygamy.

The study will use interviews, observations and focus group interviews. Interviews will be conducted with grade eight learners. Responses will be treated with confidentiality and pseudonyms will be used in-stead of actual names. Respondents will be contacted well in advance for interviews, and they will be purposively selected to participate in this study. Participation will be voluntary which means that participants may withdraw from the study should they feel insecure or no longer interested anytime without incurring any penalties.

Please note that the school and the participants will not receive any material gains for their participation in this research. The learners will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect their own personal opinions. The schools' or the participants' identities will not be divulged under any circumstances. Audio-recordings of interviews will only be done if the permission of the participants is obtained. Data will be stored in the University locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed.

For further information on this project please feel free to contact my supervisor Prof P Morojele or myself on the contact details at the bottom of this letter.

Thanking you in advance.

Yours sincerely

---

Mrs MSQ Ndlovu

Tel: 083777 0632

Email: [Ndlovums@uksn.ac.za](mailto:Ndlovums@uksn.ac.za).

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Supervisor: Prof P Morojele

Tel: 0710410352

Email: [morojele@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:morojele@ukzn.ac.za).

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**Consent letter**

If permission is granted to conduct research at your school, please fill in and sign the form below.

I \_\_\_\_\_ (Full name)

Hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document as well as the nature of the research project that will be conducted at the school.

I hereby grant permission for the researcher (Mrs MSQ Ndlovu) to conduct the research project at Ingqungqulu High School. I understand that learners are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they desire.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 1b: Informed consent document: Permission letter to the school teachers



## Appendix 1b Informed consent document: permission letter to the school teachers.

17 May 2016

*School of Education  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Edgewood Campus  
P/Bag x03  
Ashwood  
3605*

*The Teachers  
Ingqungqulu High School  
Mageza Area  
Molweni  
5270*

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dear Teacher/s

My name is Mrs Sazi Ndlovu, an MEd student in the school of Education and Social Justice at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I plan to undertake a study entitled: **Learners' constructions of polygamy: A narrative study in one KZN high school**, as part of my degree fulfilment. I hereby seek permission to conduct research in your school.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To explore grade eight learners understanding of polygamy.
2. To investigate grade eight learners experiences of polygamy.

3. To learn from above how we could support / enhance the schooling experiences' of children affected by polygamy.

The study will use interviews, observations and focus group interviews. Interviews will be conducted with grade eight learners. Responses will be treated with confidentiality and pseudonyms will be used instead of actual names. Respondents will be contacted well in advance for interviews, and they will be purposively selected to participate in this study. Participation will be voluntary which means that respondents may withdraw from the study should they feel insecure or no longer interested anytime without incurring any penalties.

Please note that the school and the participants will not receive any material gains for their participation in this research. The learners will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect their own personal opinions. The schools' or the participants' identities will not be divulged under any circumstances. Audio-recordings of interviews will only be done if the permission of the participants is obtained. Data will be stored in the University locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed.

For further information on this project please feel free to contact my supervisor Prof P Morojele or myself on the contact details at the bottom of this letter.

Thanking you in advance.

Yours sincerely

---

Mrs MSQ Ndlovu

Tel: 083777 0632

Email: [Ndlovums@uksn.ac.za](mailto:Ndlovums@uksn.ac.za).

-----  
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e-mail: [Morojele@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Morojele@ukzn.ac.za)

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### **Consent letter**

If permission is granted to conduct research at your school, please fill in and sign the form below.

I \_\_\_\_\_ (Full name)

Hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document as well as the nature of the research project that will be conducted at the school.

I hereby grant permission for the researcher (Mrs MSQ Ndlovu) to conduct the research project at Ingqungqulu High School. I understand that learners are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they desire.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2a: Informed consent document: English version for learners

16 May 2016

*School of Education  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Edgewood Campus  
P.Bag x03  
Ashwood  
3605*

*The Learners  
Ingqungqulu High School  
Mageza Area  
Molweni  
5270*

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dear Sir

My name is Mrs Sazi Ndlovu, an MEd student in the school of Education and Social Justice at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I plan to undertake a study entitled: **Learners' constructions of polygamy: A narrative study in one KZN high school**, as part of my degree fulfilment. I hereby seek permission to conduct research in your school.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To explore high school learners understanding of polygamy.
2. To investigate high school learners experiences of polygamy.
3. To learn from above how we could support / enhance the schooling experiences' of children affected by polygamy.

The study will use interviews, observations and focus group interviews. Interviews will be conducted with grade eight to grade ten learners. You will be treated with confidentiality and pseudonyms will be used instead of your actual names. You will be contacted well in advance for interviews, and will be purposively selected to participate in this study. Participation will be voluntary which means that you may withdraw from the study should you feel insecure or no longer interested anytime without incurring any penalties.

Please note that you will not receive any material gains for your participation in this research. You will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect your own personal opinions. Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstances. Audio-recordings of interviews will only be done if your permission is obtained. Data will be stored in the University locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed.

For further information on this project please feel free to contact my supervisor Prof P Morojele or myself on the contact details at the bottom of this letter.

Thanking you in advance.

Yours sincerely

---

Mrs MSQ Ndlovu

Tel: 083777 0632

Email: [Ndlovums@uksn.ac.za](mailto:Ndlovums@uksn.ac.za).

---

Professor P Morojele

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---

### **Consent letter**

If permission is granted to conduct research at your school, please fill in and sign the form below.

I \_\_\_\_\_ (Full name)

Hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document as well as the nature of the research project that will be conducted at the school.

I hereby grant permission for the researcher (Mrs MSQ Ndlovu) to conduct the research project at Ingqungqulu High School. I understand that learners are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they desire.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 2b: Informed consent document: IsiZulu version for learners**

16 May 2016

*School of Education  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Edgewood Campus  
P.Bag x03  
Ashwood  
3605*

*Abafundi  
Ingqungqulu High School  
Mageza Area  
Molweni  
5270*

### **IMVUME YOKWENZA UCWANINGO**

Mfundi othandekayo

Igama lami ngingu Nkosikazi Sazi Ndlovu, ngingumfundi eNyuvesi yaKwaZulu-Natal esikhungweni semfundo ephakeme sobuthishela. Ngokuzithoba okukhulu ngicela imvume yakho ukuba ube ingxenye yophenyo engizobe ngilwenza esikoleni lapho ufunda khona.

Isihloko sophenyo lwami simi kanje:

**High school learners' constructions of polygamy: A narrative study in one KwaZulu- Natal school.**

Uzobuzwa uwedwa uphinde ubuzwe usuhlanganyele nabanye. Lolucwaningo luzothatha izinsuku ezine enyangeni eyodwa. Luzobelwenzeka kanye ngesonto ngemumva kokuphuma kwesikole. Igama lakho ngeke lisetshenziswe uma sekubhalwa noma sekuxoxwa nawe ukuze uvikeleke. Ukubamba iqhaza kulolucwaningo akuphoqiwe futhi unemvume yokuhoxa noma inini uma uzizwa ungakhululekile. Ukuthola ulwazi olunzulu mayelana nalolucwaningo ungaxhumana nomaluleki wami u Profesa Pholoho Morojele imininingwane yakhe nansi ekupheleni kwalencwadi noma uthintane name uqobo kuyo imininingwane engezansi.



Ngicela futhi ukukwazisa ukuthi akukho ozokuthola ngokuzimbandakanya kulolucwaningo. Izimpendulo ziyobhalwa phansi ziqoshwe kwikhasethi. Uma sekuqediwe ukubhalwa ngocwaningo izinto ezisetshenzisiwe ziyogcinwa umaluleki endaweni ephephile iminyaka emihlanu bese ziyalahlwa ngendlela ephephile.

Ngiyabonga

Yimi ozithobayo

---

Mrs MSQ Ndlovu

Ucingo: 083777 0632

Email: [Ndlovums@uksn.ac.za](mailto:Ndlovums@uksn.ac.za).

---

Professor P Morojele

Prem. Mohun

Main Administration & Tutorial Building

University of Kwa-Zulu Natal

University of Kwa-Zulu Natal

HSSREC Research Office

Edgewood Campus

Govan Mbeki Centre

Contact details: Tel: +27 (0)31-2603432

Tel: 031 260 4557

Fax: +27 (0)31-2603650

e-mail: [mohunp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunp@ukzn.ac.za)

Cell: +27(0)71 041 0352

e-mail: [Morojele@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Morojele@ukzn.ac.za)

---

Isifungo

Mina \_\_\_\_\_ (Igama lomfundi eliphelele)

Ngiyavuma ukubamba iqhaza ophenyweni oluzobe lwenziwa esikoleni futhi ngiyaqinisekisa ukuthi ngiyaluqonda loluphenyo. Ngiyazi ukuthi ngingahoxa noma kunini kulolucwaningo uma ngingasathandi.

Isishicelilo

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Usuku

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## **Appendix 3a: Informed consent document: IsiZulu version for parents**

17 May 2016

*School of Education  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Edgewood Campus  
P.Bag x03  
Ashwood  
3605*

*Abazali  
Ingqungqulu High School  
Mageza Area  
Molweni  
5270*

### **IMVUME YOKWENZA UCWANINGO**

Mzali othandekayo

Igama lami ngingu Nkosikazi Sazi Ndlovu, ngingumfundi eNyuvesi yaKwaZulu-Natal esikhungweni semfundo ephakeme sobuthishela. Ngokuzithoba okukhulu ngicela imvume yakho ukuba umntwana wakho abe ingxenye yophenyo engizobe ngilwenza esikoleni lapho efunda khona.

Isihloko sophenyo lwami simi kanje:

### **High school learners' constructions of polygamy: A narrative study in one KZN school.**

Umntwana uzobuzwa eyedwa aphinde abuzwe esehlanganyele nabanye. Lolucwaningo luzothatha izinsuku ezine enyangeni eyodwa. Luzobelwenzeka kanye ngesonto ngemumva kokuphuma kwesikole. Igama lomntwana wakho angeke lisetshenziswe uma sekubhalwa noma sekuxoxwa naye ukuze avikeleke. Ukubamba iqhaza kulolucwaningo akuphoqiwe futhi umntwana wakho angahoxa noma inini uma ezizwa engakhululekile. Ukuthola ulwazi olunzulu mayelana nalolucwaningo

ungaxhumana nomaluleki wami u Profesa Pholoho Morojele enyuvesi yakwa Zulu Natali imininingwane yakhe nansi ngezansi ekupheleni kwalencwadi, noma ungithinte kulemininingwane engezansi.

Ngicela futhi ukukwazisa ukuthi akukho okuzotholwa umntwana ngokuzimbandakanya kulolucwaningo. Izimpendulo ziyobhalwa phansi ziqoshwe kwikhasethi. Uma sekuqediwe ukubhalwa ngocwaningo izinto ezisetshenzisiwe ziyogcinwa umaluleki endaweni ephephile iminyaka emihlanu bese ziyahlwa ngendlela ephephile.

Ngiyabonga

Yimi ozithobayo

---

Mrs MSQ Ndlovu

Ucingo: 083777 0632

Email: [Ndlovums@uksn.ac.za](mailto:Ndlovums@uksn.ac.za).

---

Professor P Morojele

Prem. Mohun

Main Administration & Tutorial Building

University of Kwa-Zulu Natal

University of Kwa-Zulu Natal

HSSREC Research Office

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Cell: +27(0)71 041 0352

e-mail: [Morojele@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Morojele@ukzn.ac.za)

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Isifungo

Mina \_\_\_\_\_ (Igama lomzali eliphelele)

Ngiyavuma ukuthi umntwana wami abambe iqhaza ophenyweni oluzobe lwenziwa esikoleni futhi ngiyaqinisekisa ukuthi ngiyaluqonda loluphenyo. Ngiyazi ukuthi umntwana angahoxa noma kunini kulolucwaningo uma engasathandi.

Isishicelilo

-----

Usuku

-----

## Appendix 3b: Informed consent document: English version for parents

17 May 2016

*School of Education  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Edgewood Campus  
P.Bag x03  
Ashwood  
3605*

*Parents  
Ingqungqulu High School  
Mageza Area  
Molweni  
5270*

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dear Sir

My name is Mrs Sazi Ndlovu, an MEd student in the school of Education and Social Justice at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I plan to undertake a study entitled: **Learners' constructions of polygamy: A narrative study in one KZN high school**, as part of my degree fulfilment. I hereby seek permission to conduct research at the school where your child is schooling.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To explore high school learners understanding of polygamy.
2. To investigate high school learners experiences of polygamy.
3. To learn from above how we could support / enhance the schooling experiences' of children affected by polygamy.

The study will use interviews, observations and focus group interviews. Interviews will be conducted with grade eight learners to grade ten learners. Your child will be treated with confidentiality and pseudonyms will be used instead of actual names. Your child will be contacted well in advance for interviews, and they will be purposively selected to participate in this study. Participation will be voluntary which m

means that your child may withdraw from the study should they feel insecure or no longer interested any time without incurring any penalties.

Please note that your child will not receive any material gains for their participation in this research. Your child will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect their own personal opinions. Your child's name will not be divulged under any circumstances. Audio-recordings of interviews will only be done if the permission of the child is obtained. Data will be stored in the University locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed.

For further information on this project please feel free to contact my supervisor Prof P Morojele or myself on the contact details at the bottom of this letter.

Thanking you in advance.

Yours sincerely

---

Mrs MSQ Ndlovu

Tel: 083777 0632

Email: [Ndlovums@uksn.ac.za](mailto:Ndlovums@uksn.ac.za).

---

Professor P Morojele

Prem. Mohun

Main Administration & Tutorial Building

University of Kwa-Zulu Natal

University of Kwa-Zulu Natal

HSSREC Research Office

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Contact details: Tel: +27 (0)31-2603432

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Cell: +27(0)71 041 0352

e-mail: [Morojele@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Morojele@ukzn.ac.za)

---

**Consent letter**

If permission is granted to conduct research at your school, please fill in and sign the form below.

I \_\_\_\_\_ (Full name)

Hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document as well as the nature of the research project that will be conducted at the school.

I hereby grant permission for the researcher (Mrs MSQ Ndlovu) to conduct the research project at Ingqungqulu High School. I understand that learners are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they desire.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix 4: Informed consent document: Permission letter from the principal

### Consent letter

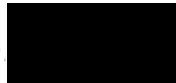
If permission is granted to conduct research at your school, please fill in and sign the form below.

I SIBONGISENI R. MHLONGO (Full name)

Hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document as well as the nature of the research project that will be conducted at the school.

I hereby grant permission for the researcher (Mrs MSQ Ndlovu) to conduct the research project at Ingqungqulu High School. I understand that learners are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they desire.

Signature



Date 18/05/2016

KZN DEPT. OF EDUCATION
PRIVATE BAG X1009 HILLCREST, 3650
PRINCIPAL'S SIGN: _____
DATE: _____
INGQUNGQULU HIGH SCHOOL

## Appendix 5: Ethical clearance certificate from the University of KwaZulu-Natal



5 September 2016

Mrs MSQ Ndlovu 921366392  
School of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Ndlovu

Protocol reference number: HSS/0843/016M

Project Title: Grade Eight learners' constructions of polygamy: A narrative study in one KwaZulu-Natal school

### Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 09 June 2016, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

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

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)  
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

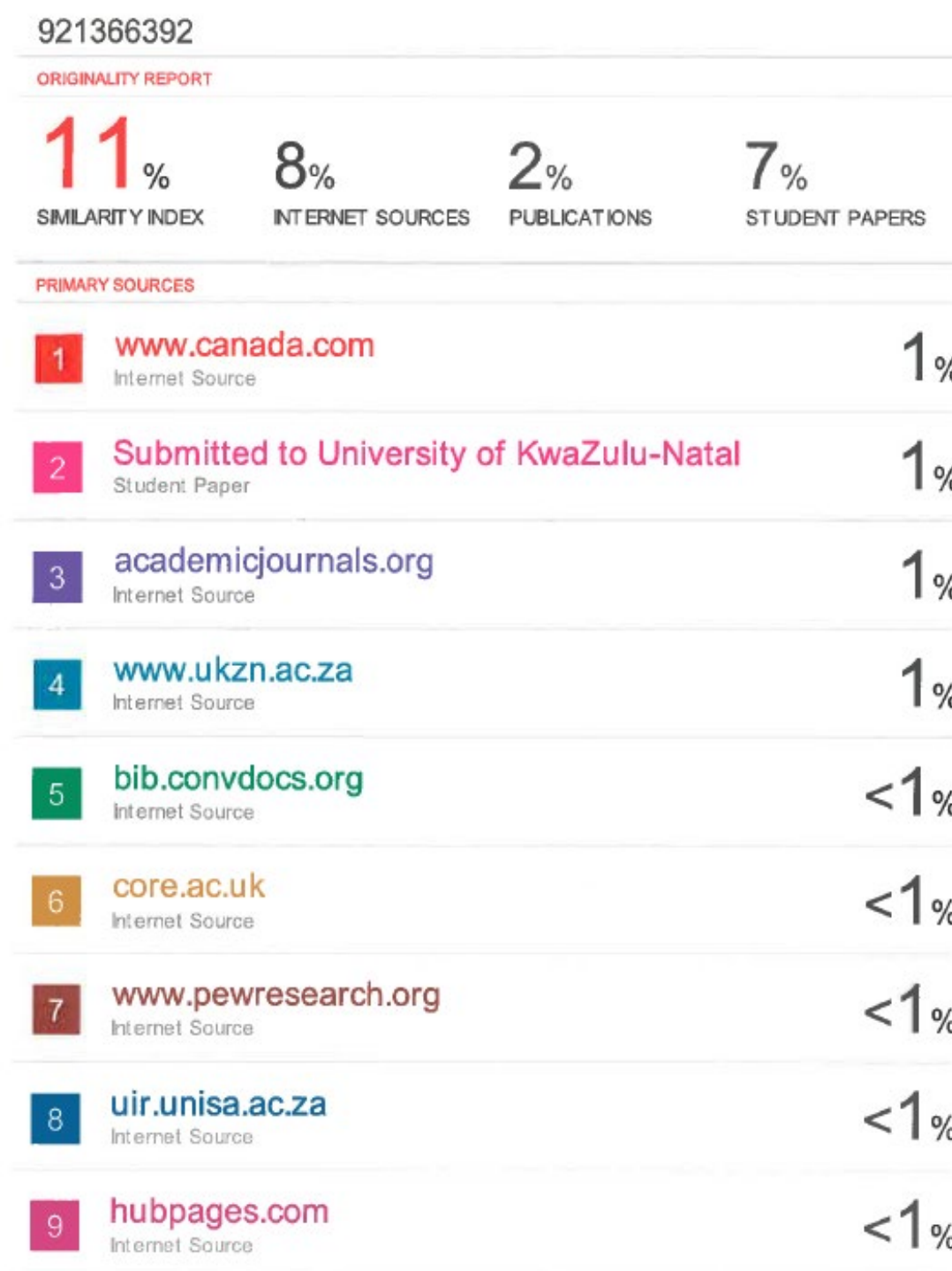
/pm

Cc Supervisor: Professor P Morojele  
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr SB Khoza  
Cc School Administrator: Ms T Khumalo & Ms Bongl Bhengu

---

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

## Appendix 6: Turnitin report



## Appendix 7: Letter from language Editor

University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Office Number IX06 TB Davies Ext, MTB  
Howard College Campus, Durban 4041  
[shumbak@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:shumbak@ukzn.ac.za)/[kemishumba@gmail.com](mailto:kemishumba@gmail.com)  
078 315 06186

To whom it may concern,

RE: EDITOR'S LETTER

I write this letter at the request of MS. MELODIOUS SAZISE QINISILE NDLOVU. The letter serves to outline the scope of activities that were done for the editing of the Master's dissertation submitted by the student, titled: **High school learners' construction of polygamy.**

### STUDENT DETAILS

Melodious Sazise Qinisile Ndlovu

Student Number:

Department: Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal

The following activities were done

- Spelling check
- Grammar check
- Document layout (formatting of headings and sub-headings)

Faithfully,

Kemist Shumba