# Parents' views on transgender identities and the implications for learners.



A research study submitted as the full dissertation component in fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Education Degree in the School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

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**SUPERVISORS DECLARATION**

As the candidate's supervisor, I agree to the submission of this dissertation.

**Signed: _____**

**Name: Professor Deevia Bhana**

**Date: August 2021**

# DECLARATION

I, **Thembisa Princess Tshibe**, hereby declare that:

(i) The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.

(ii) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

**LIST OF FIGURES**

**Isizulu words**

- **Ungqingili-** someone who is lesbian/gay.

- **Isitabane-** a derogatory word used for gays/lesbians.

- **Inkosana-** first born male child.

- **Inhloko yomuzi**- the head of the household preferably male.

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# ABSTRACT

The systematic mistreatment of transgendered people within our society at large, and particularly in rural South Africa, is still endemic. Parents, however, can play a very crucial role in challenging and changing the assumptions their children have about transgendered people. Thus, this study addresses the ways in which parents understand trans identities and he implications thereof for children. The research design for this study adopted the use of semi-structured individual interviews using photo-elicitation methods with parents residing at Umgababa, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, who currently have children in primary school. Two research issues underpinned the study. Firstly, the study sought to understand parents' constructions of transgendered identities. Secondly, the research attempted to comprehend the ways that tradition and culture shape parents' attitudes towards transgendered people. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data gathered from the participants.

The research findings of the study revealed limited understandings of transgender identities amongst the parents interviewed. They also showed that rural parents' reactions towards transgendered individuals are deeply grounded in heterosexual morals that are re-enforced by culture, tradition, and religious affiliations. This study also concluded that the violence aimed at LGBTQI+ identities in patriarchal communities regularly results in gender non-conforming individuals feeling powerless and fearing for their lives. Consequently, the results of the study indicated that parents and school staff members need to work more closely together if they are to gain collective insight relating to transgender issues.

The dissertation concludes by claiming that parents are the primary influence on their children's comprehension and behaviour in regard to transgender issues and, therefore, transgender matters need to be thoroughly addressed at the family level. A last conclusion drawn is the fact that parents should become primary 'change-agents' in order to help curb the spread of homophobic and transphobic stereotypes within rural communities (as a means of eradicating the gender-binary attitude that continually promotes toxic masculinity within patriarchal spaces).

# CHAPTER 1

## 1.1. Introduction

This study examines the views of parents regarding transgender identities and the implications that these perspectives have on primary school learners. In doing so, the study specifically pays attention to the 'T' within the LGBTQI+ acronym and directly addresses discrimination against transgender identities in South Africa. Thus, it asserts that there is a pressing need to understand the meanings parents construct with regards to transgender issues and to examine how these views influence learners to perpetuate unjustly gendered behaviours.

Violence against the LGBTQI+ community is still horrifically prevalent within our society. Beyond all its other dire consequences, it disciplines transgendered people into shying away from expressing themselves in their preferred manner due to their fear of being bullied or discriminated against by the heterosexual majority (along with many other members of society). In Kwa-Zulu Natal for instance, a notable LGBTQI+ activist was very recently stabbed and killed in Umlazi Section while he was busy socialising with his friends. Singh (2020, pg. 1) emphasises that "the knife was stuck in his left eye." Such details evoke the immediate grief and panic felt by those who witnessed the brutal murder, as well as the deeper trauma endured by his family and close friends.

Morris (2017) asserts that a large proportion of South African citizens still openly believe that being a member of the LGBTQI+ community should be classified as a criminal act. Older, more embedded societal norms and beliefs, moreover, back up these thoughts in the minds of the perpetrators of transgender violence. Failure to adhere to societal stereotypes supposedly makes the victim appear as a 'threat' to the perpetrators (Moreau, 2017).

Wholesale mistreatment of LGBTQI+ people is evident in various parts of South Africa. In Khayelitsha (a township on the outskirts of Cape Town) on New Year's Eve, 2017, a young lesbian was stabbed to death while celebrating with her friends. Before the attack, the perpetrator apparently made remarks that made the victim uncomfortable, and a little while later, seemingly on a whim, he decided to stab her to death (Hlati, 2018). According to Keeton (2017), it is the Eastern Cape Province which currently hosts the highest incident-rate of homophobic violence. Elderly people from the rural areas of South Africa struggle to understand basic LGBTQI+ concepts and, therefore, often support hate crimes against queer youth. Msibi (2009) asserts that queer people are seen as an inherent threat to masculinity and,

therefore, it is very difficult to even begin to address LGBTQI+ related issues within patriarchal communities.

Beyond South Africa, Cook-Daniels & Munson (2010) assert that sexual violence towards transgendered people in the United States of America is increasing daily. Sex-segregated public spaces, such as restrooms, are often policed to conform to the gendered binaries that society dictates for all citizens, regardless of their personal expression. These researchers offer a typical case as an example, wherein a transgendered woman in an unnamed state was publicly forced to use the men's toilet or leave a restaurant. After first being humiliated, she was physically abused and evicted from the restaurant with these words chasing her out the door: "We will beat the man out of you!" (Cook-Daniels & Munson 2010, p. 150). This quote alone illustrates the hatred and misconceptions regarding transgendered people that still hold sway in the world's oldest democracy.

Davies, Vipond and King (2018), for their part, suggest that transgender issues are not addressed sufficiently well in the teaching and learning environment, as appropriate large-scale interventions within schools may help decrease the incidence-rate of violence against transgendered people. There is some scholarly consensus that awareness of LGBTQI+ issues should be fostered and maintained in schools (Hayman, 2014); however, Phillips & Martinez (2010) note that campaigns and curriculum involvements in addressing transgender issues have a necessarily limited reach into the classroom, and, therefore, it is pivotal for teachers themselves to address such issues.

Smith (2015) asserts that, regardless of the lagging shortcomings of our current educational policies, the curriculum should still attempt to dispel misleading information sources on sex/sexuality education from the general media that target young people. Schools will always be the main source of education on these matters because learners usually spend the majority of their time at school during the day (Alsubaie, 2015). Issues surrounding cultural and religious taboos also often hinder the task of eradicating hate crimes or warding off discrimination against queer learners. According to Francis (2012), the Department of Education's present refusal to overtly address homosexuality in the curriculum is supported mainly by Muslim and Christian teachers who feel it would be 'off-limits' to address issues that they deem unacceptable. Therefore, the introduction of a progressive curriculum addressing the rights and needs of LGBTQI+ people poses potentially intractable challenges for many teachers. Francis (2012) further states that educators feel trapped between fulfilling

the standards of both the curriculum policy and their community's morals, regardless of which they perceive as more appropriate. This is in no way to say though that South African schools are not still very important in terms of potentially assisting parents and pupils to understand transgender issues.

Some parents simply feel humiliated or uncomfortable when considering their children's gender non-conformity (Davidson, 2015, p. 239). This is why Ryan et al. (2009) state that education is urgently needed to deal with the misconceptions that parents have regarding transgender issues. Such familiar conclusions now lead us into the rationale for conducting this study, together with considering the background on transgender issues and the purpose of the study overall.

## 1.2. Rationale

My reason for undertaking this study stems, inevitably, from my personal experience of growing up in Umgababa, in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. This is a rural community in which queer youth are treated in a different manner to non-queer youth. Queer youth feel isolated and struggle to socialise with their peers. And this basic discriminatory practice is continually echoed in many homes and schools in South Africa.

I am interested in understanding how traditional and cultural notions of gender and sexuality may tend to challenge gender identities. Moreover, I would say that the issue of transgendered experiences within the South African education system is painfully under-researched. Luvuno et al. (2019, p.1) emphasise flat out that "South Africa has limited research on transgender". South Africa is also one of the many post-colonial countries that currently still has difficulties achieving any recognizably equal gender balance in education. According to Rubin et al. (2009) children's exposures to discriminatory experiences are inherently multifaceted and can affect them both physically and emotionally, thus causing them to isolate themselves from social interaction with their peers. In too many countries, transgender individuals are stigmatised from an early age and often drop out of educational institutions due to their mistreatment (Cook et al., 2017). Therefore, this study exists to help us become more aware of how these inequalities get reproduced in the home and, subsequently, re-emerge in the teaching and learning environment.

**Background**

'Transgender' can be defined in numerous ways. Green et al. (2018) offer transgender as an umbrella term, commonly used to refer to a diverse array of gender identities in society. Moreover, Wilson et al. (2014) and Green et al. (2018) define transgender as specifically referring to people whose biological sexual identity and gender expression are alternate compared to those who are not transgendered.

There are several policies and laws currently used to address the issue of equal treatment for learners within a teaching and learning environment. Du Plessis (2013) states that in South Africa, inclusive educational policies were first introduced with the aim of accommodating all learners, regardless of their race, sex, or gender. Moreover, the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) (2012) states that children's rights in the basic education system should be protected to ultimately dismantle gender-based discrimination. The introduction of courses dealing with sexuality in the curriculum within South Africa's schooling context is pivotal. This is evident from the introduction of certain laws, such as the South African Schools Act (1996), which have been implemented with the purpose of promoting equality in education and fostering an awareness that gender binaries are oppressive constructs and do not serve to maintain a gender balance (Rarieya, et al., 2014).

Despite these non-discriminatory laws, the rituals and perspectives of patriarchy are still rooted in the minds of the people in South Africa (Msibi, 2009). Moreover, Haley, et al. (2019) stress that the great majority of citizens are not well informed about transgender identities, especially within the local schooling context. This deficiency means that South Africans overall still support the normalisation of men as being the wielders of power and the leaders of society. Therefore, any person who challenges the stereotypical gender characteristics that society dictates is viewed as a threat. Parents, moreover, pass these patriarchal ideas onto their children and, thus, misconceptions about, and mistreatment of, transgendered people continue. Meyerson, et al. (2016) additionally state that parents have a substantial influence on their children's behaviour and character and so create harmful spaces for transgender people in South African communities.

Society's stagnant expectations of gender are; indeed, the main reason why transgendered youth are mistreated. "Transgender persons have a difficulty in accessing basic needs such as healthcare" (Lyttan & Laloo, 2020, p. 47). This statement emphasises the marginalisation that is consciously present and reflected within our societies. Hart and Mfazo (2010) and Chapman

(2013) note that even basic information on transgender issues is not available in many libraries and, therefore, transgendered people themselves lack the basic information necessary for conforming to their true gender identities. According to Lyttan and Laloo (2020), most people who identify as heterosexual still maintain confused attitudes towards LGBTQI+ people and so wide-scale discrimination and violence against non-heterosexual regimes remain prevalent.

## 1.3. Brief review of literature

Despite redressing some past inequalities, the issue of brutality based on gender and sexual orientation is still very much prevalent in South African society. The World Health Organization (2009) further states that cases of gender-based violence worldwide are increasing due to persistent gender inequalities. Category-based violence is, therefore, a social issue of primary concern (Allen, 2019). The rash of violations against transgender people within South Africa is implicitly regulated by the norms that apartheid era instilled and embedded in the nation's psyche. This assertion is echoed by the continuing growth of discrimination and violence against transgendered people since 1994 (Rojas & Swales, 2019). Jones (2019), however, emphasises that South Africa was still the first country to classify homophobic intolerance as unlawful, and further stresses the milestone represented by its policy of aligning sexual and gender equality to human rights. Moreover, strategies tackling the mistreatment of transgendered individuals - such as the Gender Identity Act (2004) - ensure that discriminative measures are never legally taken against transgendered people (Human Rights Campaign , 2016) and also make provision for the maintenance of dignified conduct and special protection for queer children's right to dignity.

The literature reviewed here shows that there is presently minimal research on transgender issues within the education sector and, therefore, my study should specifically aim to address that gap. Glavinic (2010) asserts that there is a lack of both research and depth of basic information on transgendered youth, which by itself results in them receiving little or no support in schools. A study conducted by Greytak et al. (2009) in Canada showed how the curriculum taught in Canadian schools did not support transgendered youth, leaving them feeling isolated and inferior. Day et al. (2018) note that in California, unpleasant experiences amongst transgendered youth also predominate within the educational sector. Concerning America, Meyerson et al. (2016) add that there is currently a rapid increase in the number of both transgendered children and parents. Furthermore, they state that parental assistance is

considered central for the well-being of transgendered and gender-dissenting families. Additionally, Hillier and Torg (2019) elaborate that gender transitions involve the wholesale renegotiation of personalities and interactions for the entire household.

There are several aspects that can impact the thoughts and behaviour of learners regarding a certain aspect of transgender identity. Kington et al. (2013) assert that children learn from verbal and non-verbal interactions present within their settings; such factors include parents, family members, teachers, peers, and society. McLean and Mansfield (2012) emphasise that younger adolescents especially require assistance in creating meaning and/or ideas about concepts such as gender and transgender expression. More in-depth theories on socialisation further emphasise the major influence that parents wield on their child's beliefs and values (Jugert et al., 2016). Parents largely base their decisions on such issues on the answers that society dictates for them, based on culture, tradition, and patriarchal norms (Msibi, 2009). Therefore, 'transgenderism' is regularly rejected in both the family and school context because heterosexuality, for the most part, is endorsed (and policed) in schools in South Africa. Therefore, it is imperative to understand parents' pre-existing constructions of transgender identities when attempting to eliminate the silence towards acts of violence against transgender individuals in such schools.

Maharaj et al. (2005) assert that information regarding the statistics of transgender people in South Africa is not readily available. This dearth of knowledge shows that the issue is not being addressed appropriately, and thus that there is a dire need to conduct this study so that people are more knowledgeable about transgender identities. According to Reygan (2016), schools are the primary perpetrators of rejection and discrimination against transgender, lesbian or gay learners. Such acts of mistreatment affect these pupils' beliefs, natures, and interactions with other learners (Jones, 2019). Rubin et al. (2009) describe the major negative effect of discrimination as being social withdrawal characterised by an intentional lack of interaction with colleagues and a deterioration of confidence. It is evident that the challenges faced by queer learners in South African schools comes from fears of being bullied, judged, and labelled (Francis, 2017; McArthur, 2015; Msibi, 2012).

## 1.4. Theoretical Framework

Various scholarly theories, such as feminist studies, queer theory and sexuality studies form part of the academic analysis of transgender studies. Its approach is non-linear and examines issues of gender apart from biological sex, using data to identify gender segregations (Hines,

2010). Combining Trans- and non-C binary perceptions in gender equality are the two main specifications that transgender studies include. In this study, I will primarily be drawing on Connell's theory (1987, 2005) of multiple masculinities and gender as a social construct and Butler's (2004) queer theory that deconstructs the dominance of heterosexuality, to make sense of transgender.

### 1.4.1. Multiple masculinities theory

Firstly, I begin with Connell's (1987) theory of multiple masculinities, which stresses power hierarchies amongst masculinities, with hegemonic masculinity as the most dominant form. Furthermore, this theory creates a discriminatory gap between the various asserted masculinities. Moreover, Connell (1987) states that hegemonic masculinity is first and foremost a strategy drawn upon for the domination of women. Therefore, my study adopts the multiple masculinities theory to understand the views that parents construct regarding transgender identities and how gender binaries become a principal practice which promotes the traditional gender construction (patriarchy) that is accepted throughout race, class and culture ideologies.

### 1.4.2. Gender as a social construct

Connell (2007) notes that through the gender-role theory, certain ideas are created which affect the pre-existing link between normative and standard behaviour. This practice means that gender theory may contradict the gendered role society expects from a male/female person and question the actual role which the person partakes in. The social construct of gender emerges here and denotes the fact that gender is learnt primarily through interactions with members of society. According to Morojele (2011), certain expectations, linked with the social construction of gender, stipulate that a male individual inherently has more physical strength and is both aggressive and competitive. Kachel et al. (2016) state that the gender balances are non-existent and, therefore, masculinity is uplifted as being superior to femininity. Furthermore, forms of masculinity that fail to adhere to these expectations are labelled and ostracised. As such, my study adopts Connell's (2007) theory of gender as being a social construct, so as to aid my analysis of parents' understanding and interpretation of transgender and how these meanings influence learners and the functionality of schools, often emphasising heterosexuality as the only accredited 'ideal' of self-expression, to the exclusion of transgender individuals.

### 1.4.3. Queer theory (gender performativity)

Butler's (2004) paradox states that individuals require rules that restrict them in order to function in society. Additionally, they require standards to become recognised, while concurrently fighting to establish additional conditions of acknowledgment or chance rejection. Society depicts certain rules as inviolably applying for various genders, and a transgendered person is seen as challenging these societal norms. Butler's (2004) irony, likewise, implies that fighting for identification whilst surrounded by a cisgender and gender dualistic favouring structure is the struggle of all self-identifying queer people. She thus argues against society's perception of gender as a fixed entity because it is, naturally, fluid and performative (Butler, 1990). Butler's (1990) theory assisted me in my building my understanding of how parents transmit gender performance to their children and how this practice impacts their children's gendered identity performances.

### 1.5. Research site

The small coastal town of Umgababa lies roughly 36 kilometres south of Durban. I chose Umgababa because it is where my own home is situated and because it is a multi-cultural area with a rich history that accommodates people from various parts of KwaZulu-Natal. The last census (2011) noted that the population of this area is 762 (1,163.12 per km²) with 98.5% Africans and 1.45% Coloured people. According to Barclay (2016), the Umgababa Beach area also has national historical resonance because, during the apartheid era, it was set aside as an area for Black South Africans. The duration of the study was one year, and data collection commenced as soon as Ethical Clearance was obtained from the Department of Education and the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This study did not focus on one school but rather on parents who had children enrolled in any of the primary schools situated within the Umgababa area, in order to ensure that the richness of the data was maintained throughout the study.

### 1.6. Aims and Objectives

- To understand and analyse the attitudes of parents regarding transgendered people.

- To establish how parents' constructions of transgender identities are shaped by socio-cultural values.

### 1.7. Critical Questions

The critical questions of this study are:

1. How do parents construct transgender identities?

2. In what ways are parents' constructions of transgender identities shaped by socio-cultural patterns?

### 1.8. Research Methods

### 1.8.1. Research Design

Van Wyk's (2012) qualitative research strategy combines data collection methods, analysis of data generated, and a summation of how all these methods aim to answer the research question. The methodology that this study adopts is a phenomenological approach. Creswell (2007, p. 104) refers to the phenomenological method as "describing the essence of a lived phenomenon". This definition implies that a phenomenological method allows the researcher access to rich data based on the participants' understanding and notions of a phenomenon. The study is also located within the interpretivist paradigm. According to Kelly et al. (2018) 'explanation' and 'understanding' are the main aims for an interpretivist paradigm.

### 1.8.2. Sampling

In this study, purposive sampling was used. The study initially anticipated maintaining a specific gender balance of 15 male participants and 15 female participants who are the parents of primary school learners. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic the study ended up only sampling 23 participants. Moreover, snowball sampling was used to simplify the process of locating suitable parents and achieving the exact number of participants required in the study.

### 1.8.3. Individual interviews / Photo-elicitation method

Semi-structured interviews were held with each parent on various separate occasions. Each interview lasted for approximately 10-20 minutes with each parent, which gave me (the researcher) sufficient time to collect the raw data. This study made use of photo-elicitation

methods to generate rich data from the participants' interpretations of transgender identities. According to Palaiologou (2017), the use of photos evokes different voices and interpretations from the participants, and therefore it further assisted in the attainment of more in-depth data.

### 1.8.4. Ethical Issues

Ethical clearance from the Department of Education and University of KwaZulu-Natal was efficiently obtained. Written consent was also obtained from participants and they were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time. Recording of interviews was conducted subsequent to the participants' permission being obtained. A safe venue was used during the data-collection process. Information received from participants was confidential and individuals were given pseudonyms to protect their identities.

### 1.8.5. Data Analysis/ Rigour

The audio data was transcribed verbatim from an audio-tape into textual data. Transcripts were then formulated and read through thoroughly. Thereafter, I looked for any common patterns within responses from each participant and analysed the data using thematic analysis. According to Percy and Kostere (2015), thematic analysis is when the data gathered from participants is analysed as it is collected. 'Conformability', dependability, credibility, and transferability generate the trustworthiness in a qualitative study. Triangulation was further implemented which involves using other ways to generate data from the participants by selecting participants who had children in different schools.

### 1.9. Contribution of the study

Rarieya et al. (2014) state that sexuality education within the curriculum is implemented within the education sector at large. Laws such as the South African Schools Act (1996) promote the eradication of gender binaries in South African schools. This study thus aims to capture parents' views of transgender identities and their effects on primary school learners. It also aims to contribute towards the creation of suitable intervention strategies to dismantle factors such as power, patriarchy, cultural and traditional norms that are learnt through societal interactions with parents, teachers, community, and society at large. Moreover, the study is of benefit to the participants because it creates greater awareness of the issues facing

transgendered people and gender non-conforming individuals. Hopefully it will enable the study participants themselves to become more vigilant regarding sexual discrimination and, hence, more supportive of the LGBTQI+ community.

## 1.10. Chapter outline

Chapter 1 focuses on the rationale, research site used, literature review, theoretical framework and research methodologies and design.

Chapter 2 focuses on the theoretical frameworks adopted, such as Connell's theory (2005; 1987) of multiple masculinities and gender as a social construct and Butler's (2004) queer theory. Both of these theories are further elaborated on and adapted in the data analysis.

Chapter 3 provides a critical account of the prevailing literature from both local and global contexts on transgender identities and parents' influence on their children. Literature on the persistence of violence and hate crimes perpetrated against the LGBTQI+ community, lack of research availability on transgender issues and the implications that parents' views assert on primary school learners are examined.

Chapter 4 explains the methodology used in this study. It is interpretive, phenomenological, and qualitative research, all of which aim to locate the participants' understanding of issues related to transgender identities, without prediction or misinterpretation of data generated. Moreover, the study makes use of purposive and snowballing sampling in order to locate participants. Semi-structured individual interviews and photo-elicitation methods are adopted in this study to generate the data. The trustworthiness of the study was ensured with the use of the concepts of triangulation, credibility, dependability, confirmability, and dependability.

Chapter 5 addresses the study's main research questions. This chapter presents the findings that were generated from the data collected from the study's 30 participants. The theories of Connell (1987, 2005) and Butler (2004) were used to interpret the data.

Chapter 6 provides a summary of the issues the study has addressed. It further includes the conclusions drawn and presents recommendations that arose from the analysis of the data.

## 1.11. Conclusion

The intention of this chapter is to generate an overall indication of what the study entails. This chapter covers aspects such as the background, rationale, review of literature relating to transgender identities, research site used in the study, objectives and critical questions, research design, methodology and theoretical frameworks.

The following chapter will explore and engage with how theoretical frames have been used to understand parents' views on transgender identities.

**CHAPTER 2- THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

**2.1. Introduction**

The central aim of this study is to understand parents' views on transgender identities and the implications that these have on the lives of primary school learners. This chapter outlines key theoretical concepts and perspectives that inform the framework for my study. This study is informed by a feminist lens and draws on post-structuralist theories to help analyse the above-mentioned influence of South African primary school parents' views on transgender issues. This study draws from Butler (1990) and Connell (1987, 1995, 2005). Butler's (1990) theory provides an understanding of gender, sexuality, gender performativity and queer theory, and Connell's (1987) theory offers an appreciation of gender as a social construct and the existence of multiple masculinities. Firstly, I begin with an explanation of the theoretical concepts of gender, gender essentialism and gender socialisation. Then I outline the social constructionists' theory of gender and the poststructuralist theory. I also draw on Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity. Lastly, I focus on Connell's (1987) theory of gender as a social construct and I outline Connell's (2005) theory of multiple masculinities.

**2.2. Understanding Gender**

It is pivotal to understand the notions that specific theorists have constructed about gender construction. Butler (1990) denotes gender as a performance of the ideas and standards presently normalised within a certain society. Additionally, Darwin (2017) notes that gender does not necessarily need to correspond with one's biological sex at birth, but that societal norms and pressures invariably demand one conform to this category. However, Maccoby (2002) argues that gender is a product both of performance and societal projection and, thus, is not an entity that a person is born with. Similarly, Connell (1995) defines gender as the reproduction of physical structures that are moulded by society. The notions of gender explained by most gender theorists depict the fact that individuals who do not conform to the gendered norms of a society are stigmatised and often even pathologised (Konopka et al., 2020). However, all theorists seem to agree that the concept of gender is complex and is comprised of various ideas – only one of which relates to gender essentialism.

## 2.3. Gender essentialism

According to Meyer and Gelman (2016), gender essentialism is the old-fashioned idea that men and women are elementally different and have unique options in life that are unchangeable. Gendered stereotypes are perhaps the major factors that strengthen gender essentialism (Meyer & Gelman, 2016). However, gender essentialism possesses negative implications which further enforce gendered binaries of what is 'normal' behaviour. The notion of gender further correlates with the biological essentialist ideology that implies the inherent beliefs that race and sex determine who we are and how we behave (Crompton & Lyonette, 2005). Moreover, this principle assumes that our behaviours are irreparably predetermined and not the result of our exposure to specific societal influences.

## 2.4. Gender socialisation

Gleitman et al. (2000) state that gender socialisation is a fixed form of socialisation that socialises males and females into certain gendered roles. Moreover, these forms of socialisation teach an individual how a 'male' or 'female' is expected to behave (Stockard, 2006). Gender socialisation begins from the moment a child is born and is enforced by the primary agent (parent). Parents' gendered expectations also contribute to gender socialisation (Coman, 2016). For example, parents often endorse aggressive behaviours for boys whilst expecting girls to be gentle, passive, and accommodating. Parents tend to reinforce these behavioural patterns in their children to ensure compliance with the patriarchal norms and values assigned to the meanings given to 'boy' and 'girl'. Parents discipline children in different ways that reinforce their assigned gender expectations; for example, discipline is harsher for boys because they are assumed to want to show their masculine 'virtues' and, thus, should learn not to cry. The saying 'boys will be boys' has a huge impact on the behaviours that parents may accept from boys - for instance, schoolboys are pretty much expected to be attracted to physical fights, whereas girls are viewed as peaceable innocents.

## 2.5. Social constructionist theory

According to Andrews (2012), social constructionists are theorists who analyse everyday interactions between people and focus on things like language-use and how we construct our sense of objective reality. This study further adopted the social constructionist theory so as to understand how individuals learn to construct meanings of gender through, and within, their environment, and to understand how parents construct knowledge relating to transgender identities. Haslanger (2012) emphasises that social constructionists challenge the daily assumptions of what society considers as 'natural' behaviour. 'Naturalness' is represented by the culture, tradition and values practiced within a specific context. Similarly, social constructionists propose that a core idea of constructionism exists to emphasise that there are social agents that produce or control a certain object or individual (Mallon, 2008). Moreover, the social constructionist theory adopted in the study helps to deconstruct the actions of heterosexual parents who try to influence their transgendered children to adopt heteronormativity.

The figure below outlines various steps that parents expect will play a major influence on how children create their gendered identities from birth onwards (Money & Ehrhardt, 1972).

McLeod (2014) further states that gender identity, as such, is neutral, meaning that a biological girl raised as a boy will develop the gender identity of a boy. Following this brief explanation of the parental expectation model, gender as a social construct will now be discussed.

## 2.6. Gender as a social construct

Alarcão et al. (2016, p. 272) refer to gender as "socially constructed and regulated through a range of contexts and institutions". This understanding of gender, therefore, stipulates that it is not an inherent biological trait but rather a constructed behaviour learnt through exposure to various backgrounds and social norms (Alarcão et al., 2016; Connell, 2005). Similarly, Butler (1990) and Lorber (1994) stipulate that gender is a form of imposed binary logic that inherently elevates males and subordinates women and thus generates room for discrimination against anyone who does not constitute part of the so called 'naturalised' gendered order.

The social construction of gender is closely associated with the process of adapting/learning from symbolic interaction (Vincent et al., 2011). In short, this concept means that gender is learned from communicating with other people in society. According to Connell (2002),

parents form part of the social agents who use cultural and traditional beliefs to support gender as a binary construct, which is accepted by societal norms. Additionally, culture prescribes heterosexuality so as to align gender and sexuality (Butler, 1990).

Connell (2005) therefore share similar notions which stipulate that the construction of gender is not fixed but can be altered by the environment or society in which one grows up. Connell's (2005) theory of gender as a social construct helped me to analyse the fundamental role that parents play in their children's lives as the pre-eminent social agents they encounter. Sunil (2018) states that parental socialisation is a specific technique through which parents teach their children how to differentiate between right and wrong. Parents encourage and pass moral values onto children as young as 18-24 months old (Hammond & Carpendale, 2014; Pasupathi, 2014). Additionally, Maccoby (2002) stresses that gender is learnt by children from as early as three years of age. However, Spring (2010) reiterates that although parents indeed influence their children's success, their peers also contribute perhaps just as significantly to their character and ways of thinking.

Society as a whole, therefore, is one of the major forces which influences the constructions of gendered and transgendered identities. To identify a particular entity as being socially constructed is to emphasise its reliance upon aspects of our social selves (Haslanger, 2017). Van Damme (2010) notes that parents, teachers, peers, and the mass media are all agencies that influence young people's gendered practices. Social norms are thus so fixed within the mindsets of individuals en masse that they do not see the need to avoid biased attitudes towards transgendered people (Butler, 1990). However, as people, we learn through socialisation and absorb attitudes about certain gender roles and behaviours which, in turn, are transmitted to children. According to Denzin (2016) and Darwin (2017), our social education concerning gender changes throughout our lives because every figure we meet plays a certain role in either reaffirming or challenging the meaning of gender. The bottom line is that the socialisation of gender processes does not cater for transgender identities and, therefore, their marginalisation continues to be replicated. The social construction of gender has been outlined in this section; next I will focus on post-structuralist theory.

## 2.7. Poststructuralist theory

This study also adopts the post-structuralist framework in order to explore parents' views on transgender identities and the implications these perceptions have on primary school learners.

Post-structuralist assumptions state that no person exists in isolation and the views of every individual are socially constructed (Cooper, 2016). The use of this framework in this study serves to emphasise the part the social world plays in an individual's understanding of their lives. Culture, in this context, acts as a guide that influences the gendered values that parents teach their children. Additionally, children and parents do not exist in seclusion, but culture always shapes their ideologies of how they comprehend gender. For example, heterosexual parents tend to adhere to culturally accepted patriarchal morals that do not recognise homosexuality. Therefore, it is pivotal to make use of post-structuralist theory to understand the influential factors of culture towards parents' understanding of transgendered children. Post-structuralist theory has been briefly described in this section, and next Butler's (1990;2006) notions of sexuality will be explained.

## 2.8. Sexuality

It is pivotal to understand theoretical notions of sexuality to have a clear understanding of gendered identities (Callis, 2009). Butler (1990,2006) stipulates in this regard that many theorists tend to separate sex, gender, and sexuality, thus representing them as ideologies that work in isolation from one another. However, she maintains that these three phenomena do not work unaided, but rather maintain coherent relationships and continuity. Therefore, using Butler's (1990,2006) notions of sexuality in this study strengthens my understanding of how parents interpret their children's transgendered identities. For example, from the moment a child is born and the parents identify him as a boy owing to his genitals, they implicitly expect him to display masculine traits (gender) and automatically assume that the child is heterosexual (sexuality). After this brief outline of the notions of sexuality, a further analysis of Butler's (1990) gender performativity theory will be discussed in the next section.

## 2.9. Gender performativity

According to Butler's (1990) gender performativity theory, gender is constituted from a repetition of performances, fluctuating according to the individual's actions, speech utterances and dress code. Butler (1990) also emphasises that society and cultural factors play a major role in enforcing people to perform the sexual and gender identities they were given at birth. However, she argues against this notion and denounces the heteronormative framework which

places binary limitations on gender. Moreover, Butler (1990) claims that heteronormative frameworks sanction the "naturalness" of heteronormative sexualities and end up ignoring/marginalising the possibility of 'other' identities.

Butler's (1990) theory naturally supports Foucault's (1980) concepts of power and subjectivity. Both theorists assert that 'power' is not created through domination but rather through the mind of the subject, which in this case, is exercised or controlled by the person in power. Moreover, Foucault (1980) maintains that bias is not created in isolation but rather shaped through the ideas of human 'subjects' that are formed discursively. Butler (1990) coined the notion of gender performativity so as to further engage with how bias works in creating gendered binaries. Gender performativity, therefore, involves an analysis of the performance of 'sexed' identity (Butler, 1990). In my study, gender performativity is adopted as a theoretical lens to better understand the views that the participating parents have on transgendered identities because, to my knowledge, most of the sample parents conform to heterosexuality as a matter of default performance within their homes. Parents in general depend on Butler's (1990) heterosexual matrix, which depicts the invisible norms approved of as 'natural' that recognise everyone as heterosexual until proven otherwise.

The image in the figure below was used by Butler (1990) to show a simple representation of her gender performativity theory. The image maintains the notion that gender is fluid and can be influenced by various factors within societies (Butler, 1990).
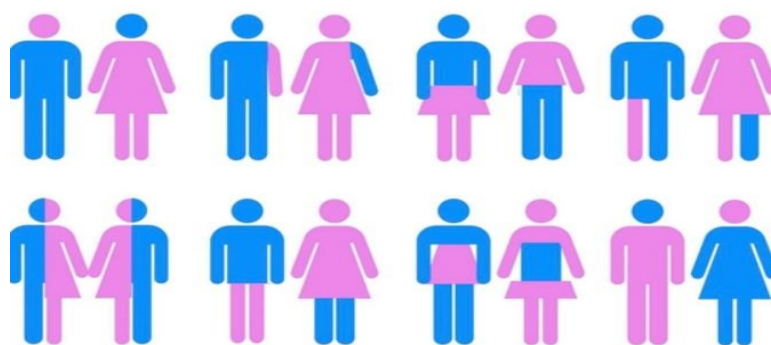


*Figure 1: Butler. J (1990) Gender performativity construction*

Meyerhof (2015) and Butler (1990) state that forming and upholding gender identities are similarly founded in performative actions. These similarities consist of knowing where an individual comes from and understanding the relationship they have to their society (Meyerhof, 2015). Lastly, we must recognise the decisions they have made to perform the cultural norms that are acceptable within that specific society. Butler (1990) likewise maintains that gender is a prescribed cultural performance. This view aligns with this study perfectly because, in the experience of the researcher, parents tend to enforce heterosexuality as a compulsory norm before fully understanding gender through a performative and fluid lens and recognising and accepting transgendered identities among their children.

Butler's (1990) theory assisted me in understanding how parents transmit gender performance to their children and how this practice impacts their children's gendered identity performances. Furthermore, there are ways in which parents may reinforce gender stereotypical roles unintentionally - even when they are not blatantly encouraging them. These behaviours are generally noticed in parents' usage of essentialist statements about gender (Leaper & Bigler, 2011, p. 291) such as "boys like soccer' or "girls like playing with a kitchen set". Parents' utterance of such gendered statements creates an offhand binary for transgendered children. Similarly, parentally imposed gendered stereotypes tend to limit children's capabilities (Wigfield, et al., 2002). Gelman and Taylor (2004) define descriptive stereotypes as 'observed patterns relating to each gender'. However, Butler (1988) emphasises at last that performativity of gender is complex and requires a well-structured and controlled approach in any study. I will now elaborate on queer theory.

## 2.10. Queer theory

'Queer' is a broad term which concerns taking actions that challenge sexual and societal norms (Greteman, 2014; Msibi, 2012). However, Butler (1990) defines queer theory as an ideology that confronts the traditionally apprehended expectations which stipulate the existence of the binary divide between heterosexual and gay individuals. Butler's (1990) queer theory emphasises that fluidity in sexuality and gender should be accepted and that its main aim is to dismantle societal marginalisation and promote the acceptance of 'queerness'. Additionally, the notion of 'queer' in this context proves that the study acknowledges that parents'/children's sexuality are never actually fixed and (as explained by Butler's (1990) queer theory) can

change depending on the space and time in which they exist. In the next section, I will explore masculinity theory as coined by Connell (2000).

## 2.11. Multiple masculinities

Connell (2000) defines 'masculinities' as a multifaceted structure developed through one's personal life and associations with different members of society. This process inevitably creates different interpretations of masculinities for every person (Morrell, 2001). Moreover, Connell (2005) coined the theory of 'multiple masculinities' which indicates that there is (and almost always has been) a hierarchy of numerous masculinities that exist within society expressed in terms of different class powers and cultures (Tharinger, 2008). Connell (2005) recognises the interconnections between four kinds of masculinities, namely: hegemonic, complicit, marginalised, and subordinate, as depicted in the figure below:
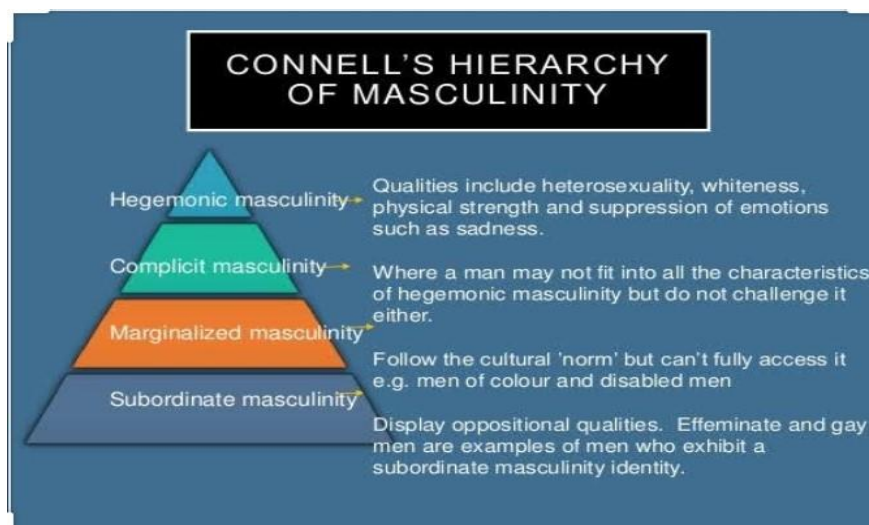


*Figure 2- Connell's (2005) hierarchy of masculinities*

Connell (2005) emphasises that hegemonic masculinity is the most dominant form of masculinity, because it promotes heterosexuality over homosexuality. In addition, it is considered as the normalised enactment of how men 'should be' characterised in society (Connell, 2005). Furthermore, Connell (2001) stipulates that hegemonic masculinities exist to overpower women, making them subordinate to men and adherent to traditional norms (patriarchy). Furthermore, Connell (2001) and Tharinger (2008) state that hegemony also

subordinates gay men to heterosexual men. However, in the South African context, there are even more various notions of masculinity (Connell, 2005; Msibi, 2012). Men's praise of hegemonic masculinities and traditional and cultural ideals are deeply rooted in the construction of masculinities (Msibi, 2012).

Connell (1995), for instance, states that homosexual men are often 'shamed' for performing an inferior form of masculinity and, thus, are subjected to violence due to this zero-sum notion of masculinity. Homophobia and, more recently, transphobia, are thus social practices that are strongly connected to dominant forms of masculinity (Connell, 1995). Similarly, Ringrose and Renold (2010) state that hierarchies maintained by hegemonic masculinities venerate heterosexual identities from an early age. Therefore, in my study, the hegemonic masculinities theory was self-evident in the way that some participating parents constructed false transgender identities and opted to pass on their traditional and cultural norms to their children. These traditional norms seek to create gendered binaries that suppress transgendered identities. Parents presume heterosexuality and deny their young boys' close interaction with children of the opposite sex for fear of signifying failed masculinities, on the assumption that friendships with girls may cause the child in question to tend towards homosexuality (Kehily, 2001). Hegemonic masculinities are thus strongly influenced by cultural norms and beliefs (Connell, 2002; Gomez, 2007). Cultural norms within traditional patriarchal societies create the obligation for boys to become actively involved in constantly attesting their masculinity (Mills, 2001). Parents feel obliged to promote heterosexuality and to raise their children in a way that adheres to and strengthens their morally-accepted patriarchal cultural traditions.


## 2.12. Conclusion

The theories outlined in this chapter assisted me in understanding how the participating parents' views of transgender identities were closely intertwined with societal and cultural norms. Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity indicates that gender is created by performing the norms that society dictates and thus it 'denaturalises' the notion of gender. Connell (1987) similarly maintains that gender is constructed by various interactions with members of a society and, consequently, is not fixed. Moreover, Connell's (2005) theory of multiple masculinities highlights that hegemonic masculinity is the most dominant present form of masculinity and, being situated on the top of the gender hierarchy, creates gendered binaries. I have outlined the

theories used in this study in this chapter and will now proceed to review gender-related literature from an international and local perspective.

# CHAPTER 3- LITERATURE REVIEW

## 3.1. Introduction

This chapter explores a wealth of literature on parents' views on the construction of transgender identities. Whilst there is some emerging research on LGBTQ+ in South Africa (Bhana, 2012; Francis & Msibi, 2011), there is very limited research on transgender identities - particularly in relation to parents' construction of transgender identities and their views of this phenomenon. Thus, I focused on this aspect in my own study. My focus on parents is vital too for addressing transgendered sexualities (identities) because parents ineluctably shape (their) children's views in these matters. My study is also shaped by the belief that if we can educate parents on transgender identities, we can work towards the eradication of discrimination, violence and sexual injustices against LGBTQI+ and transgendered people and, thereby, create a kinder form of daily life for children, parents, educational authorities and society as a whole. My study of parents' views towards gendered identity, and their construction of transgendered identities, is linked to LGBTQI+ primarily because transgender, gay, bisexuality, queer and intersex identities, form part of non-normative sexualities.

Before I delve into the existing literature relating to both parents' views towards, and their construction of, transgender, it is important to consider why binaries are used to shape the construction of gender in the first place. I explore this complex aspect below.

## 3.2. Why are binaries used to shape the construction of gender?

The gender binary is a system that accepts that the concept of gender can only be categorised within two distinct boxes, namely: men and women. These are constituted from different characteristics of masculinity and femininity based on the assumption that all these characteristics are heterosexual (Hoskin, 2017). Masculine traits, therefore, are identified as being representative of men (strong and aggressive), while feminine traits are identified as being applicable to women (gentle and submissive). Moreover, Lorber and Moore (2007) assert that some present-day societies still live up to these expectations and automatically base their beliefs on gender binary ideologies. Culture, tradition, and social values construct gendered binaries from the moment a child is born because they shape the way a parent instils gendered norms on their child (Sheppard & Mayo, 2013). Additionally, these principles control the clothes parents buy for the children and the types of behaviours the child is expected to follow,

via allocating two distinct sets of gender roles and identities which together promote heterosexual norms (Lorber & Moore (2007). Furthermore, many parents raise their children to conform to the context of the cultural expectations which restrict them from exploring gender identities that are not categorised in pre-existent gender 'boxes' (and thus are outside of dominant heterosexuality).

It is also important to consider how the South African context has influenced parents' views on transgender identities. In this regard, it is necessary to briefly consider what it means to be LGBTQI+ within the South African context. I explore this concept in the next section.

### 3.3. What it means to be LGBTQI+ within the South African context?

Section 9 of the South African Constitution upholds the protection of LGBTQI+ rights in South Africa. It criminalises discrimination based on sex, gender, or sexual orientation, which includes any form of discrimination against transgendered people by the citizens of South Africa. However, whilst there has been legal acceptance of transgender identities, their social status remains challenged due to a combination of social mores, hence the social acceptance of transgender identities remains a challenge for the LGBTQI+ community. This lack of recognition has only been further entrenched through ongoing, deep-seated hostility, discrimination, and stigma towards the LGTBQI+ community. Recent studies on transgender issues reveal that there is a stark contrast between the legal acceptance of such identities and the realities of lived experiences (Dennis & Francis, 2017; Herriot et al., 2018). The most recent murders of LGBTQI+ persons are testament to this deep antipathy towards this community. In June 2020, Kirvan Fortuin, a well-known and internationally recognised queer dancer, choreographer, and ball culture 'ground-breaker', was murdered in the Western Cape – allegedly by a 14-year-old girl. It was reported that the girl stabbed Fortuin twice in the chest. Whilst it has not been established if Fortuin's sexuality was related to this crime, it was reported by a friend that Fortuin had argued with the same girl the previous week because she allegedly made an anti-gay slur (DeBarros, 2020). In 2017, transgender activist, Nare Mphela, sought justice when she challenged the gender discrimination she had faced at the hands of her school principal due to her gendered identity. She was awarded R60 000 in personal compensation (Maphanga, 2020). However, in 2020, Mphela's decomposing body was discovered, and was found to have suffered multiple stab wounds. These accounts are but the most recent and highly-publicised records of violence directed towards transgendered people in South Africa.

It has been argued that this brutality is rooted in disdain and hatred, suggesting that inherent social mores underlie attacks on transgender communities (Msibi, 2012). The implication then being that South African society has yet to accept what it regards as 'non-normative' sexualities.

In this chapter I first focus on Bhana's (2013) study, which sought to examine the ways in which equality in terms of the right to freedom of sexuality is defined, established and maintained by parents from different social backgrounds, and how these parents' notions affect moral education in schools. The study - which was conducted in the KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng provinces with 17 parents of children in secondary schools - found that parents are extremely capable of reshaping a new version of morality for their children through cultural and religious values. A qualitative approach was used to gather the participating parents' views. The study's conclusions highlighted that religion, culture and discrimination play an enormous role in the maintenance of homophobia. Key themes that emerged from the research revealed how Christianity defends hetero-morality, the gendered and cultural reproduction of hetero-morality and, lastly, how hetero-morality can be challenged within the teaching environment.

Regarding the first theme, Bhana (2013) notes that compulsory heterosexuality is embedded within Christian religious morals, when in turn are deeply entrenched within Christian parents' reactions towards LGBTQI+ gendered identities within a schooling environment which, finally, tends to limit the rights of lesbians and gay learners. The study also found that the normalisation of homosexual behaviour within a Christian based institution is mostly prohibited because it is considered 'ungodly'. Therefore, heterosexual norms remain a priority. The existence of homosexuality within societies is acknowledged by these communities only as a contagious disease, or a 'lie' which can be healed through prayer. Christian religious norms align with hetero-patriarchal morals which state that lesbians or gays cannot have access to God because they are not as holy or pure as people who adhere to 'hetero-moral' beliefs.

The second theme that emerged addressed the reproduction of gender, culture and hetero-morality. Bhana (2013) finds that societal pressures influence and support the enforcement of gender and culture and parents' understandings of hetero-morality. This study also shows that cultural, religious and gender protocols maintain that homosexuality is abnormal because it 'disrupts the interconnection between gender and sexuality'. Culturally, the subordination of women is normalised within heterosexual relationships, thus, equality among hetero-moral

connections is eradicated. Therefore, gender and cultural practices that maintain gender hierarchies still constitute the basis of parents' understanding of hetero-morality.

The final theme to emerge from this study related to teaching for hetero-morality is how children are easily influenced by their educators. Our teaching and learning environments enforce socially accepted differences between gender roles. Furthermore, the participating parents emphasised that children are easily influenced and could be swayed into an acceptance of homosexuality. Therefore, some teachers asserted that including any ideas within the curriculum that are not part of the normalised hetero-morality guidelines would be considered disruptive. However, the study also found that this perception contradicts the views of those teachers who do support the introduction of a revised morality education. The theme concluded that teachers, therefore, believe it is a safer option just to leave parents to teach their children about sexuality and homosexuality from a young age.

Bhana's (2013) study is of great importance to mine because it shows the influence of culture and religion on parents and teachers' notions of non-normative sexualities. Therefore, gender inequalities remain the major issue for any person championing the form of sexuality that our culture and religions seek to prohibit. In addition, her study notes how parents' rigid compliance with hetero-gender hierarchies affect their children's acceptance of their true gender identities.

In the following sections of this chapter, I explore some studies conducted from an international perspective that discuss parental views on transgender identities. These discussions are recorded under the various themes that emerged in the reviewed literature. Specifically, I will now discuss parents' rejection of transgender identities.

## 3.4. Parents' rejection of transgender identities

A study conducted by Hill and Menville (2009) in the United States, among 43 parents who have gender-variant children or adolescents, found that while many parents accept their children regardless of their gendered identity, if they do take the route of intolerance it is usually the father who disowns or distances himself from children who do not adhere to traditional heterosexual norms. This study also found that several parents remain in denial, choosing to believe that their children's gender variant identities are only temporary and, thus, bound to change at a later stage. Hence, heterosexual fathers try to instil qualities associated

with masculinity in their sons, with the goal of influencing them to adopt heteronormative behaviour. Hills and Menville (2009) also found that heterosexual parents limit or take away privileges from gender-variant children; not with the aim of inflicting pain but to impose heteronormality on such transgendered children. Hills and Menville (2009) further reported that some parents, especially fathers, have definite ideas regarding the 'need' to prohibit children from adhering to certain 'socially deviant' practices from an early age. For example, a father would supress his boy child's desire to possess a barbie doll by authorising the child to opt for a superman toy, which is considered more 'manly'. Nevertheless, the study also found that some parents prefer just guiding their children towards heterosexual practices rather than actively declaring that being queer or transgendered is wrong or sinful. Correspondingly, a study undertaken in New York by Katz-Wise et al. (2016) with two clinical cases to determine the influence of family acceptance and rejection of a transgender youth showed that the (vast) majority of sexual-minority youth are born of parents who promote heteronormality. Their study concluded that children raised in heteronormative homes develop a fear of conforming to their transgendered identities because they fear rejection from their families. A study conducted by Herriot et al. (2018) in Canada found that parents' support for heterosexuality features strongly and wholly underscores their ideology regarding transgendered or non-normative gendered identities. For example, the following response from a parent - "I want my children to learn about gender and sex education as adolescents, and I want my children to be heterosexual when they grow up" - clearly shows that some parents do not object to their children learning about sex and sexuality at school, but clearly do not want them to grow up adhering to homosexuality.

## 3.5. Parents' acceptance of transgender identities

Hill and Menville (2009) generated a second theme which covered the different routes that some parents experienced during the process of accepting their transgendered children. According to Hill and Menville (2009), some parents expressed curiosity regarding their children's sexuality; meaning that these parents monitored and questioned their children's persistent behaviours. Katz-Wise et al.'s (2016) study conducted in New York also found that, irrespective of the initial reactions parents portray when a child reveals his/her unique gendered identity, they most often come to accept their child over time. However, the researchers also noted that some parents needed more time to accept their children's cross-gendered identity

than those who readily accepted their children's choices. Katz-Wise et al. (2016) also found that parents tend to accept some minimal forms of gender non-conformity for their sons (such as teaching them to cook and clean) but develop and/or display adverse reactions when their sons engage in gender-variant activities (such as crossdressing). However, the "child-taught parents" theme asserts that some parents are grateful for having children who can openly express their gendered identities, since this behaviour challenges them to create accepting environments for their children. According to Hills and Menville (2009), some parents gradually change the way they interact and react towards transgendered identities and, as a result, the gender-variant children teach their parents to be more understanding and accepting of situations that they cannot change. Similarly, a study conducted by Pyne (2016) with 15 participants in 10 families in Toronto, Canada, noted an example whereby the child used statements such as "they are my family…if they love me they will accept me!" with the aim of persuading their parents to be open-minded about his gendered identity and, thus, managed to prevent their extended family from mistreating him or passing silly comments when he expressed his true identity in their presence.

Sansfaçon et al. (2015) conducted a study with 14 parents in Montreal, Canada, that revealed how some parents gladly accept their children's gendered identity, regard them as their responsibility and fear any negative consequences that may occur if they reject their children. This study found that parents accepting their children, regardless of their gendered identity, comes with several challenges which stem mostly from society's lack of awareness of transgendered identities. Wren's (2002) study - conducted in Britain with 11 heterosexual parents of transgendered children - also found parental acceptance to be especially crucial, in as much as it provides adolescents with a chance to voice their notions of gender-variance and also allows parents time to reflect on their knowledge of gendered identities before they respond to these notions. A study conducted by Sansfaçon et al. (2015) also found that the judgement that parents receive from society and peers is closely linked with their own acceptance of transgender identities. However, some parents did not need time to reflect on their children's opinions regarding their preferred gendered identity because they readily expressed their acceptance and support for their children. Yet, still, some of the parents interviewed struggled to accept, review, or consider reshaping their views on gendered identities.

Contrariwise, a study by Gregor et al. (2015), conducted in Travistock clinic in London with eight parents, showed that the acceptance of transgendered children is a very complex individual process and, consequently, mixed emotions were expressed by some of the parents who were unclear about how they would inform other people regarding their child's 'correct' biological gender. Moreover, Gregor et al. (2015) maintain that parents' main motive for delayed acceptance is their concern for their children's future happiness in terms of their true gendered identity and their fear that society might not accept their children as a result of transphobic interactions.

Meadow's (2011) study with 39 families in the USA discovered that the transgender identity can be related to scientific explanations. Medical experts participating in this study stipulate that certain medical issues can cause hormonal imbalance which can lead an individual to perform or desire transgendered interests. For example, the study includes a story of a girl child (Sam) who had received previous medical treatments that had incited her particular psychology. As noted in the study, soon after these medical treatments Sam began developing a love for boys' toys and clothes. Therefore, in medical terms, Sam's mother explained the child's transgendered identity as being evoked initially by their inability to 'read' the presence of testosterone which resulted in certain masculine behaviours being present in their child.

### 3.6. Recognising and accepting children as gender-variant

Sansfaçon et al. (2015) show that parents do occasionally recognise and fully accept their children's gender-variance. The authors found in their study that parents devote their support to their children in all aspects, and they further noted that social norms and expectations do not restrict parents from protecting their children, simply because it is their responsibility to embrace their children's gendered identities so that social stigmas - such as mistreatment, self-harm and suicide - do not affect the children. However, the parents clearly emphasised to them too that acceptance does not occur overnight and differs from one person to the next; some parents experience shock but do gradually adapt to the notion of their child being transgendered. However, challenges still emerge with acceptance. Firstly, societal pressure constantly influences parental acceptance of their child's gendered identity. This anxiety results in both the child and parents concealing the child's true transgendered identity in public because they fear negative reactions from their peers and society. Secondly, the prevalence of

transphobia within present-day society additionally imposes more stress upon parents to have their children openly identified and known to be part of the transgender community. Lastly, Sansfaçon et al. (2015) note that parents' struggles in relation to acceptance may result in their putting their social lives at risk, as some of the participants noted feelings of being uncomfortable with telling their family or peers about their child's transgendered identity.

Both Wren (2002) and Ryan et al. (2010) note that there is a dearth of research literature addressing issues on family acceptance and family relationships with gender-variant adolescents. Moreover, Ryan et al. (2010) conducted a study with 55 parents within a rural setting in California, USA. They found that various factors - such as social class status, religious affiliations, and gender - impinge on the potential acceptance of both the parents and families of transgendered children. Family acceptance of transgendered identities in this study was mainly noted amongst working-class citizens and those who do not have strong religious connections. These authors thus assert that the role played by families towards accepting gender-variant children is crucial and creates a positive living environment for both the family and children. This situation includes boosting confidence, increasing self-esteem, good health, and social support. Ryan et al. (2010) assert that such a positive environment greatly lessens the chance of negative outcomes in the lives of both the child and the parents.

### 3.7. Parents' fears and concerns regarding societal acceptance of transgendered children

Katz-Wise et al. (2016) examine how family acceptance and rejection influences the behaviour of transgendered youths' mental well-being. The conclusions of this study discovered that the negative responses portrayed by parents towards transgendered youths included anxious concerns about their child's well-being and the potential future abuse they might suffer. Hence, the parents feared that society may question the sexual identity of their transgendered children and, thereafter, mistreat or bully them. Hill and Menville's (2009) study noted that several parents are aware of the murders of both famous and infamous lesbians or gays, which have subsequently led to their children developing anxieties and becoming worried about the reactions of society to their coming-out. Parental fears are also regulated by how heterosexual parents' reactions might be interpreted by their homosexual children (Goodrich, 2009). Goodrich (2009) goes on to state that parents' emotions play a crucial part in raising a transgender adolescent; especially because the parents participating in their study are

heterosexual. However, these parents feared that their children might be prone to suicidal thoughts resulting from the pressures of a society that implicitly seeks to prevent them from freely expressing their gendered identity without the risk of being called names or feeling intimidated. This finding is supported by Robichaud and Dumais-Michaud (2015) who found that raising a transgendered child creates feelings of stress, nervousness and seclusion for both parents and child. This fact was noted by one particular participant who asserted that some parents feel that the exposure of other people's transgendered children in a social space will contaminate the hetero-morally accepted beliefs of both their children and themselves.

A study conducted by Rahilly (2015) in California among 24 parents of gender-variant children showed that their children's gender non-conformity 'obliged' them to keep this information secret. Their study - which explored parent's negotiations with their children's gender variance - found that many adults have adopted indigent cultural ideologies, and hence they conclude that these cultural ideologies restrict certain behaviours that challenge the socially accepted morals within that society. Moreover, Hill and Menvill's (2009) study further found how one parent proposed creating a rule that would allow their children to adhere to their gendered identity only when they are at home. This restriction would mean that when these children attended school and/or engaged with society, they would have to display traditional masculine or feminine behaviours whilst still being free to cross-dress or express themselves according to their chosen gendered identity at home.

A study conducted by Wren (2002) among a group of parents with transgendered adolescents found that many families do not like to engage in transgender topics at all with other members of society because they feel ashamed or humiliated to confront situations in which one of their family members or children might not be seen to conform to heterosexual moral standards. The study indicated too that many parents frequently experience negative reactions and treatment from heterosexual members of society which influence the way they treat their gender-variant children. Pepper (2012) concurs that parents raising gender non-conforming children feel a sense of isolation due to displays of great disappointment and disapproval from society that are made manifest through family members' criticism of their parenting skills, as well as nasty comments from strangers.

According to Sansfaçon et al. (2015), labelling children as transgender or gender non-conforming gives society the impression that these children are uncontrollable or difficult to

associate with and accept. In other words, parents with children who are not gender-variant treat a transgendered child as a bad influence who can convince their child to 'conform to gender creativity'. This study also found that many parents do not welcome being associated with a transgendered person. Hill and Menville (2009) showed that parents are aware that their gender-variant children might be mistreated by society and, thus, that they must develop unique safety measures that will protect their children from such abuse. According to Hill and Menville (2009) some of these measures include: advising the child to exercise discretion when using public washrooms, encouraging schools to adopt an anti-bullying curriculum and, lastly, encouraging the schools to conduct staff-development workshops to curb intolerance of gender variant children within the schooling environments. Furthermore, Goodrich (2009) also highlights the fact that some parents have predetermined ideas that encourage them to attempt to instruct their children on how to behave. For example, one parent in the study dictated that her son should carry his books in a 'manly' fashion. Such comments suggested that parents do have opportunities to lessen the level of societal discrimination and harassment that their transgendered children may confront (Simons et al. 2013).

## 3.8. Parental views on care and maintaining healthy relationships with transgendered children

A study by Simons et al. (2013) examines the positive and negative relationships between parents and their transgendered adolescent children. This study - which was conducted in California with a varied group of transgendered adolescents - found that the maintenance of a healthy relationship within a family is crucial for a transgendered child, as it basically ensures the stability of their mental health. According to Simons et al. (2013), transgendered adolescents often feel they will become a burden to their families when they admit their sexual orientation, and this can result in their falling into depression if their family is not in favour of their gender identity. However, there were also numerous emotional challenges that the participating parents encountered even through accepting and supporting their children's chosen gender identities. Firstly, parents experience stress and anxiety when they realise that their children are unhappy and want to commit self-harm or possess suicidal thoughts because of their negative encounters with society. These parents indicated that they felt powerless because they could not effectively protect their children once they were outside their homes. This emotion created some confusion for them about how they should accept and support their

child to ensure their happiness. Secondly, it emerged that parents face challenges of loneliness. Loneliness in this study was noted to be caused by parents experiencing the absence of support, both from family members and society at large, and, thus, having no one to talk to about their children's gender-variance. Lastly, the study found that parents experienced feelings of uncertainty which restricted them from taking any decisions on behalf of their children because they did not want their offspring to doubt or blame them for such decisions in future. For example, parents were uncertain whether allowing their children to transition to their desired gender would result in these children blaming them at a later stage of their lives. The parents further noted that these emotional challenges constituted a personal burden.

## 3.9. Communication between the parent/s and the transgendered child

Wren (2002) states that supportive parent-adolescent communication will almost always contribute to a transgendered adolescent's positive well-being. According to Wren (2002), parents recognise overall that their children enthusiastically trust that disclosing their gendered identity to their parents is a positive step. This study also found that some parents had unrealistic notions regarding transgender issues and imagined that their 'tomboy' child would having to "cut off body-parts" to align with the 'opposite' gender they wished to conform to. According to Wren (2002), these statements show that numerous parents encounter difficulties when talking about bodily changes with their adolescent children. Hence, this struggle creates a crucial need to create and maintain good communication with transsexual and transgendered children so that such misunderstandings are eradicated at an early stage.

Meadow's (2011) study confirms that the relationship that a parent creates and maintains with his/her gender-variant child creates a great sense of safety and security. For example, the study uses the story of Sean, a gay man who adopted a child called Michael. Michael is a gender-variant child who is assigned female at birth but wants to grow up as a boy. The relationship that Sean created with Michael made it easy for him to feel safe and ready to inform Sean that he wanted to disclose his chosen gender from an early age. Furthermore, Sean's constant support and active engagement with psychologists and therapists to assist Michael to adhere to his true gendered identity was reflected in Michael's desire to openly admit his desire for gender-variance. Parental involvement, both emotionally and physically, secures their

relationship with their child and allows their children to explore their gender-variance without any doubt or fear of 'coming-out' and/or suffering rejection.

Wren's (2002) study also showed that fathers tend to distance themselves from having multifaceted gender discussions with their children and would rather assign these tasks to the mothers. This disclosure suggests that some families fundamentally fear causing tension in their relationship with the gender-variant family member.


### 3.10. Parents' term/s of reference when communicating with a transgendered child

A book by Pepper (2012) aims to help the mothers of transitioning and gender-variant children to share their stories of how they have learned to understand and support their children. The book emphasises the various circumstances that parents raising these children experienced both within the family and the community − "our journeys are distinct, like the personalities of our children" (Pepper, 2012, p. 04). This comment means that every parent's journey is unique, and therefore, different situations bear out diverse reactions and outcomes. For example, one mother of a boy did not know how to address her son once he had transitioned and rather opted to call him 'child' because she was trying very hard to ensure that her 'son' did not feel humiliated by any potentially transphobic remarks. Most parents indeed have trouble finding the suitable term to use when communicating with their transgendered or transitioning child.

Parents in the majority of reviewed studies have their own terminology preferences that they feel are best to use when referring to their gender-variant children. Hence, many parents prefer to use the term 'gender creative' because they felt it is inspirational and allows their child to explore their desired gender identities. Several parents also appreciated the use of the term 'gender-variant' because they feel it is a medical term and, thus, encourages people not to challenge or ask any further information if they introduce their children as such. However, some parents stated that 'medicalising' their children's gender would restrict their happiness in future because people would expect a potential cure for the child's 'condition'.

Thus far, I have explored literature that has examined parents' views on transgendered children. While it is clear that parenting a transgendered child is fraught with challenges, the literature has revealed that these challenges can still be overcome with acceptance from both parents and society. In the next section of this chapter, I examine two further themes.

**3.11. Gaining knowledge on transgendered children**

This theme relates to 'acquiring wisdom' and stipulates that for parents to completely understand and accept transgendered children, they must firstly educate themselves by reading books/studies on transgender, attending workshops, and always keeping an open mind. Secondly, parents need to be critical of their own beliefs even though, as Katz-Wise et al. (2016) state, if they have ingrained traditional values they may be less accommodating of their children's transgendered orientations. Therefore, working on changing the way they understand gender orientation and considering attending family therapy will help them acquire wisdom and accept their cross-gendered child(ren) (Hills & Menville, 2009). According to Hills and Menville (2009), parents need to grant their children the freedom to be whoever they aspire to be because family support is the foundation of their happiness in their preferred gender identities. The study concluded that exposing children to antagonistic interactions within the family will only make them lose their self-confidence and, later, become miserable adults. These findings align with those of Simons et al (2013) who highlight the enormous importance of parental support for transgendered or cross-gendered children, as this reduces the potential burdens of depression and marginalisation of transgendered identities. Robichaud and Dumais-Michaud (2015) also state that in order for parents to support their gender non-conforming children, it is pivotal that they are educated on the various transgendered identity issues that they may experience in the process of acceptance. Moreover, easy access to information on transgender issues not only creates safe spaces for transgendered children but also assists parents to take the initiative to work against transphobia within their societies (Wren, 2002). Besides acquiring 'wisdom' in relation to transgender issues, other studies have shown how some parents have sought to consent to their child's gender-variant behaviour by seeking support and/or solace in religion. I explore the theme of transgender, religion, and spirituality in the next section.

**3.12. Transgender, religion, and spirituality**

Goodrich (2009) explores the experiences of 13 parents in 9 separate families who had adult sons or daughters who identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. According to their findings, balancing religious values and the acceptance of their transgendered children was a struggle for most parents, as they were conflicted about what to say or how to react to their children's gender non-conformity in as much as they 'challenged the canon' of their religious beliefs.

However, Goodrich also found that some parents drew on support from their religious faith; for example, one parent confided in her pastor, and he insisted that the parent choose love over faith. Such words encouraged and strengthened the conflicted parent to understand better that she could not change her child's sexual orientation but could modify her sensitivity towards gendered identities that are different to those set by her religious values.

Meadow's (2011) study shows that transgender identities can be described and understood in spiritual terms – specifically, as having to live a life of being spiritually trapped in a body that does not belong to you. 'Willow', a child who had numerous gender issues that even their psychologists could not explain, was given as an example of how accurate notions of transgender identity and an accepting spirituality were all that was required for their parents to understand their traumatised child. Willow was given a chance to explore his gendered identity and behave in a manner he felt comfortable with, which resulted in the family realising that Willow was transgendered and that his spirituality could not allow him to ignore his gendered identity. Willow's parents stated that accepting their child for who he was allowed him to become a happy, free soul who no longer felt trapped in an unwanted body.


## 3.13. Evaluating transgendered learners' experiences of schooling

A study by Bartholomaeus and Riggs (2017) with young children, aged 3-11, and their families in Australia sought to create teaching and learning environments inclusive of transgendered identities. The researchers found that heterosexual parents of transgendered primary school children reported numerous negative issues experienced by their children, such as excessive bullying from their peers who did not accept transgendered identities. Exclusion from the school curriculum due to transgendered learners not being recognised within the schooling environment followed on from their not receiving adequate understanding and care from the school staff – a finding also recorded in a study by Sansfaçon et al. (2015). Similarly, a study by Francis (2017) found that learners who are labelled LGBTQI+ inevitably experience challenges in schools in which compulsory heterosexuality and heteronormativity flourish.

A European study by Apostolidou (2019) with primary and secondary school teachers, parents, and children shows that the school environment is one of the places where transphobia remains most prevalent (through bullying or other violent school practices). Therefore, it is vital to comprehend the role that parents can play in supporting their children's non-normative constructions of sexuality. Parents' positive reactions to their children's sexualities result in

lower rates of suicide amongst transgendered learners. Parents who are well informed about transgendered identities create a safer schooling experience for their children. However, parents' lack of support towards their transgendered children further perpetuates discriminatory remarks which affect their children's desire to attend school or interact with their parents and peers (Msibi, 2012). For example, parents' active involvement in their children's schooling helps the educators to work closely with learners while showing children that they have all the support that they need to complete their schooling years.

A South African study by Bhana (2012) study, expressing one's gendered identity as being non-normative is still not considered acceptable within the majority of South African schooling environments. Heterosexuality is the ideal in most schools (Msibi, 2012); for example, most schoolboys have been shown to conform to notions of gender and sexuality which are fixed and exclusively heteronormative. Moreover, gender-variant learners have expressed how they feel invisible and intimidated within these schooling contexts. Hence, such feelings result in negative consequences (such as bad eating habits) and can affect the learners' academic performances.

## 3.14. Conclusion

This chapter has explored literature discussing parents' views on transgender issues through both a global and a local lens. The findings of this review thus indicate that parents face numerous challenges when raising transgendered children; mainly because the societies in which they do the raising conform to heterosexual norms. Therefore, challenging these norms necessarily creates various emotions of fear and loneliness which influence the acceptance of their transgendered children within their homes. This chapter, however, did not find any literature that recorded the total rejection of these gender-variant children; overall, the parents participating in the studies felt responsible for their children's wellbeing. It is imperative to note that this phenomenon was disclosed in greater detail from international perspectives, as research on parents' views on transgendered identities in South Africa was found to be minimal. Consequently, this study will indeed add to the emerging literature on parents' perspectives on transgender and the implications these have on primary school learners in South Africa. This chapter constituted the literature review and so Chapter 4 will discuss the methodology used in this study.

# CHAPTER 4- RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

## 4.1. Introduction

'Research' is defined as a sequence of collected data used to formulate answers to a study's research question (Cohen et al., 2011, Creswell, 2017). This chapter discusses the research design and methodology used in this study to gain an in-depth understanding of parents' views of transgender issues in relation to transgendered primary school pupils. This chapter is thus arranged as follows:

- Summary of research plan

- Defining research design

- Data collection methods

- Data analysis

- Ethical considerations

- Limitations.

## 4.2. Summary of research plan

| Research site | Research design | Methodology, instruments, and sampling | Participants | Age group | Duration of interview |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| KwaZulu-Natal, Umgababa | Research approach − Qualitative<br><br>Epistemology interpretivist paradigm<br><br>Data Analysis: Thematic analysis | Methodology: Phenomenological study<br><br>Research instruments/ methods: Semi-structured individual interviews with 23 parents. Telephonic interviews with 16 parents was conducted.<br><br>Sampling: Purposeful sampling Snowball sampling | Parents - 23<br><br>Gender:<br><br>Males − 7<br>Females − 16<br><br>Race: African − 23<br><br>(Note: Numbers may change according to available races and gender). | 28 – 52 | Individual semi-structured interview of 10-20 minutes. |

Figure 3:  Summary of the research approach

## 4.3. Research Design

Research design denotes the structure that displays how all the key parts of the research project coalesce to address the central research questions (Cohen et al., 2013; Creswell, 2009). Research design includes the research paradigm, methods, instruments, and data analysis procedures. This study adopts the following research approaches: qualitative, interpretive, and phenomenological.

## 4.3.1. Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is interested in "understanding issues that are studied" (Flick, 2014: p. 77). This broad definition means, for our purposes, that adopting the qualitative research design will strengthen the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon being studied based on the participating parents' understanding of transgender issues. Additionally, Cohen et al. (2013)

contend that a qualitative approach further requires explanations, which means that a qualitative research design fits perfectly with my study because it allows me to actively interact with my participants so that I can accumulate knowledge of their understandings of transgendered identity. This approach allowed me to give my participants a chance to describe, explain and interpret their opinions clearly without my ever doubting their responses. This method of research is also used to advance my understanding of participants' fundamental aims, thoughts and inspirations regarding the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2009). The qualitative research design in this study showed that there are multiple realities within a certain time and place (Flick, 2002; Silverman, 2015). Specifically, this study involved participants from different socio-economic backgrounds and, therefore, their responses or ways of attaching meanings to transgendered identity were dependent upon this context.

Qualitative research is aimed at approaching the physical, external world and describing the various social phenomena present in it (Flick, 2018). Qualitative research methods also describe human conduct by examining factors such as the entities that participants like or dislike. Adopting this research approach in my study entailed my giving the participants a platform to share their experiences, their interactions in society, and the meanings that they had created or adopted socially regarding transgendered identity. A qualitative approach is also used to monitor how people organise their language (Silverman, 2018) and this study ensured this approach by checking and thoroughly reading the transcripts so that a clear understanding of the parents' manner of replying showed a well-defined representation of their true perceptions. The importance of qualitative research in my study having been explained, I will now expound on the interpretivist research design.

### 4.3.2. Interpretivist research design

This study is located within an interpretivist paradigm. Kelly et al. (2018) affirm that explanation and understanding are the main aims of an interpretivist paradigm. Furthermore, this paradigm strives to understand the perceptions of the observed subjects, rather than those of the observer (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Therefore, in locating this study within the interpretivist paradigm, I could generate an in-depth understanding of the participants' perceptions regarding transgendered identities and how they made sense of the world around them. This study acknowledges that an empathetic understanding of the individual participants' views of transgendered identities is crucial. According to Thanh and Thanh (2015), the

interpretivist paradigm also allows researchers to explore, view and examine the world by means of understanding and interpreting individuals' perceptions without limiting their viewpoints and interpretations of 'truths'. I ensured that I remained empathetic when addressing the participants so that they never felt uncomfortable sharing their notions of transgendered issues. This section has provided a cursory explanation of the importance of the interpretivist approach and I will now briefly discuss the phenomenological method that was also used in this study.

### 4.3.3. Phenomenological approach

Marshall and Rossman (2010) state that phenomenology is a philosophy that, when adapted as a research method, can assist researchers to understand their participants' knowledge of their experiences. According to Polit and Beck (2008), the phenomenological approach discovers the underlying patterns of a lived phenomenon. These researchers stipulate that phenomenological studies investigate people's everyday lives and, thereafter, assess whether these situations correspond with their understanding of their shared circumstances (Chan & Farmer, 2017). My study employed the phenomenological approach because I wanted to strengthen my research by capturing the uncertainty of the lived experiences revealed through the participants' responses, while maintaining the richness of the data generated.

Adopting a phenomenological approach assisted my study in terms of analysing the aspects of thought that the participants adopted from their societal values, what lifestyles they regarded as normal, and the cultural, religious and societal norms and meanings that they had passed on to their children. I also sought to discover if the parents' perceptions of transgendered identities corresponded with the views they more overtly portrayed in society.

Phenomenological studies allow the researcher to observe the world through multiple lenses. This means that using a phenomenological approach will reveal the various perspectives that a study's participants experience, based on the prevailing influences within their environment. For example, some parents might not understand transgendered identities because of their religious values, which automatically judge transgender issues from a moral perspective. Moreover, adopting a phenomenological approach assisted this research by helping me to embrace the common features of the participants' lived experiences.

This section has outlined the research methods implemented and shown how the qualitative, interpretive, and phenomenological methods complemented one another due to their being non-probability based. Altogether, they enhanced the researcher's understanding of the participants' voices greatly. The subsequent section will briefly discuss the location of the study.

## 4.4. Location of the study

The study will be conducted in Umgababa.
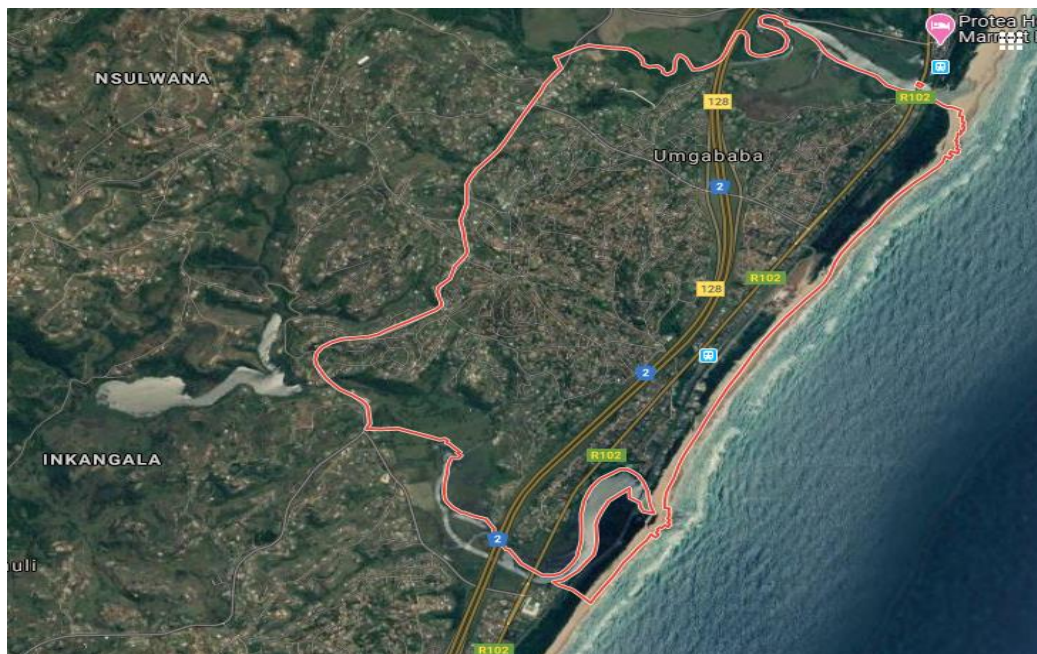


Figure 4: Aerial photograph showing the location of Umgababa in KwaZulu-Natal

This study was conducted in the rural area of Umgababa on the south coast of KwaZulu-Natal. The name Umgababa originates from the name 'Umkababa' which means 'my father's wife' (eThekwini, 2011). This area is a historical region and occupies 1,163.12 per km² in the coastal area of southern KwaZulu-Natal, falling under the eThekwini Municipality District. Umgababa is surrounded by two other large coastal areas, namely Ilovo and Adams, and lies approximately 36 kilometres south of the major metropole of Durban. The last census (2011) noted that the population of this area is 762 people (1,163.12 per km²) with 98.5% Africans and 1.45% Coloured people.

| Research site | |
|---|---|
| Province | KwaZulu-Natal |
| Municipality | EThekwini |
| Municipal Capital | Durban |
| Urban/Rural/Township | Rural |
| Total percentage of people in terms of race. | 98.5% Africans and 1.45% coloured people |

Census (2011)

There are numerous landowners within this traditional area, most of whom are subject to the regulations of the Ingonyama Trust Board, which is ruled primarily by patriarchal Zulu chiefs. Some areas of Umgababa fall under the uMnini Trust, while other parts are owned by eThekwini Municipality and Ingonyama Trust Trustees. This traditional council area is currently facing rapid population growth as many KZN citizens have begun moving in search of employment from the deeper rural areas to the cheaper locations situated on the outskirts of urban areas. The main language of the residents in this area is Isizulu. The deep links between the language, history and social structure of the Zulu nation implies that because the parents participating in this study are Zulu, their culture must necessarily play an essential role in shaping their views of transgendered identities.

I chose Umgababa as the location for my research because it was easily accessible from my own home and is a notable multi-cultural area, having accommodated people from various parts of KwaZulu-Natal. "Rural households rely upon migrant workers" (Bhana, 2010, p. 12), which means that the men living in this area go out to work and provide financial assistance to maintain their families who reside in Umgababa. Most of the local inhabitants are economically unstable and, in addition to the financial assistance provided by the male members within the household, rely on child-support grants and old-age pensions. There are also local support systems such as the uMgababa Taxi Rank and the uMnini Thusong Centre that provide local services, including social development, economic development offices, a community hall and library services. The uMnini Thusong Centre especially has boosted the employment of parents within the area.

There are four educational facilities located within this area, including two secondary and two primary schools. However, there are no FET colleges within the area, and consequently students must travel to town for further education. All four educational facilities have feeding schemes to ensure that the learners' basic nutritional needs are met. This study does not focus on one school but rather on parents who have children in the two primary schools situated within the area of Umgababa, so that the richness of the information gleaned is maintained throughout the study. This section has outlined where the research is located, so I will now explain the sampling methods adopted in the study.

## 4.5. Sampling

Sharma (2017) defines sampling as a process that is adopted by a researcher to systematically select a small number of individuals from a pre-demarcated population to serve as subjects for observation in line with the objectives of the researcher's study. Etikan et al. (2015, p. 1) assert that sampling involves "a portion of a population". For example, in this study, 23 participants were recruited and invited to freely share their understandings of transgendered identities. For the purposes of this study, it was impossible to interview all the parents who have children attending the primary schools in the area and, therefore, these 23 selected participants are made to represent the larger population of Umgababa.

This study adopted the 'purposive' and 'snowball' sampling techniques to recruit participants. Firstly, the use of purposive sampling was implemented to carefully select participants. Adopting this approach necessitates that the researcher formulates a certain criterion that the potential participants must possess preceding their being contacted to participate in the research study (Creswell, 2009). The context and participants are chosen based upon characteristics that are likely to ensure they possess the type of data that the research study needs (Creswell, 2009; Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

**Selection criteria used in this study**

- Participants needed to reside at Umgababa.

- Participants had to be a parent with a child enrolled in one of the (two) local primary schools within the area of Umgababa.

- Participants had to be keen to contribute to the study and willing to sign a consent form to be interviewed.

I used the above requirements as criteria to recruit participants. My study adopted the purposive sampling technique because this approach required specified criteria to recruit participants (Neuman, 2011), such as their knowledge and experiences of the phenomenon of interest being investigated by the researcher (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). The purposive sampling selection of participants availed me 10 female participants and 1 male participant - which was insufficient to allow me to saturate my data. After having used the purposive sampling criteria to recruit my participants, it was difficult to recruit more parents who were eager to partake in the research, given the sensitivity of the issues relating to transgendered sexuality. Thereafter, I adopted a snowball sampling process to recruit additional participants.

Snowballing techniques are used to locate participants who would otherwise be difficult for researchers to trace (Sharma, 2017). This means that the researcher must ask the already recruited participants to assist him/her in finding potential participants who match the already established selection to participate in the research study. The statement "a sample grows like a rolling snowball" (Sharma, 2017, p. 752) just means that the sample will grow as more participants are located. I used the snowballing sampling approach because it provided for the easy recruitment of additional participants. I personally reside in Umgababa and I know a few parents who also live in this area and have children who attend the local primary schools. Hence, I approached my neighbour to inform her about my research study requirements and asked for permission to include her as one of my participants. She also knew numerous other parents whom she felt would be suitable candidates and, thus, I approached them to obtain further clarification of their suitability as study participants.


## 4.6. Data Collection

Yin (2017) asserts that the crucial foundation for collecting data is conducting interviews. Coetzee (2009) additionally states that the interview process is a tool that promotes social interaction between the participants and the researcher; for example, this process allowed me to socialise with the participants after the interview. Therefore, my study adopted semi-structured interviews and photo-elicitation methods to generate data. The interview questions were built up from the research topic, which was of course parents' views on transgendered

identities and the implications of these perceptions for primary school learners. The interviews were conducted in IsiZulu.

### 4.6.1. Semi-structured individual interviews

Creswell and Creswell (2017) define semi-structured interviewing as a data collection method that allows the researcher to question participants on a topic and, simultaneously, to audio-record the responses from participants. Furthermore, my study employed semi-structured individual interviews to create and maintain the participants' trust throughout the study. Prior to the Covid-19 global pandemic, I was able to conduct interviews with 7 participants. After the implementation of the first Covid-19 lockdown, the remaining semi-structured interviews were conducted telephonically with 16 participants, which resulted in a total of 23 individual interviews.

Semi-structured interviews make the research more enjoyable (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) and allow the researcher to note basic, primary responses that augment their descriptions of the participants' views. This type of interview consists of posing open-ended questions to gain unstructured responses from participants and acquire meaningful data as to how they make meaning of the significant activities in their lives (Schumacher & McMillan, 2006). Additionally, these interviews give the researcher cues such as the body language, speech patterns and facial expressions of the participants (Opdenakker, 2006). Employing this type of interview assisted me in obtaining additional facial clues (via the one-on-one physical interviews) and voice cues (via the telephonic interviews) from my participants. For example, one of the participants kept sighing before they uttered a response, and this vocal cue gave me an instant reflection of the participant's emotions during the interview.

### 4.6.2. Face-to-face interviews

The use of semi-structured interviews is very popular for qualitative studies (Knox & Burkard, 2009) because they are comparatively easy and flexible. For this research project, seven face-to-face interviews were conducted before the announcement of the Covid-19 pandemic's first

Level 5 lock-down. These semi-structured interviews were conducted at safe venues such as the participants' homes, or at the community hall for those who felt uncomfortable with meeting me at my house. These face-to-face interviews were very effective because they permitted me to adjust certain questions to accommodate the understanding of the participant.

### 4.6.3. Telephonic interviews

The Covid-19 pandemic, as you know, caused huge panic across the world. On the 5th of March 2020, the first announcement of the arrival of the Covid-19 virus within our borders was made by the South African Minister of Health, who stated that a man from KwaZulu-Natal who had recently travelled to Italy had been infected with the virus. Subsequently, I was forced to consider alternative options for my research besides direct contact with my participants. I had to explain to these parents that we had to adjust our plans and find other suitable ways to communicate and generate data for my study. Some participants were doubtful that telephonic interviews would be the solution; however, I managed to conduct 16 telephonic interviews with willing parents. The duration of the calls was uniformly between 10 to 20 minutes and took place during the day, usually in the morning. Before we began our interview process, I read out the consent form so that the parents were reminded of their rights as participants. The consent form was always read out a second time because some parents said that they had simply not had time to read the forms.

### 4.6.4. Photo-elicitation methods

Harper (2002) asserts that photo-elicitation comprises the use of one or more pictures during an interview as a means of gathering more verbal responses and/or promoting discussions. However, Thomas (2009) states that pictures can also be presented by the participants within a study. In this study, my participants received the pictures from me via WhatsApp so that they had a visual representation of the photo that I referred them to during our telephonic semi-structured interview. The pictures distributed before the telephonic interviews were conducted were clearly labelled so that the participants knew the order in which they would be discussed. This study used photo-elicitation methods to help participants sharpen their memory and realise where they might have potentially misunderstood the questions. The use of the photo-elicitation

method kept the interviews dynamic, particularly with regards to topics that are considered to be extremely sensitive within a predominantly Zulu rural context.

Therefore, I used photographs of two gay individuals who are well-known public figures to spark my participants' interest in answering questions, thus evoking more responses. The images assisted many of them in voicing their interpretations of transgender, because this concept, as a concept, was previously foreign to them. The first half of the photographic insert contained two images that depicted a well-known gay adolescent dressed as a man in one quarter and as a woman in the other quarter. These images helped the parents gain an understanding of transgender issues and become more vocal during the interview process. The second half of the insert was just a picture of a famous gay man, who the majority of people have already seen via the media. Using these images helped the participants express their true reactions to the issue of transgender identity. These photographs were given to the participants at the commencement of the face-to-face semi-structured individual interviews and before conducting the interviews telephonically, in the hope that viewing them would trigger the parents' hidden thoughts via their body language or vocal reactions.

The table below depicts a list of the participants' profiles. All the names listed below are, of course, pseudonymous, as this study had guaranteed the participants' right to anonymity.

**Participant profile**

| No. | Participant | Race | Sex | Age | Duration of interview |
|-----|-------------|------|-----|-----|----------------------|
| 1 | Nozibusiso | African | F | 41 | 00: 20: 05 |
| 2 | Amanda | African | F | 39 | 00:17:01 |
| 3 | Rosemary | African | F | 47 | 00:15:18 |
| 4 | Nobuhle | African | F | 39 | 00:16:02 |
| 5 | Zamandosi | African | F | 35 | 00:16:00 |
| 6 | Khanyisile | African | F | 44 | 00:16:39 |
| 7 | Andiswa | African | F | 49 | 00:18:38 |
| 8 | Nomatemba | African | F | 39 | 00:19:00 |
| 9 | Nosipho | African | F | 43 | 00:16:56 |
| 10 | Promise | African | F | 37 | 00:12:59 |
| 11 | Nonsikelelo | African | F | 35 | 00:17:06 |
| 12 | Lusanda | African | F | 39 | 00:15:45 |
| 13 | Phindile | African | F | 50 | 00:13:50 |
| 14 | Sindiswa | African | F | 46 | 00:15:43 |
| 15 | Bongekile | African | F | 28 | 00:18:26 |
| 16 | Zuzile | African | F | 29 | 00:16:23 |
| 17 | Solomon | African | M | 52 | 00:17:29 |
| 18 | Siyabonga | African | M | 42 | 00:13:34 |
| 19 | Nkosinathi | African | M | 44 | 00:14:59 |
| 20 | Alfred | African | M | 46 | 00:13:31 |
| 21 | Sipho | African | M | 45 | 00:16:51 |
| 22 | Zolani | African | M | 36 | 00:14:40 |
| 23 | Mnqobi | African | M | 32 | 00:18:21 |

## 4.7. Data Analysis

Data analysis is a highly significant aspect of research. The researcher adopts a systematic approach to analyse the study in separate parts (Cohen et al., 2011). As such, Pope et al. (2006) affirm that data analysis needs to be conducted in a logical manner that requires dedication on the part of the researcher. This requirement makes analysing data a challenging task because the researcher must make sense of textual data using coding. Rallis and Rossman (2012) assert that analysing the piles of data obtained through a qualitative study can be a complex process. I, therefore, interpreted the data initially by setting aside the comparisons and contrasts in the participants' responses (Cohen et al., 2011). This action helped me to understand and further interpret the participants' thoughts. Reference to these comparisons and contrasts at a later stage of the interpretative process enabled me to draw conclusions based on the results of my study.

Furthermore, this study adopted the thematic analysis approach so as to analyse the data collected during the semi-structured individual interviews. Analysing data using a thematic analysis means categorising and then reporting on the outlines within facts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, Willig (2012) defines this process as constituting a focus on all aspects of the data, recognising that there are different meanings which show explicit content in relation to what the participants understand. The audio data was transcribed verbatim from an audio-recording into a written format or textual data. Transcripts were compiled and read thoroughly. Thereafter, I looked for any common patterns within parents' individual responses and analysed the obtained data using thematic analysis. These transcripts were further translated into the participants' mother-tongue (IsiZulu) so that they would be able to check them for accuracy. Percy and Kostere (2015) contend that thematic analysis occurs when the data gathered from participants is analysed at the time it is collected.

Braun and Clarke (2017) assert that coding data is essential and always requires a systematic plan. The steps listed below re-classify the raw data into organised and useful information. Furthermore, Braun and Clarke (2017) stipulate that one must firstly familiarise oneself with the raw data collected. For my study, I familiarised myself with the data by personally transcribing and translating it. Translations strengthened this phase of my study because I had to read the data many times to ensure that the views of the participants were not lost or misrepresented. Translations were necessary because the interview questions and consent forms were written in Isizulu.

The second step in data analysis is generating initial codes to organise the data (Braun and Clarke, 2017). I generated and recorded initial codes so that it would be easy to generate themes for my data. The third step involves searching for common themes - a process that includes identifying similar and/or shared ideas. The fourth step entails carefully re-reading the collected data to review the themes. The fifth step is then to define the common themes. The sixth step requires the researcher to report the results noted from the data. My study employed the use of thematic analysis and coding, as this practice helped me organise and understand the raw data in a systematic and meaningful manner that was supported by qualitative studies. I have outlined the use of thematic analysis and coding within my study and will now focus on the issue of trustworthiness.

## 4.8. Trustworthiness of the study

Ensuring trustworthiness within a qualitative research study is, of course, crucial. Thus, this study adopted the following dimensions to ensure its trustworthiness: credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2007). Hence, the subsequent four sections will briefly explain the use of each of these concepts within this study.

### 4.8.1. Credibility

According to Houghton et al. (2013) credible research is well-defined as the point when the data analysis and data generated within the study are trustworthy and realistic. In this study, after having transcribed and translated the data into IsiZulu. However, participants were not given the overall findings of the study because, according to Cope (2014), doing so would be a very risky technique that could threaten the credibility of the study. I will now explain how conformability was maintained in this study.

### 4.8.2. Confirmability

Confirmability is the point at which the end results of a study can be checked and proved by other researchers (Bryman & Burgees, 2002). In this study, conformability was ensured by using the same set of semi-structured individual interview questions for every participant. This practice guaranteed that the study remained unbiased and did not favour any specific gender or

participant. I also ensured that the responses that the participants uttered were transcribed verbatim and that I did not change or edit their responses. Shenton (2004) states that it is crucial for qualitative research to consist of findings that are comparable to the aims of the study - a condition that was followed in this study. The following subsection will briefly discuss how dependability was maintained in the study.

### 4.8.3. Dependability

Elo et al. (2014) define dependability as data that remains consistent and does not change under any given circumstance. However, some researchers argue that dependability requires the researcher to provide thorough details when reporting the study's findings. This study ensured dependability by recording accurate information during the transcribing and translation of the data (Shenton, 2004). Hence, direct quotations of the participants' voices are used throughout the data analysis chapter so that it is evident that no notion or understanding provided by the participating parents was changed or used out of context. I will now discuss how transferability was generated in this study.

### 4.8.4. Transferability

'Transferability' refers to the researcher's ability to draw general conclusions on the nature of both the research setting and the participants so as to enable comparisons to be made by other researchers. Fortune et al. (2013) add that transferability is a form of validation of the researcher's study. Nevertheless, Thomas (2013) and Tobin and Begley (2003) emphasise that within a qualitative research study, correct or incorrect answers for 'generalisability' do not exist. Therefore, this study ensured that a clear description of emotions, feelings, and the viewpoints of the participants was set down so that the research could be transferable to other settings. Hence, Thomas (2013) defines transferability as the level to which the conclusions can be generalised. I will now discuss reflexivity and how I ensured it was present enough to enhance the trustworthiness of my study.

### 4.8.5. Reflexivity

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) note that reflexivity in research requires that one conduct a self-examination of the overall thoughts and reactions the researcher has experienced during the research process and/or interaction with the participants (Raheim et al., 2016). In this study, I ensure reflexivity by not allowing my own religious thoughts and beliefs to influence my

judgements. Moreover, I further ensure reflexivity by noting down the essential thoughts and assumptions of every participant during each interview so that I can remain unbiased and neutral throughout my research.

Haynes (2012) defines reflexivity as the means of acknowledging how the social interpretations pre-existent to the study came to be and how these perceptions might affect the research findings. This practice means that the researcher firstly must be mindful that the participants may feel overwhelmed by the researcher's inquiries and may, thus, voice opinions that they assume will please the researcher. Reflexivity was maintained by thoroughly explaining to participants what my study entailed and that their responses would be respected and not criticised. Harper (2012) maintains that reflexivity means 'forming multiple layers of the research project'. I kept personal notes of every interview: a process that allowed me to acknowledge that I had captured participants' honest responses and did not display any emotional reactions during the interviews so that the research aims were always achieved. Given the sensitivity of transgender discussions and the fact this study was conducted in a rural area, strong emotions were evoked from many participants (as well as myself). Some parents said things that could be construed as judgmental and offensive to LGBTQI+ identifying individuals, and, therefore, I had to remain neutral and not react in a manner that would demotivate the participants from expressing their true feelings. I will now engage in a discussion of the ethical considerations of the study.


## 4.9. Ethical considerations

This research study was conducted only after ethical clearance from both the Department of Education and the University of KwaZulu-Natal Research Ethics Committee was granted. Sekaran and Bougie (2016) consider that asking for permission from the participants provides a holistic understanding of any extended process of research and grants them a chance to fully understand its nature. Hence, the participants in this study were given consent forms, which were explained to them in detail so that they knew the requirements of the study (Appendix 3). According to Flick (2009) and Sekaran and Bougie (2016), 'non-maleficence' is an essential ethical principle that researchers must consider throughout their research. In this study, I ensured non-maleficence by informing participants that this study was not intended to harm their well-being or reveal their identities, but would ultimately be beneficial to them, their

families and the community. Thereafter, the participants were guaranteed that they would have an opportunity to withdraw from the study whenever they desired to do so.

Ethics within an academic research project refers to a code of good conduct which is maintained through standards and principles that do not place the researcher and participants in any form of danger (Ruane, 2016). Flick (2009) maintains that research ethics protect the well-being of the study participants by ensuring that the confidentiality of all information received from them is preserved. Additionally, Cohen et al. (2007) state that guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality confirms participants' right to privacy. Anonymity and discretion in my study were guaranteed because the participants were informed that they would be given pseudonyms in the presentation of the research findings so as to protect their identities. Participants' permission for recording their interviews was obtained prior to conducting and recording them. A safe venue was used to gather data.

## 4.10. Limitations of the study

The first limitation of this study correlated mainly to the size of the sample and the schedule for interviewing participants. Parents usually had busy schedules and sometimes they had to cancel or delay face-to-face meetings or telephonic interviews. I dealt with this challenge by granting these parents the opportunity to communicate with me whenever they had time.

The second limitation that I encountered was getting participants to participate in face-to-face semi-structured individual discussions. In addition to the sensitivity of the issue being examined in this research project, the announcement of the national Covid-19 pandemic rules and regulations unfortunately made the participants even more reluctant to participate and resulted in numerous prospective participants withdrawing from the study. I dealt with this limitation by conducting telephonic interviews with willing parents so that the required data would be belatedly recorded.

Thirdly, being based in a rural context creates a huge challenge in terms of making telephone calls, more especially during 'load-shedding' hours (a period during which no electrical power was available). The network connection in rural areas is generally weak and at times the calls would 'cut off' during the telephonic interview - a situation that uniformly demotivated the participant from continuing the interview process when reconnection could be established. I dealt with this challenge by reminding the participants that they had the right to retract from

the interview at any time. I also asked the participant to please consider scheduling another telephonic interview during the mornings because I noticed that most of the participants had little or no network connection in the afternoon.

The fourth limitation that I encountered was the gender balance amongst the participants. I had originally anticipated having 15 male and 15 female participants in my study. I understood the sensitivity of my chosen research topic and found that, unfortunately, the rural setting in which the study was conducted was deeply rooted within patriarchal norms (Msibi, 2012) and, thus, community members, especially men, did not find engaging with sexuality-related topics easy, particularly in conversation with a woman. I eventually recruited only 7 male participants but overcame this problem by working empathically with all the participants who were available (regardless of their gender) so that no parent felt they had been coerced into participating.

## 4.11. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study employed the qualitative, interpretive and phenomenological approaches, all of which worked cohesively to locate the participants' understanding of transgendered identities without changing their pre-existing notions. The chapter also used the purposive and snowball sampling techniques to recruit participants from Umgababa. Thereafter, the data was coded and thematically analysed to make meanings out of the raw data obtained from the participants. The study also explained the nature of the semi-structured interviews that were conducted initially face-to-face and later telephonically in order to generate the essential data. Issues such as ensuring the participants remain anonymous and confidential was maintained throughout the study to ensure its trustworthiness. The methodology having been explained in ths chapter, the next chapter presents the data analysis.

## CHAPTER 5- DATA ANALYSIS

## 5.1. Introduction

The methodology and procedures of data generation for this study were presented in the prior chapter. Thus, in this chapter I will stipulate a detailed analysis of the data that was generated

through my telephonic and face-to-face semi-structured individual interviews. The data was also thematically analysed, which involved familiarising myself with my findings by re-reading the transcriptions several times and then grouping the participants' views into various main- and sub- themes. The thorough analysis of the data thusly generated will answer the study's two main research questions, namely:

- How do parents construct transgender identities?

- In what ways are parents' constructions of transgender identities are shaped by socio=cultural values?

This chapter draws from Butler's (1990) and Connell's (1987; 1995; 2005) theories that deconstruct the gender binary and heteronormativity in order to analyse the participants' responses. Moreover, Butler's (1990) theory will aid the understanding of gender, sexuality, gender performativity and queer theory and Connell's (1987; 1995; 2005) corpus that of gender as a social construct and multiple masculinities in order to increase this study's comprehension of how parents draw upon religion and culture to shape their views of transgender identities. The main themes and sub-themes of this research project are tabulated below:

| Main themes | Sub-themes |
| --- | --- |

| 5.2) Parental views on transgender identities. | |
|---|---|
| 5.3) The gender binary. | 5.3.1) The gender binary created by cross-dressing. |
| 5.4) Factors that influence children's understandings of transgender identities. | 5.4.1) Parents.<br>5.4.2) Society. |
| 5.5) Gender-based violence against transgender identities. | |
| 5.6) Effects of gender violence. | |
| 5.7) Religious/ cultural effects in shaping transgender identities. | 5.7.1) Religious beliefs in shaping the views of parents.<br>5.7.2) Traditional/ cultural views on transgender identities. |
| 5.8) Schooling of transgender identities. | |

Figure 5- main themes and sub-themes

## 5.2. Parental views on transgender identities

Many of the participants were not previously conscious of the meanings associated with 'transgender' and stated that they had never heard of the term before. This response correlated with that of Pepper (2012) who commented that parents were not fully knowledgeable about the terminology associated with transgender identities and would rather label their children as 'gender creative', which is meant to inspire the children to explore their gender identity freely. Moreover, the majority of the parents in this research stipulated as follows:

**Zolani** [36-year-old African male]: I do not know what it means.

**Zamandosi** [35-year-old African female]: I have never heard of the word at all.

The above responses show that the issue of transgender identities has gone nigh-on unnoticed in many rural areas and, consequently, that many parents currently have a very limited knowledge of this specific concept. However, in such cases, the images recorded in Appendix 5 below were used to assist the participants in gaining an understanding of the term 'transgender'. Additionally, Sansfaçon et al.'s (2015) research showed that parents do invariably recognise their own children's gender-variance. Although participants in this study did seem to be aware of the existence of gays and lesbians, some of them were confused when transgender identities came into question and linked this new concept to 'cutting off body parts'

or else tried to separate the word into two distinctive words so as to formulate a better understanding of the term, as highlighted below:

**Solomon** [52-year-old African male]: I do not think I have come across that word before… but I think it means a male person undergoing a surgery to change certain parts of their body.

**Nomatemba** [39-year-old African female]: I think it has to do with an individual changing their assigned gender by having surgeries to cut their parts of the body to suit their will and gender.

**Alfred** [46 years old African male]: I know gender refers to female or male, 'trans' is many or numerous. So, putting these meanings together means that transgender refers to a person that is male and female, like Caster Semenya maybe…

Nomatemba and Solomon's explanations clearly show that transgender identities are associated with cutting off biological parts of the body (genitals) to legitimise a preferred gender identity. Nomatemba states that achieving a transgender identity requires medical procedures, which is similar to the views expressed in Wren's (2002) study in which parents of gender-variant children feared they would alter their bodies irreparably by removing gender-related body parts.

The researcher then went on to ask participants how they felt about transgender identities.

*Researcher: Do you think people choose to be transgender? Explain.*

**Nkosinathi** [44-year-old African male]: No, I am confused on this one, but I think they do choose to be transgender because they feel trapped in another person's body.

**Sindiswa** [46-year-old African female]: I think they choose because they feel trapped in a body different from what they want, and therefore voluntarily choose to live a different life that fulfils their desires.

Nkosinathi's responses showed that some rural individuals associated LGBTQI+ identities with the creation of certain transgendered identities (bodies) that are not accepted within African rural spaces. Ahmed (2014) asserts that experiences of the body are associated with the idea of belonging, where belonging creates for them a sense of acceptance and value in their body. This view meant that Nkosinathi and Sindiswa concluded that acquiring a transgender identity is the remedy to feeling 'trapped in the wrong body' - a fact that correlates

with Meadow's (2011) study which asserts that adopting a transgender identity can be described as the result of possessing a spiritual understanding of having to live a life trapped in an alien body.

The researcher then used the images in Appendix 5 to incite the reactions of parents if their children were to inform them that they are homosexual. Most of the participants displayed a sense of hurt, shock, disappointment, and anger after they realised that their children are non-heterosexual.

> **Rosemary** [47-year-old African female]: Eh…I think parents pre-plan their children's future from a very young age, and they become hurt and disappointed when their child is not what they expected.

> **Nosipho** [43-year-old African female]: I would be shocked and disappointed as my expectations for my child would have to change as now the sexuality of my child is now different than what I thought it was.

> **Promise** [37-year-old African female]: I would be shocked because all that he does, his behaviour and his peers, none of them seem to show any sign of being gay.

> **Lusanda** [39-year-old African female]: My reaction would be very clear that I am angry and shocked as to what made my own child want to become lesbian or gay.

> **Phindile** [50-year-old African female]: I would be angry because, raising a child as a single parent is a huge challenge on its own, and realizing that the child is against my moral values kills my expectations of him and the future I have anticipated for him.

It is quite evident from this that many rural parents who participated in the study do not fully accept homosexuality. This theme was analysed using Butler's (1990) gender performativity theory which notes that parents enforce gender upon their children and regulates their children's performances of these gendered norms. The parents' views on transgender identities having been recorded, I will now briefly discuss the gender binary theme.

**5.3. The gender binary**

"The gender binary establishes a set of cultural assumptions about one's gendered preferences, expressions and identity, relative to an assigned sex" (Rahilly, 2015, p. 365). This view depicts the fact that the gender binary functions according to the cultural values that parents instil in their children and that separating the genders assigned to males and females creates the binary in the first place. Lorber and Moore (2007) posit that this gendered binary creates a notion that masculinity is assigned to males and femininity to females. There are numerous strategies that maintain the gender binary, and cross-dressing will be discussed in detail below.

*5.3.1 Gendered binaries created by cross-dressing*

This theme emerged when participants re-asserted a gendered binary amongst transgender identities. The gender binary exists through the stereotypical views that parents and their society possess. Upholding a certain gender, whether male or female, creates inequalities leading to the conclusion that one is superior to the other. This view correlates with Katz-Wise et al.'s (2016) study, which found that parents tend to accept some form of gender non-conformity for their sons to a minimal extent, but develop and/or display adverse reactions towards their sons engaging in cross-dressing. Furthermore, the researcher asked the study participants to elaborate on how they felt about cross-dressing.

> **Researcher**: *What do you think about a female who dresses like a man?*

> **Andiswa** [49-year-old African female]: I honestly do not think it is bad for a female to dress like a male because firstly, society does not pay too much attention on behaviour that is done by a female.

> **Zuzile** [29-year-old African female]: I do not see anything wrong with doing that when it is done by a female, I automatically assume that the person is admiring her brothers', father's, or boyfriend's clothing. I mean my daughter shops in the male section for t-shirts and I allow that because she always shops there for the quality.

The above extracts show that some of my participants and those in society at large find females who wear male clothing generally acceptable, whereas the opposite feeling emerges when a male person attempts to wear female clothing. This reinforced parents' belief that females dressing as men is acceptable, as it does not compromise their identity as females. This reaction proves that the way one dresses disciplines the body's physical appearance to conform to the normalised ideologies of femininity or masculinity. The type of clothes that an individual

chooses reveals which gender they adhere to. The majority of the research participants responded as follows:

> **Researcher:** *What do you think about a male person who dresses like a female?*

> **Mnqobi** [32-year-old African male]: I automatically see a gay person who is tired of living with a hidden sexuality.

> **Alfred** [46-year-old African male]: It means that the person is not happy being a male and would very much wish he were born female.

> **Sipho** [54-year-old African male]: I think the person is gay.

The above comments demonstrate that the way one dresses only further invokes a gendered binary in the minds of observers, and that such binaries can result in males who prefer to dress like women not being accepted by society and, instead, being subjected to questionable remarks regarding their sexuality. This theme was examined using Butler's (1990) gender performativity theory, which analyses the aspect of performance in sexed identities and locates the creation of gendered binaries. This theory shows that gender performance is stereotypically accepted by societal gendered norms with regard to how a person is expected to dress, talk, and walk. Likewise, Rahilly's (2015) study notes that the efficacy of the gendered binary is highly dependent on societal stereotypes that separate behaviours deemed acceptable for masculine and feminine identities and that such gendered norms create a binary for transgendered identities. However, the participants' responses set out above reinforced sex and gender as a binary which separates female and male individuals. These binary stereotypes can lead to a more discriminatory use of language towards transgendered individuals whereby females are labelled a "tomboy" and males derive even harsher identifications such as "istabane" (Msibi, 2012). The latter is a derogatory word which reinforces the stigma attached to being gay, as such an identity is othered, degraded and considered to be a stain on one's identity. This theme was analysed here using Butler (1990) and Lorber's (1994) perceptions of the social construct of gender, which maintains that gender is a form of false binary logic in which women are subordinate to men. This form of thought also creates room for discrimination against anyone who does not constitute part of the so called 'naturalised' genders. This section has explained the gender binary created by cross-dressing; next I will explain the parental/societal role in influencing children's construction of LGBTQI+ identities.

**5.4 Parental/societal role in influencing children's construction of LGBTQI+ identities**

From the participants' responses, two sub-themes emerged. Namely:

- Parents' influence on their children.

- Society's influence on children.

The participants' responses were analysed according to each sub-theme so that a clear understanding of the data would be presented.

**5.4.1. Parents shaping the construction of LGBTQI+ identities**

Many participants stated that parents are the actors responsible for teaching a child how to behave. This view implies that parents play an essential part in their children's lives, as shown by the participants' responses delineated below:

> **Zamandosi** [35-year-old African female]: I honestly think the involvement of a male parent in their son's life is vital and he does not only create a bond with the child but he influences the son's gendered decisions - he learns what behaviour is acceptable and what is not.

> **Mnqobi** [32-year-old African male]: Parents are the main influence on the children but to a certain point because, children grow up with a fixed set of 'do's and don'ts' that are strictly followed within the parents' house but as soon as they are with their peers they [the peers] have the power to belittle the parental instructions and convince the child to act in a certain manner.

> **Alfred** [46-year-old African male]: I think it is mostly the parents, parents need to raise children in a certain way that does not make them to be easily convinced to explore their gender identities to the extent that they decide to change who they are naturally.

> **Zolani** [36-year-old African male]: There are so many things that we grow up seeing as wrong for men/women to experiment [with] and, therefore, I believe that parents are the major influence that either makes or breaks a child's perspective on certain ideologies. For example, I for one believe that God created a man and a woman and nothing in between. This means that my children will grow up following the same

beliefs on male and female roles and sexes on what is accepted in our household and society.

Mnqobi places great emphasis here on the issue of parents being the first agents of influence on their children because they teach them from the moment they are born until they are old enough to learn from other people within their space. This view stipulates that children's initial cognitive development is all but established by their parents. Additionally, "a father's involvement in the boy's life, encourages parents to enforce stricter gender boundaries on their child's behaviour and to reward any signs of masculinity" (Wren, 2002, p. 379). This view correlates with Zamandosi's response in particular and shows that both parents have an essential role to fulfill in regulating their children.

Kane (2012) notes that the majority of parents succumb to the 'gender trap': the societal expectations which limit the parents' best intentions towards the binary, a view that correlates with Zolani's response noted above that the moment a child is born, the natural sex is the first variant that shapes how the parents are expected to raise their child. A boy is automatically expected to wear blue, be strong, fierce, aggressive, and masculine, whereas a girl is expected to portray the opposite characteristics. She is expected to wear pink and be shy, quiet, and feminine. Moreover, children's notions of gender and heterosexuality begin to manifest because, having been taught to adhere to heterosexuality, they now see themselves as heterosexual beings.

Martin (2009) states that mothers are often put in difficult positions here as they are accused of poor parenting skills when their children adopt non-heterosexual gender identities. However, many of my study participants further revealed that heterosexuality within a rural context is considered obligatory, and this view was gleaned from the use of a photo-elicitation picture and a short story by a character named Lasizwe delineated below:

"I believe if my father was hands-on in my life, I wouldn't be gay. Not that I blame him or regret who I am, it is just an observation. I am not suggesting that females are the reason behind gayness, but in my life, women have been pillars to a point where I was inspired to do what they do. Being a gay man in South Africa is still a thing. People will stigmatise you till kingdom comes. [*He then reminisced about the time he had to come out and tell his parents about his sexuality*]. My late mother did not talk to me for close to six months after I told her about my feelings towards boys. She lost her mind and always reiterated that she will not have a gay son in her house, but she eventually got used to it."

*Researcher: What would you have done if you were Lasizwe's parent?*

**Sipho** [45-year-old African male]: As a male parent, I think I would have tried to make sure that time spent with my son is enough and when we spend time together we talk about what he is expected to be, how he is expected to behave and lastly what duties he needs to fulfil as a man.

**Amanda** [39-year-old African female]: I would have contacted his father and informed him exactly what is happening and, therefore, make him understand that he needs to be present in his son's life as his son is now adopting a different unexpected sexuality.

**Nobuhle** [39-year-old African female]: Many fathers do not have an idea of the importance of the role they play in a boy child's upbringing and life, and children end up taking the wrong decisions because of the absence of their fathers in their lives.

**Zolani** [36-year-old African male]: I think he is being honest really, because the norms that we adopt are from what our parents taught us from birth until we have our own families and pass that on to our children. If the father were present and active in his upbringing, he would have not grown up to adopt 'sissy' tendencies and attitudes.

Whitehead (2002) stipulates that children are not born with social and cultural identities; instead, these are shaped through contact with 'significant others' - especially parents. Observation of the study participants' responses clearly showed to me that each and every parent plays a huge role in their child's upbringing. Fathers, according to Amanda's response, contribute immensely to their sons' lives and are considered to be needed for the task of teaching them how to conform to the rural heterosexual norms. Lasizwe's expression, therefore, comes across as someone who is protesting the family's expectations that his parents set out indirectly for him; especially because within Zulu societies there is a saying that stipulates that "a child is because the child's parents are." This statement asserts that how a child is raised is a mere reflection of whom his/her parents are and, in this case, Lasizwe actively observed the norms that her mother was teaching their female siblings, and so he too adopted feminine characteristics from his mother.

### 5.4.2. Society's influence in shaping children's views on transgender identities

Bhana (2013) states that societal pressure also influences the enforcement of gender and cultural norms and parents' understandings of hetero-morality. Some of the participants stated that in African rural communities, cultural norms influence their thoughts and opinions on transgender.

> **Solomon** [42-year-old African male]: I really think the community that one grows up in plays a major role in influencing the mindset of a child more than a parent does. A parent can only influence a child to a limited extent, for example a parent can instil morals that promote male and female relationships or sexual interactions but when a child goes out into the community to see a different norm to that he/she is restricted to follow but which is acceptable to members of society, then he/she too will not hesitate to challenge the parents' moral beliefs on homosexuality.

> **Rosemary** [47-year-old African female]: I think social pressure is the most influencing factor. Social pressure changes a lot of perspectives especially for adolescents, as they communicate with their peers, they begin to question certain things and, thereafter, implement various things that they take from their social peers.

Solomon's remarks maintain the idea that parents may hold the main power over their children's perspectives of transgendered identities, but it is evident as well that society continues to influence the foundation that has been built by the parents. Similarly, the use of gender essentialist expectations persists in such cases and props up stereotypical inequalities that label masculinities as inherently powerful. This fact is evident in Sansfaçon et al.'s (2015) research findings, which stipulate that society uses essentialist languages to position parents' notions of transgender identity. Society's influence having been examined; I will now discuss the gendered mistreatment of transgendered identities.

### 5.5. Violence against transgendered identities

Stigmatisation and violence against the LGBTQI+ community is, as mentioned, still prevalent in South Africa (Msibi, 2012). Cases of abuse against lesbians, gays or people with transgendered identities are still regularly reported in the media, during which the rights of the LGBTQI+ identities are not taken into consideration. This theme aims to locate the main reason why many cisgender individuals mistreat people who are non-cisgender.

*Researcher: What issues lead to the mistreatment of transgendered people in our societies?*

**Nkosinathi** [44-year-old African male]: It is caused by society and communities not accepting that LGBT individuals exist and are not pretending to be created in that way.

**Zamandosi** [35-year-old African female]: mmm [thinking]… I think it is really caused by the difference in the times we were born in and the time that our children are born in, old people like myself believe that transgendered people put up an act for fame or due to pressure.

This comment by Nkosinathi suggests that there are individuals who are still convinced that that the transgender identity does not authentically exist, and that this makes it difficult for communities to accept people who assert it. Zamandosi's response added to the idea of 'pretending' to be different and further touches upon the issue of generational difference, suggesting that parents have maintained their traditional ideologies that because transgendered identities did not exist in the 'olden days' and thus cannot be 'real' today. Msibi (2009; 2012) posits that such perspectives are underwritten by patriarchal communities which maintain that a man must uphold certain values, and stereotypes transgendered individuals as being deserving of the gender-based violence (Merry, 2006) they receive in these rural communities. Therefore, it becomes difficult to influence the patriarchal communities to adopt a change of attitude and behaviour.

Contrary to these stated reasons for the prevalence of gender-based violence, some participants maintained that LGBTQI+-professing individuals do not understand that they are bound to be mistreated for adopting or portraying unnatural and foreign identities compared to gender-conforming individuals. Some such responses are shown below:

**Nomatemba** [39-year-old African female]: Issues such as lack of understanding, I say this because many gay/lesbian people that I have seen on television are hyper-active and are likely to be [extra[verts] when it comes to the way they speak, laugh and walk, - therefore, they are mistreated because some people become easily annoyed by such [extra[vert] conduct or character.

**Nonsikelelo** [35-year-old African female]: I think mostly men are annoyed by the fact that another man can want to experience what it feels like to be a woman and, therefore, they want to tease or mock the transgender individual. Living in a rural context has

certain demands from a man and, therefore, anyone that acts in contradiction of those customs, whether intentionally or unintentionally, is judged.

The participants' responses showcased some of the stereotypical misconceptions portrayed by the media which have caused them to draw certain conclusions without checking the facts. Such conclusions revealed a central lack of understanding which serves to uphold binaries among the cisgender and homosexual individuals. Connell's (1987; 2002) theory of hegemonic masculinities asserts that hegemonic masculinity is the form of masculinity that is considered to be the most valued way of being a man in society. Moreover, Connell & Messerschmidt (2005) assert that it is a form of masculinity that positions men as having to adhere to prescribed notions of gendered behaviour and, consequently, one that subordinates women.

## 5.6. Effects of violence against transgender identities

The construction of gender identities manifests through schools and greater society and has an effect upon the way in which gender is portrayed (Bhana, 2010). However, the participants in the study agreed that gendered stigmatisation makes transgendered individuals resort to consuming abusive substances.

> **Andiswa** [47-year-old African female]: Lesbian and gay individuals tend to resort to consuming drugs or alcohol to avoid any conflicts or being discriminated against because of their gender.

> **Sipho** [45-year-old African male]: LGBTQI+ individuals tend to abuse substances such as alcohol or drugs with the aim to find happiness or increase their self-esteem that was lowered by the level of mistreatment derived from society, friends or family.

The above responses illustrate how gendered violence has negative effects both for children and adults: the issue of substance abuse increases in danger because many of the victims resort to alcohol and drugs to ease their shame and humiliation. Moreover, some participants described how a lack of self-esteem has a huge effect on how transgendered identities socialise with their peers, as shown below.

> **Nonsikelelo** [35-year-old African female]: Transgender people who are mistreated lack self-esteem because they have been through a lot of judgements and mistreatments in

their societies. Some also do not want to interact with people and choose to rather stay away from school or work.

>**Mnqobi** [32-year-old African male]: LGBTQI+ individuals would rather stay away from the streets or places that have many people because they fear for their lives.

The above responses describe how people who do not conform to the gendered identities approved by their societies and communities live a life that is controlled by the fear resulting from negative judgements. Negative treatment does not only affect their self-esteem, but also creates a gendered binary amongst non-heteronormative individuals. Pepper (2012) concurs that parents who raise gender non-conforming children often feel a sense of isolation. Mnqobi's response illustrates the ways that LGBTQI+ identities also isolate themselves because they do not feel comfortable being in public spaces owing to their fear that transphobic or homophobic individuals might harm or discriminate against them. These responses correlate with McArthur's (2015) study of the homophobic violence that transpired at a school in the Northern Cape - which concluded that homophobic violence creates a deep sense of sadness, isolation, and fear for the victims. I have explained the effects of gendered mistreatments portrayed against transgendered identities and will now discuss the religious and cultural views expressed towards transgendered identities.

## 5.7. Religious and cultural views towards transgendered identities

This theme explains that the viewpoints outlined by parents in the study reveal the strong impact played by their religious and cultural views.

### 5.7.1. Religious beliefs in shaping the views of parents

The majority of the study's participants adhered to Christian religious morals and shared a belief that for a person to be accepted in their religious spaces, they ought to follow a very specific Christian ethos. Furthermore, the following participants reported:

>**Researcher**: *Does your religion accept this form of gender? Explain*

>**Phindile** [50-year-old African female]: No, religion promotes morals and ways written in their scriptures and, therefore, since the LGBTQI+ people are not included as holy, they are discriminated and labelled as demons that are going against the will of God.

> **Zuzile** [29-year-old African female]: No, my religion does not compromise, it demands that we all live the life that religious beliefs expect of us.

> **Solomon** [52-year-old African male]: Religion does not accommodate anything that is not heterosexual as it expects that a man will automatically attract a female and vice versa.

The above responses depict how Christian participants' construction of transgendered identities were reinforced by their belief that God created only heterosexual beings and, therefore, that people should adopt behaviours that are approved by their scriptures. Moreover, Msibi (2012) stipulates that religion restricts or limits gender and sexuality expression and causes them to label LGBTQI+ identities as demonic or sinful. Nkosinathi's response posits that religious leaders powerfully influence the members of the congregation to further reject individuals who are gender non-conforming. Correspondingly, Solomon's response shows the heterosexual norms that are maintained by his religious beliefs, thus prioritising heteronormativity. Moreover, Msibi (2012) notes that the presence of homosexuality is constantly questioned and denied by various religions. Transgendered identities are, therefore, rejected within these spaces because they are deemed to be demonic and unholy in the presence of religion.

> **Nkosinathi** [44-year-old African male]: No, our religious leaders and members lack understanding of these different types of sexualities and label such as demonic or satanic acts that promote life that is not morally accepted by God.

> **Lusanda** [39-year old African female]: No, I am not a religious person but I do know that as a person who grew up in a religious home, any other form of sexuality that exists is satanic if it is not what you were physically born with.

These participants' responses show that the rejection of homosexuality remains prevalent and is often labelled as demonic, satanic and, thus, a deceptive gender identity (Bhana, 2013). However, Nkosinathi's response showed too that the idea of conforming to heterosexuality within religious spaces was further promoted by the religious leaders and pastors.

> **Amanda** [39-year-old African female]: I would have to firstly take him/her to the pastor to pray for the demons that are possessing her/him to be cast out, second option is to convince the child to think things through if he/she really is lesbian or gay.

Amanda's response clearly shows that local religious leaders do not condone persons who do not adapt to the heteronormative gender identities promoted by the religious ethos. Participants

believe that the pastors possess the power to disassemble homosexuality by praying to free the homosexual person from the 'ungodly' act. Contrary to this paper, Goodrich's (2009) study found that one parent confided in her pastor, who later insisted that their parent choose love over faith. These words then encouraged and strengthened the conflicted parent to understand that they could not change their child's sexual orientation.

### 5.7.2. Traditional/cultural views on transgendered identities

The majority of the study participants asserted that culture had played an essential role in shaping their views on transgendered identities. Tradition and culture groom and instil values as to what constitutes a man and, thus, how men should behave. This finding correlates with Bhana's (2013) study on parental views of morality which maintained that rural settings often serve to preserve strict cultural practices and gender limitations.

> **Nomatemba** [39-year-old African female]: Culture is very difficult to change its perceptions. In my culture, specifically, gay, or lesbian adolescents are stigmatised and discriminated against, therefore, that is why we fear allowing our children to experience such brutality from the society and cultural norms.

> **Zamandosi** [35-year-old African female]: My culture regards a person who is gay less of a man and 'he' is not included in cultural practices that involve grooming and declaring that a man is now old enough to have his family and be initiated into manhood.

The responses quoted above were analysed using Connell's (2005) theory of multiple masculinities, which explains that the promotion of heterosexuality over homosexuality is highly pivotal in replicating cultural norms and only further oblige a man to possess all the masculine traits demanded by their culture. Hence, Zamandosi's response shows that there is a certain verbiage that our culture employs in order to describe what it means to be a man, and that this does not accommodate gay, lesbian, or transgendered identities. Gendered dynamics and gendered roles are expected to be maintained and practiced accordingly. Zulu communities label first-born males as 'ínkosana' and "young age men are inducted into masculine traits through stick fighting as they prepare to assume the role of 'mnumzana' (head of the household)" (Bhana, 2010, p. 11). This practice means that they are trained to take over the father's role in the family once the father dies or moves away for work purposes. Connell's

(1987) theory of hegemonic masculinities is especially evident in the Zulu traditional practices of being an 'Inkosana' and earning the status of a man. Transgendered identities, therefore, are seen as challenging this notion and potentially discrediting males' superiority over women. As an Inkosana, one is expected to gradually learn from the hetero-patriarchal males of the household or one's society by leading important cultural rituals, such as burning the incense on behalf of the family members (Langa, 2012).

Likewise, this cultural influence is shown when parents teach their children to adhere to hetero-morality and indirectly relate it to gender and cultural practices which promote masculinity as being inherently powerful.

> **Siyabonga** [42-year-old African male]: Tradition demands men to remain men, traditional morals are very strict and require accurate following. For example, just as traditionally homosexual men were not present, hence, homosexuality should not be entertained in traditional expectations.

> **Lusanda** [39-old year old African female]: Culture does not respond friendly to challenges or opposing individuals because cultural practices need to be followed by male persons and as a Xhosa man it would be very difficult to allow a homosexual person to not fulfil the cultural demands of being a man and performing certain rituals.

> **Zolani** [36-year-old African male]: Tradition does not allow men to act like women, tradition creates a strong foundation that shapes one's thoughts, therefore, in my tradition, gay men do not exist. It is either you are a man in nature or female.

The above statements indicate that culture within a KZN rural context is constructed to adopt and champion patriarchal dominance within societies. Connell (1995) maintains that homosexuality not only shames pre-existent cultural notions of masculinity, but also incites a gendered binary reaction among traditional societies. Siyabonga's response correlates with that found in research undertaken by Msibi (2009; 2012) which stipulates that most African cultures require men to continuously demonstrate their manhood by performing certain tasks or roles within a household. Failing to comply with these restrictions garners questionable thoughts or mistreatment from other men. Likewise, a study by Bhana (2019) notes that homosexuality that is practiced within patriarchal households leads to many African men being labelled as 'un-African'. Moreover, Lusanda's statement above provides an example of cultural practices that further incite gender discrimination against gay, transgender, and queer-identifying men. Such

notions of religion and culture having been examined, I will now briefly explain the schooling context.

## 5.8. Schooling of transgendered identities

Children occupy most of their time during the week at school, under the watch of their teachers and peers. The schooling environment, therefore, plays a huge role in shaping the way learners seek to conform to their gendered identities. Moreover, Connell (2002) notes that schooling environments are also active spaces in which learners must constantly perform their gendered identities based on their assumed gender.

> ***Researcher****: What can schools do to support gender-variant learners?*

> **Nonsikelelo** [35-year-old African female]: Schools should maintain a clear policy of equality among pupils regardless of race, gender, class, and sexuality. This does not only create a peaceful learning environment, but it further creates more confident learners who are not afraid to express themselves in a way that they feel comfortable with.

> **Nosipho** [43-year-old African female]: Schools must promote equality amongst learners, teachers, and any other staff members so that children, especially in primary school, learn from them. Educating learners about the importance of diversity within our country is very important because it creates a stable and drama-free schooling policy and environment.

> **Nkosinathi** [44-year-old African male]: Schools should educate children that LGBTQI+ identities do exist, maybe they can even do assembly talks to encourage unity among children so that none of the learners feel discriminated.

> **Nobuhle** [39-year-old African female]: The schools can do posters, assembly talks and even plays that show the learners the importance of respecting other people's gender identities.

> **Alfred** [46-year-old African male]: They can try to encourage learners to treat one another with respect and avoid using terms that will offend gay/lesbian learners as they too need to feel accepted and safe within the school environment

The above responses illustrate that some of the participants do want the schools in their area to showcase a transparent policy on the issue of equal treatment for their children, irrespective of their gender, race, or class. Nosipho's response illustrated that the importance of diversity should be emphasised and maintained so that issues such as bullying, discrimination or 'gender-bashing' tendencies are minimised. Francis (2017) notes that schooling environments are one of the important 'socialisers' with regards to sexuality and gender in society. This researcher opines that schools also need to be evaluated on the morals that they pass on to their learners.

> **Sindiswa** [46-year-old African female]: I think schools need to work with parents to educate us and learners as well on sensitive issues of transgender and as I have noted before that because parents have the majority influence on their children they will definitely improve their children's attitudes towards LGBTQI+ learners.

> **Zolani** [36-year-old African male]: Perhaps if schools could educate parents on the existence of gay/lesbian lifestyles, then parents would try to create room for understanding or reading more on such issues instead of being quick to remain homophobic.

> **Sipho** [45-year-old African male]: Schools can try educating us more on transgender issues because as much as children value parents' notions on gender and sexuality, they do need to learn from their teachers and can adopt a different mindset that does not cause any gender-based violence but aims to accommodate all kinds of learners in school.

Sindiswa and Sipho's responses illustrate how the parents and the school staff (teachers, principals and management) need to work together to educate their children on gender and sexuality-related topics so that the teachers can also find the courage to include such topics in their curriculum. This view correlates with Robichaud and Dumais-Michaud's (2015) study, which maintains that in order for parents to support their transgendered or gender non-conforming children, it is pivotal that they educate themselves on the transgendered identity issues that they may experience in the process of accepting them. Similarly, Bhana (2013) emphasises that parents' interactions with their children implicitly create awareness of their children's experiences within the schooling environments, which can then work in favour of nurturing the parents' ability to influence principals and teachers to address sexual equality in schools. Butler's (1990) queer theory was here used to support and ground notions such as

dismantling the marginalisation of LGBTQI+ identities within schools and the promotion of the acceptance of queerness.

## 5.9. Conclusion

This chapter concludes by stating that parents within a rural context are not fully knowledgeable on the terminology associated with transgendered identities. Feelings of disappointment invariably arise as they try to understand their children's gender-variance. Religious beliefs and values place enormous power in the hands of the religious leaders in their communities because most of them preach that the issue of homosexuality is, in itself, ungodly and wrong. Traditional/cultural practices were noted to continue to influence the gendered binary amongst children and parents. The study also concluded that parents and school staff members need to work together to educate learners on the importance of unity amongst all leaners and the rejection of discrimination against queer learners. The data gathered from the interviews with participating parents was thoroughly analysed in this chapter, thus, in the succeeding chapter I will briefly discuss the overall conclusion of the study.

# CHAPTER 6- MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 6.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a conclusion to this study of parents' views of transgender identities. A transitory summary will be provided of each chapter, followed by the study's main findings and recommendations.

## 6.2. Summary of chapters

Chapter One examined the views of parents regarding transgender identities and the implications these had on primary school learners. Moreover, the rationale was triggered by the researcher wanting to understand how traditional and cultural ideas of gender and sexuality tend to challenge non-normative gender identities. The background on transgender identity was supported by theories and research literature offering both a local and an international perspective on the issue. The chapter then set out the objectives and research questions of the study. Next, the methodology adopted in the study was briefly discussed and, lastly, an overview of the expectations of each chapter was provided.

Chapter Two described the theoretical frameworks that were implemented in the research with the objective of providing a better understanding of the parents' views of transgendered identities. Theories such as Butler's (2004) Gender Performativity in relation to Queer theory and Connell's theories (2005;1987) of Multiple Masculinities and the Social Construction of Gender were further elaborated on and utilised to analyse the data generated from the participants' interviews.

Chapter Three presented detailed research on local and international perspectives on transgendered identities through the reviewed literature and then appraised them according to pre-set themes. Literature relating to the gender binary perspective and parents' pre-existing notions on gender and sexuality were discussed. Moreover, the religious, traditional, and cultural ideologies potentially shaping rural parents' views on gender were briefly examined in this chapter.

Chapter Four provided a brief discussion of the methodology that was used to generate the data from participants. This study opted for a combination of the qualitative, interpretivist and phenomenological research designs and consciously sought to maintain the central component of the qualitative form, which is to gain an in-depth understanding of the research topic through the participants' thoughts and opinions. Chapter Four also provided a brief discussion on the

location of the study, the recruitment process, and how data was collected from every participant using the semi-structured individual interview process and photo-elicitation methods. Thereafter, it described how data was thematically analysed and coded to create meaningful themes and data. Finally, it examined the trustworthiness of the study using the categories of credibility, reflexivity, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Ethical considerations and the data collection limitations the researcher encountered were also discussed thoroughly in this chapter.

In Chapter Five, the data analysis was presented using the thematic analysis and coding method, which entailed grouping the participants' responses into themes. The study consisted of main and sub-themes, which gradually revealed the participants' own notions of the research aims and objectives. Next came the presentation of the data, showing that these parents played a huge part in the shaping of their children's views on transgender, as well as the role that the schooling environment can play to curb the violent acts of gender binary prejudice perpetuated against queer learners.

An overview of the previous five chapters in the study having been delineated, I will now discuss the main findings.

## 6.3. Main findings of the study

### 6.3.1. Parental views on transgender identities

Research showed that parents possess only limited information on transgender identities (Pepper, 2012); however, this deficiency does not mean that parents are unaware of the existence of gender-variance. Nevertheless, this study also found that the participating parents continued to hold to strong heterosexual norms that limited their desire to gain more knowledge about transgender issues. The findings demonstrated that participants often displayed confusion when questioned about the issue of transgendered identities and tended to associate this practice with acts of biological mutilation, such as cutting off male genitalia to legitimise a preferred gender identity. This lack of understanding was also linked to participants' belief that transgendered persons feel trapped in a body that does not 'belong' to them. This study also found that rural individuals associate LGBTQI+ identities with certain behaviours that are not accepted within African rural spaces. Overall, this study indicated that some of the

participants rejected homosexuality in favour of re-inforcing heterosexual norms and standards.

**6.3.2. The gender binary**

The study found that gendered binary attitudes continue to exist within this rural space as a result of the cultural values that parents instil in their children – a practice that should not be ignored if prejudice and violence against the LGBTQI+ community is to ultimately be eradicated.

*6.3.2.1. Gendered binaries created by cross-dressing*

Katz-Wise, Rosario and Tsappis's (2016) study found that parents tend to accept some form of gender non-conformity amongst their sons, but only to a minimal extent. This trend was also demonstrated in this study, whereby participants supported some measure of cross-dressing by girl children but considered it problematic if practiced by their sons. Moreover, affording preferential treatment to one gender, whether male or female, creates inequalities and the assumption that one sex is superior to the other, thus, perpetuating the gendered binary.

**6.3.3. Parents'/society's role in influencing children's construction of LGBTQI+ identities**

*6.3.3.1. Parents shaping constructions of LGBTQI+ identities*

This study found that parents are essential influences in the moral and gendered upbringing of children. External research states that the majority of parents submit to the gender trap because societal prospects limit the parents' best intentions towards accepting deviations of the gender binary (Kane, 2012). Furthermore, parents in this study demonstrated that heterosexuality within a rural context is considered not only normal but necessary. Whitehead (2002) stipulated, however, that children are not born with cultural and social identities; instead, these norms are shaped through connection with 'significant others', specifically parents and family members. This view intimates that each parent – both the father and the mother − plays a huge role in their child's upbringing.

*6.3.3.2. Societal influence in shaping the children's views on transgender identities*

Other research stipulated too that societal pressure influences the enforcement of gender and cultural norms, thus influencing parents' understanding of hetero-morality (Bhana, 2013). Moreover, it was evident in this study that society at large (particularly during children's school

years) continues to influence the gender binary foundation that has been instilled in children by their parents. This practice involves acts such as their stereotypically adhering to the society's heterosexual demands for 'naturalising' a certain gender over others.

### 6.3.4. Violence against transgendered people

It was found too that incidents of abuse and stigmatisation against LGBTQI+ identities are still prevalent (Msibi, 2012). The rights of transgendered individuals are, overall, not recognised or valued. The study's participants demonstrated that there are many individuals who still do not even acknowledge the existence of transgendered identities, and this fact makes it difficult for our communities to accept LGBTQI+ individuals. It is not easy to persuade patriarchal communities to change their perceptions of, and reactions towards, homosexuality, because they often categorise non-heterosexual people as unnatural or demonic.

### 6.3.5. Effects of violence against transgender identities

This study also found that gender violence has negative effects for both children and adults − substance abuse increases because many of the victims of gender-based prejudice use alcohol and drugs to ease their shame and humiliation. Moreover, it was also found that many people who do not conform to the so-called 'normal' gendered identities approved by their communities come to live lives controlled by fear and denunciation. Society's negative treatment not only adversely affects their self-esteem, but also re-enforces the spectre of a gendered binary amongst these heterosexual-defying individuals.

### 6.3.6. Religious and cultural views on transgender identities

*6.3.6.1. Religious beliefs shaping the views of parents*

Participants in this study almost uniformly shared a belief that for a person to be accepted within their religious communities they ought to adhere to a specific Christian ethos. This leads to the conclusion that adopting a lifestyle that is not prescribed by their religious doctrine is unacceptable and, thus, must be labelled 'a sin'. External research reveals that religion restricts or limits certain practices related to gender and sexuality (Msibi, 2012). Hence homosexuality is labelled as a deceptive, demonic, and satanic gender identity and its rejection remains prevalent amongst overtly religious communities (Bhana, 2013). This study also found that

spiritual leaders also work to perpetuate the notion that it is a sin to be homosexual and transgender identities, therefore, are ostracised within these religious groups.

### 6.3.6.2. Traditional/cultural views on transgender identities

This study found that tradition and culture instil and 'groom' people's values relating to how men should behave. Transgendered identities, therefore, are seen as challenging these notions and are thus considered inferior to both 'real' men and women. This fact is evidenced by the fact that parents often teach their children to adhere to heterosexuality by indirectly relating it to gender and traditional practices which promote masculinity as being more powerful than its feminine counterpart. Msibi (2009; 2012) stipulates that African cultures require men to continuously demonstrate their 'manhood' by performing certain protective roles or tasks within a household (such as being the 'breadwinner'), and that failing to comply with these 'rules' inspires attacks against their masculinity (Bhana, 2019).

## 6.3.7. Schooling of transgender identities

The study's conclusions propose that the school environment plays a significant part in shaping the way learners conform to their gendered identities. Some of the research participants wanted schools/education departments to show a transparent policy on the issue of equal treatment for their children, irrespective of their gender-identity, race, or class. Research shows that schooling environments are one of the important socialisers in terms of pupils' attitudes towards sexuality and gender in society (Francis, 2017). This study also found that school staff members need to work closely with parents and their children, so that all can gain greater insight on transgender-related issues.

## 6.4. Recommendations

It was ultimately found that many of the parents in the study continue to hold strong cultural, traditional, and religious beliefs and, therefore, most often denounce LGBTQI+ identities as abnormal and immoral. This response shows that very little information is available on transgender identities within rural contexts and, therefore, community members, including the study participants, shy away from engaging with such a topic. This study, therefore, recommends that a greater awareness of transgender issues needs to be facilitated; not only amongst learners in schools, but also amongst their parents. Bhana (2013) maintains that schools need to work with parents so that they can play a role in influencing school staff

members to address sexual equality in schools. Furthermore, Msibi (2012) clarifies that it is very difficult to change the perceptions of patriarchal parents who uphold strong notions of heterosexuality; however, this study recommends that all stakeholders (parents, society leaders and schools) play an essential role by potentially becoming change-agents and gradually influencing these heterosexual individuals towards full acceptance of all individuals regardless of their gender/sexuality identity.

This study, further, recommends that the schooling environments within rural contexts should become inclusive teaching and learning spaces where children are treated equally regardless of their gender-conformity preference. They can do this by helping them to understand that transgender identities are natural and should be treated as such. Bhana (2012) asserts that although teachers cannot eliminate transphobia, they can still influence the rejection of heterosexual dominance within the classroom. Teachers need to make use of the Life Orientation curriculum to clarify gender- and sexuality-related topics in a respectful and acceptable manner so that learners will also gain insights on the broad-scale existence of homosexuality and gender-variance.

As revealed before in this chapter, schools remain the main socialisers of gender and sexuality-related issues (Francis, 2017). Hence, this study also recommends that schools that experience a high number of homophobic conflicts need to consider reshaping their policies in a manner that promotes and endorses a gender spectrum. Dismantling gender segregation starts with assigning duties within the classroom that do not serve to promote heterosexual morality and superiority. Simple actions can contribute towards building transphobic- and homophobic-free schools.

This study understands the sensitivity of the issues surrounding gender and sexuality; hence it recommends that parents spend time communicating with their children in order to gradually give their offspring sufficient confidence to share their gender and sexual preferences with them. Homosexuality occuring in male-dominated societies is often labelled as an un-African practice (Bhana, 2019); therefore, this study recommends that parents' need to play their part as change-agents by consciously reshaping the traditional beliefs regarding heterosexuality currently prescribed within rural communities. Positive attitudes should be perpetuated by actively encouraging community members to acknowledge transgender identities. Awareness needs to transpire and grow; thus, relevant information needs to be disseminated across rural

areas so that both the community and its parents do not receive and blindly reflect negative information regarding LGBTQI+ identities.

## 6.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research highlighted the necessity for society in general to recognise gender and sexuality within rural contexts. This study is of great importance because it shows how the gendered binaries are practiced by parents who insist on adhering to cultural, traditional, and religious heterosexual morals. Furthermore, a focus on transgendered identities is vital so that parents do not continue to receive and spread limited knowledge in relation to lesbians and gays but become aware that other gender identities exist - even in rural settings. This study encourages parents to be eager to become the first change-agents by breaking the stereotypical notions that masculinities within patriarchal environments continue to enforce. It is vitally important for the future of all South Africans that parents become the 'frontline' that serves to eliminate the homophobic and transphobic remarks and actions that today's gender-variant individuals so frequently experience.

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**APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

02 September 2020

**Miss Thembisa Princess Tshibe (215015725)**
**School Of Education**
**Edgewood Campus**

**Dear Miss Tshibe,**

**Protocol reference number:** HSSREC/00001366/2020
**Project title:** Parents views on transgender and the implications for primary school learners
**Degree:** Masters

## Approval Notification – Full Committee Reviewed Protocol

This letter serves to notify you that your response received on 07 July 2020 to our letter of 02 July 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**

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

This approval is valid for one year until 02 September 2021
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours faithfully

..................................................................
**Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)**

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587
Website: http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood  ■ Howard College  ■ Medical School  ■ Pietermaritzburg  ■ Westville

**INSPIRING GREATNESS**

# APPENDIX 2: ETHICAL CLEARANCE- KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

| **Enquiries**: Phindile Duma/Buyi Ntuli | **Tel**: 033 392 1063/51 | **Ref.**:2/4/8/4100 |
| --- | --- | --- |

Ms Thembisa Princess Tshibe
P.O. Box 616
**IIFRACOME**
4170

Dear Ms Tshibe

### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"PARENTS' VIEWS ON TRANSGENDER AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR LEARNERS IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 09 March 2020 to 10 January 2022.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma/Mrs Buyi Ntuli at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

**Dr. EV Nzama**
**Head of Department: Education**
**Date: 09 March 2020**

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## APPENDIX 3: INFORMED CONSENT FORM (ENGLISH VERSION)

Dear Participant

**Request for permission to participate in a research study.**

I Thembisa Princess Tshibe (Student no. 215015725) am a masters (Gender Education) student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. You are invited to consider participating in a study that is part of a larger research project titled, **parents' views on transgender identities and the implications for learners in a primary school**, which seeks to explore how boys and girls in schools in KwaZulu-Natal learn about and "perform" gender and sexuality. My research project forms part of this project, with my supervisor, Professor Deevia Bhana as the principal investigator in this study.

The aim and purpose of this research is to examine how parents construct meaning to gender identities, and how transphobia stem from these notions. It also involves examining how culture and tradition form power imbalances. The study is expected to enroll 30 parents and expects you to participate voluntary in individual interviews which will be approximately 30-45 minutes long and in order to accommodate the Covid-19 pandemic participants will be asked to participate in interviews through WhatsApp video call or telephonic methods.

With your permission, interviews will be audio-taped and therefore copied out and made accessible to you to verify information obtained. The reason for recording interviews is for copying data accessibly. The data will be saved in a safe space and destroyed after a period of five years. All participants real names will not be used, and information collected will be private. For this reason, assumed names will be used. You will also be allowed to withdraw from the study at any time if you feel uncomfortable, without any consequence. However, there will be limits of confidentially in cases where your well-being/ other learners are affected.

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions pertaining to the validity of the study then you are most welcome to contact you may contact the Professor Deevia Bhana, my supervisor of the study on: 031 260 2603/ bhanad1@ukzn.ac.za  or email hssrec@ukzn.ac.za


Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Thembisa Princess Tshibe

Email: 215015725@stu.ukzn.ac.za or misatshibe215@gmail.com

**PARTICIPANT'S INFORMED ASSENT REPLY SLIP**

I ……………………………………………………………. (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this research project and I agree to my participation in the research project.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time should I desire.

……………………………………………                                    ………………………

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT                                                  DATE

*Additional consent, where applicable:*

| I hereby provide assent to: | Please tick | |
|---|---|---|
| Audio-record my interview | YES | |
| | NO | |

**APPENDIX 4: INFORMED CONSENT FORM (ISIZULU VERSION)**

**ISICELO SEMVUME YOKUBAMBA IQHAZA OCWANINGWENI LOKUCWANINGA.**



Mhlanganyeli othandekayo                                    02 Nhlolanja 2020

Mina Thembisa Princess Tshibe (215015725) ngingumfundi weMasters (Gender Education) eNyuvesi yaKwaZulu-Natali. Uyamenywa ukuthi ucubungule ukubamba iqhaza ocwaningweni oluyingxenye yephrojekthi enkulu yocwaningo enesihloko esithi, **imibono yabazali ngobunikazi bobulili obuhlukile kanye nemithelela yabafundi esikoleni samabanga aphansi**, nesifuna ukubheka ukuthi abafana namantombazane ezikoleni zaKwaZulu-Natali bafunda kanjani mayelana nokuthi "zenze" ubulili kanye nezocansi. Iphrojekthi yami yocwaningo iyingxenye yalomsebenzi, nomphathi wami, uSolwazi Deevia Bhana njengomphenyi oyinhloko kulolu cwaningo.

Inhloso nenhloso yalolu cwaningo ukubheka ukuthi abazali bazakhela kanjani izincazelo zobunikazi bobulili, nokuthi kwenzeka kanjani lokhu okuvela kulombono. Kubandakanya futhi ukuhlola ukuthi isiko nesiko bakwakha kanjani ukungalingani kwamandla. Lolu cwaningo kulindeleke ukuthi lubhalise abazali abangama-30 futhi ulindele ukuthi ubambe iqhaza ngokuzithandela ezingxoxweni ngazinye eziba cishe imizuzu engama-30 kuya kwengama-30 ubude futhi ukuze siqinisekise ukulandelwa kweigomo nemibandela yesifo kazwelonke lweCovid-19 ababambiqhaza bacelwe ukuthi babambe iqhaza ezingxoxweni ngeselula noma ngezinhlelo zesimanje phecelezi iWhatsApp video call.

Ngemvume yakho, izingxoxo ezizothintwa zizothunyelwa ngokulalelwayo ngakho-ke zikopishwe futhi zenziwe zifinyeleleke kuwe ukuze uqinisekise imininingwane etholakele. Isizathu sokurekhoda izingxoxo ukukopisha idatha ngokufinyeleleka. Imininingwane izogcinwa endaweni ephephile bese ichithwa ngemuva kweminyaka emihlanu. Bonke ababambiqhaza amagama wangempela ngeke asetshenziswe,

futhi imininingwane eqoqwe izoba yimfihlo. Ngalesi sizathu, amagama azosetshenziswa aqanjiwe. Uzovunyelwa futhi ukuthi uhoxe esifundweni nganoma yisiphi isikhathi uma uzizwa ungakhululekile, ngaphandle kwemiphumela. Kodwa-ke, kuzoba nemingcele yokugcina izimfihlo ezimweni lapho inhlalakahle yakho / abanye abafundi ithinteka khona.

Uma kwenzeka kuba nezinkinga noma ukukhathazeka / imibuzo ephathelene nokuqinisekiswa kocwaningo, wamukelekile kakhulu ukuxhumana ungaxhumana noProfessor Deevia Bhana, umphathi wami walolu cwaningo kule nombolo: 031 260 2603 / bhanad1@ukzn.ac.za. noma i-imeyili hssrec@ukzn.ac.za.

Siyabonga ngokubambisana kwakho.
Ozithobayo,

███████████

UThembisa Princess Tshibe

███████████

I-imeyili: 215015725@stu.ukzn.ac.za. noma misatshibe215@gmail.com

ISICELO SEMVUME YOKUBAMBA IQHAZA OCWANINGWENI.

Mina …………………………………………………………. (Amagama aphelele obambe iqhaza) ngalokhu ngiyaqinisekisa ukuthi ngiyakuqonda okuqukethwe yile ncwadi kanye nohlobo lwale projekthi yocwaningo futhi ngiyavuma ukubamba iqhaza kwami kuphrojekthi yocwaningo.

Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ngikhululekile ukuhoxa kuphrojekthi nganoma yisiphi isikhathi uma ngifisa.


……………………………………….                    ………………………….
Ikusayina kombambiqhaza                              usuku


Imvume eyengeziwe, lapho kusebenza khona:


| Ngaleyo ndlela nginikela ukuvuma: Rekhoda i-interview yami | Phawula ngophawu ngezansi |
|---|---|
| YEBO | |
| CHA | |

**SEMI-STRUCTUIRED INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

1. What do you understand about the term 'transgender'?
2. Do you think people choose to be transgender? Why do you say so?
3. What comes to your mind when you see a female wearing male clothes?
4. What comes to your mind when you see a male wearing female clothes?
5. Is it right or wrong to be transgender, lesbian, or gay?
6. What do you think influences the way your child or children construct meanings on transgender?
7. What causes people to mistreat transgender people in our societies?
8. How does gender-based violence affect LGBTI people?
9. What would you suggest as solutions of fighting violence against transgender people in society?
10. Does your religion accept this form of gender? Explain

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..



Masweneng (2017)

The picture above shows a young vlogger who is a well-known celebrity named Lasizwe Dambuza. Who was originally born as Thulasizwe Siphiwe Dambuza.

 *"I believe if my father was hands on in my life, I wouldn't be gay, not that I blame him or regret who I am, it's just an observation. I am not suggesting that females are the reason behind gayness, but in my life, women have been*

*pillars to a point where I was inspired to do what they do. Being a gay man in South Africa is still a thing. People will stigmatise you till kingdom comes. He reminisced about the time he had to come out and tell his parents about his sexuality. My late mother didn't talk to me for close to six months after I told her about my feelings towards boys. She lost her mind and always reiterated that she will not have a gay son in her house, but she eventually got used to it."*

<div align="right">Masweneng (2017)</div>

1. What do you think about Lasizwe's story?
2. How would you react if the situation happened to your own child?
3. What would you have done if you are Lasizwe's parent?
4. What do you think made Lasizwe's mother to react the way she did?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………



Somizi Mhlongo

1. Do you know the person in the picture?
2. What would you do if your child reveals that he/she is gay/lesbian?
3. What does culture and tradition say about this?
4. What can schools do to support gender different learners?

**APPENDIX 6: SEMI-STRUCTURED INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW (ENGLISH VERSION)**

**ISHEDYULI YESIHLOKO SEZOBUCHWEPHESHE BOKUFUNDA**

1. Yini oyiqondayo ngbulili obehlukile noma igama eliphecelezi 'transgender'?

2. Ngabe ucabanga ukuthi abantu bakhetha ukuba yiloluhlobo? Kungani usho njalo?

3. Yini efika emqondweni wakho lapho ubona owesfazane igqoke izingubo zowesilisa?

4. Yini efika emqondweni wakho lapho ubona owesilisa egqoke izingubo zabesifazane?

5. Ngabe kulungile noma akulungile ukuba ngumuntu onobulili obuhlukile?

6. Ucabanga ukuthi yini eyenza ingane noma izingane zakho zishintshe zibe inkokoni?

7. Yini edala ukuthi abantu baphathe kabi abantu abaphila nobulili obuhlukile emiphakathini yethu?

8. Udlame olususelwa ebulilini lubathinta kanjani abantu bakwa-LGBTI?

9. Yini ongayiphakamisa njengezixazululo zokulwa nodlame olubhekiswe kubantu abanobulili obuhlukile emphakathini?

10. Ngabe inkolo yakho iyayemukela le ndlela yobulili? Chaza

……………………………………………………………………………………………………



Masweneng (2017)

Lesi sithombe esingenhla sibonisa i-vlogger encane engusaziwayo owaziwayo ogama lakhe linguLasizwe Dambuza. Owazalwa kuqala njengoThulasizwe Siphiwe Dambuza.

*"Ngikholwa ukuthi ukube ubaba wami ubekhona empilweni yami, bengingeke ngibe yisitabane, hhayi ukuthi ngiyamsola noma ngizisole ukuthi ngingubani, kumane kuwukubhekwa. Angikuphakamisi ukuthi abantu besifazane bayimbangela yezitabane, kodwa Impilo yami, abesifazane bebelokhu beyizinsika lapho ngaphefumulelwa ukuba ngenze lokhu abakwenzayo. Ukuba yindoda engungqingili lapha eNingizimu Afrika kuseyinto. Abantu bazokugcona kuze kufike umbuso lapho esekhumbula khona. futhi atshele abazali bakhe ngokobulili bakhe. Umama wami ongasekho akazange akhulume nami cishe izinyanga eziyisithupha ngemuva kokuba sengimtshelile ngemizwa yami ngabafana. Walahlekelwa ngumqondo futhi wayehlala ephinda ethi ngeke abe nendodana eyisitabane endlini yakhe , kodwa ekugcineni wakujwayela. "*

1. Ucabangani ngendaba kaLasizwe?

2. Ungasabela kanjani uma isimo senzeka enganeni yakho?

3. Ungenzenjani uma ungumzali kaLasizwe?

4. Ucabanga ukuthi yini eyenze ukuthi umama kaLasizwe asabele ngendlela enza ngayo?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………



Somizi Mhlongo

1. Uyamazi umuntu osesithombeni?

2. Yini ongayenza uma ingane yakho iveza ukuthi iyisitabane / isitabane?

3. Ngabe isiko nesiko lithini ngalokhu?

4. Yini engenziwa yizikole ukusekela abafundi abahlukile ngokobulili?