



Exploring the meanings girls attach to virginity testing in the 21st century: A study on maidens from a Cultural Institute in Pietermaritzburg; KwaZulu-Natal.

By

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DECLARATION

I, **ZAMANSELE NSELE** declare that:

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DECLARATION BY SUPERVISOR

This thesis which I have supervised is being submitted with my approval

.....

Dr S. ZIBANE

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Durban

December 2021

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to God who gave me the ability to go through the most difficult times of life and still be able to complete this thesis. Thank you for being the greater one that lives in me. I dedicate this thesis to all who lose themselves but find the inner strength to find themselves again and carry on. I dedicate this thesis to a brighter future where love and laughter are the order of the day.

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ABSTRACT

Virginity testing is one of the old cultural practices that is currently contested particularly by the human rights and gender activists. The same contested practice is perceived as one of the cultural practices that foster dignity and a positive womanhood to girls in the African communities. Moreover, the practice has been resurrected as one of the tools to fight HIV and AIDS among girls. This study aimed to explore the meanings girls attach to virginity testing in the 21st century. Specifically, it investigated the importance of virginity testing and the fight against HIV/AIDS. The study adopted the interpretivist research paradigm. A qualitative research design was adopted to gather data by interviewing 15 participants from a cultural institute in Pietermaritzburg. The study used exploratory research design. Thematic content analysis was adopted to make sense of the data collected during the fieldwork in this study. The results showed that the practice of virginity testing encourages maidens to abstain so to avoid the risks of HIV/AIDS infections.

The study also revealed that the maidens did not agree with banning virginity testing and disputed some of the statements that are said about virginity testing. These results suggested that the practice of virginity testing has a positive role it plays in the lives of the participants and in understanding cultural practices. On this basis, the importance of virginity testing and other cultural practices should be taken into account before advocating for their ban, but rather look for ways to improve the practices. Findings from the study recommend that social workers invent support programs to be implemented pre and post maiden workshops or camps. It is suggested that social workers advocate for African people, communities and leaders to have the final say on their culture and traditions. This will discourage other nations in making decisions on behalf of Africa and its people.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
SA	South Africa
SAA	Sub-Saharan Africa
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
WHO	World health Organisation

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CHAPTER ONE: CONTEXTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

1.1 Background and Rationale of the Study

Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome has been a major pandemic that has claimed several lives over several decades. This health challenge has gained global prominence and attention from researchers, activists and various organizations. For almost three decades, all these stakeholders are working hard to win the struggle against HIV and AIDS. They have employed various conventional and unconventional interventions and initiatives that are targeted at curbing the spread of the disease. Among them is the cultural practice that promotes the preservation of girls' virginity through virginity testing by cultural institutes. While this practice is generally discussed in relation to sexual abstinence, Rumsey and Carolyn (2012), argued that the process of sexual abstinence among young girls has been monitored through a cultural procedure of virginity testing in South Africa. While the process focuses on female sexual sanctity, it is popularly discussed in literature as one of the several ways to curb the spread of HIV and AIDS, hence the process becomes a matter of cultural sanctity and medical importance (Hunter, 2011: Ruark, 2016). Hlale (2012), recognizing the importance of sexual abstinence among young girls in South Africa, noted that the practice has enjoyed government support through financial support to the maidens yearly dance program known as the Reed dance.

It is important to state at this point that while this study is not ignorant of the various other avenues through which people contract HIV and AIDS, literatures establish that sexual intercourse among heterosexual couples is the most prevalent mode of HIV transmission (Mafigiri, Matovu, Makumbi, Ndyanabo, Nabukalu, Sakor, Kigozi, Nalugoda, & Wanyenze, 2017). To further substantiate the relevance of virginity testing as a tool to curb the spread of HIV and AIDS, Ruark (2016), opined that of the various preventive measures advocated in the fight of HIV and AIDS, the practice of virginity testing is still most effective among young South African girls because the cultural necessity of going through the process makes them refrain from engaging in sexual activities

Mbiti (2015), discussed that practices such as virginity testing are held in high esteem among Africans because cultural and religious values are sources of moral prescription and as such one of the most effective ways to affect behavior. And, it is assertions such as these that have prompted debates around virginity testing as an HIV prevention strategy and also prompted my interest in the proposed study. According to McQuoid-Mason and Dada (2001), in South Africa, studies on young people and HIV have focused on abstinence among the youth - neglecting the practice of virginity testing and the views of the youth there of. Where virginity testing is being studied, the practice is described as unhealthy and abusive to young girls (Dlamini, 2017). In many instances, these studies focus on the process and procedure through which the girls are being tested and not necessarily the overall impact of the process of virginity testing in the maidens lives as well as their knowledge of HIV and AIDS. The gap is on research that presents girls as active agents who are experts in matters concerning their sexual health and sexuality. We need research that takes into account how and why young people make a choice to participate in virginity testing.

There are many challenges that are faced by the participants of virginity testing and those that see it a cultural necessity in today's age. The Commission on Gender Equality and the Human Rights Commission condemned the activities. The testing is seen as encroaching on young women's lives and as humiliating (Scorgie, 2002). Anthropologist Suzanne Leclerc-Madlala (2001) has interpreted the movement as an effort to handle the AIDS exerting greater control over women and their sexuality. The maidens who are part of the cultural practice of virginity testing have advised they are not forced into virginity testing (Scorgie, 2002). The Anthropological Institute (2010) indicated that virginity testing as seen is an urgent and vital necessity by maidens.

While the practice is regarded as a cultural practice; the motivation to remain a virgin is often argued to be a process pressured by parents or the adult members of the community. It is in the interest of this study to understand what

motivates young girls to take part in the practice of virginity testing. This study adopted a youth-centred approach which acknowledges girls as active agents in matters concerning their culture and sexuality (Zibane, 2017). The study gave young women a voice. It aimed to explore how girls' agency is exercised, negotiated, or/and challenged (Mathe, 2013) within the very intense pressure from society and cultural prescriptions. The proposed study thus seeks to understand the meanings that girls attach to virginity testing and the significance and the perception they attach to it.

1.2 Problem Statement

According to Scorgie (2002), there has been talks around virginity testing, proponents of the practice argue that this cultural process put young girls in fear of engaging in sexual relations Higson (2002) argues that, while the practice is very much needed, it should be practiced among older females, this is because the practice is also conducted to maidens under the age of 16 which is not constitutional. On the contrary, critics of virginity testing have argued that, the procedure is unconstitutional, unhygienic, and a violation of the rights of these young girls (William, 2005). They believe that the practice undermines the principles of equality, freedom, and human dignity. It is also gender discriminatory and impairs the dignity and well-being of the girl child. Virginity testing is also viewed by some as exposing vulnerable girls to the invasion of privacy, stigmatization, and sexual abuse (Taylor, 2004). George (2007) argues that virginity testing creates tension between the right of women and girls to equality, privacy, and sexual autonomy. Leclerc-Madlala (2001) argues that, it is therefore not surprising that "the most vociferous voices advocating virginity testing tradition are those older women who themselves are heads of households supporting a number of young children." The emphasis that older women place on the importance of virginity testing has much to do with concern about the preservation of cultural practice, ensuring young girls sanctity and curbing promiscuity in general (Harrison, 2008; Scorgie 2002).

These contrasting debates evidently highlight the need for a research that gives the girls who participate in virginity testing a space and a platform to speak about their own experiences and the meanings they give to virginity testing. The gained understanding from such spaces is key to developing relevant forms of transformative interventions designed to address the intersection of culture, sexuality and HIV and AIDS (Zibane, 2017). Understanding the ways in which young people in varied social contexts give meaning to sexuality and gender are key to developing appropriate forms of educational interventions designed to address sexuality, HIV and AIDS education and gender equality (Ramadhin, 2010, Bhana and Pattman, 2009).

1.3 Aim and objectives of the proposed study

1.3.1 Aim

The overall aim of this study was to understand the experiences and the meanings that young maidens attach to virginity testing. This aim was further broken down into the following objectives.

1.3.2 Objectives

1. To explore how the maidens define and interpret the practice of virginity testing
2. To explore the maidens' views and beliefs about virginity testing;
3. To explore the maidens' experiences of virginity testing.

1.3.4 Research Questions

4. What are the maidens definition and interpretation of virginity testing; and
5. What are the maiden's views and beliefs about virginity testing?
6. What are the meanings and experiences of virginity testing?

1.3.5 Research assumptions

This study assumes that there are varied meanings attached to virginity testing, and may include young girls participate in the process of virginity testing because it is their choice; others participate because it is a cultural requirement amongst many.

1.4 Introducing research methodologies

The study was a qualitative study which adopted a Social Constructivism paradigm. A qualitative approach is ideal when dealing with people's real experiences, thoughts and feelings. Fouché and Delport (2005) state that a qualitative approach seeks to understand the phenomena and explore unknown terrain. This approach was very relevant to the study because the researcher sought to unpack the experiences and perceptions of young girls about virginity testing. The study aimed at gaining understanding not only through observable phenomena, but also on subjective beliefs, values, reasons, and understandings. It emphasized that knowledge is constructed.

The study was about the way in which people have meaning in their lives, and the

An explorative research design was used in the study. Using explorative research design helped in having a better understanding of the problem. In line with the focus of this study, an exploratory research design was not aimed at providing the final and conclusive answers to the research questions, but merely explored the research topic with varying levels of depth.

The participants of the study were selected using a purposive sample. The aim was to involve only participants with first hand information about the practice. This was to eliminate any information that was based on assumptions and unfounded perceptions. The sample size was 15 African maidens. Participants were between the ages of 18-35 years (South African Youth Age). Nomkhubulwane Cultural Institute was the research site. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to disclose thoughts importance of having a life with a meaning. and feelings which are clearly private (Clough & Nutbrown, 2007). Data was analyzed using thematic content analysis.

1.5. Theoretical framework

The framework that guided this research is the Ecosystems theory. Ecological systems theory is an approach to study of human development , mutual accommodation, and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives (Bronfenbrenner , 1989). The ecosystems theory explains how the inherent qualities of a child and his environment interact to influence how he will grow and develop. The theory stresses the importance of studying a person in the context of multiple environments, also known as ecological systems in the attempt to understand his development.

The study adopted three levels of the ecosystems. These levels are the micro, the mezzo, and the macro level. The Micro level (**individual level**) is the smallest and most immediate environment in which the individual lives. As such, the micro level comprises the daily home, school or daycare, peer group or community environment. The Micro level explored the maidens who undergo virginity testing, their reasons for undergoing virginity testing, and looked at their immediate environment as a source of influence for abstinence and virginity testing. The individual level explained how the knowledge and beliefs of virginity testing affects and shapes their behavior as individuals.

The Mezzo level encompasses the interaction of the different microsystems which the individual finds him in. According to Bronfenbrenner (1976) , It is a system of microsystems and as such, involves linkages between home and school, between peer group and family, or between family and church. This level deliberated on the way culture groups such as Nomkhubulwane cultural institute influences the behavior of maidens with regards to virginity testing. It looked into what links are there from their individual environments and their organizational levels. This could mean there are similarities in teaching at home and that of the groups the individuals join.

The Macro level, explored how Zulu culture and government policies influence the practice of virginity testing. It was important also to look at the intersection of those influences with the maiden's aspirations and choices about participation in virginity testing practices.

1.6 Significance of the study

The study was a reminder that as much as there is a high focus on the practice being abusive and there is a great need to ban the practice, there are other factors that need not be overlooked.

Value to the participants: The potential value was that virginity testing be understood from the maidens perspective. The study contributed in making virginity testing well understood. By undergoing this study the voices of those who undergo the practice were heard and this helped in addressing the challenges that are ensued in the process viability. The woman who are testers got proactive views from the research on what the maidens like and not like about the practice and where there is need for reevaluation of the procedure and entire process.

Value to the programmers: As discussed in literatures, various measures have been advocated for the prevention of HIV/AIDS- Abstinence, faithfulness, and usage of condoms. However, of all popular measures, virginity testing though regarded as unconventional/cultural has been accepted within the cultural mainframe of South African society as an effective way of curbing the spread of HIV/AIDS. The practice of virginity testing has been debated in literature and critics argue that it is unconstitutional, unhealthy and an infringement on the sexual autonomy of women. Hence, this study aimed to provide in-depth narratives of the practice from the perspective of the maidens who go through the process. It provided an insight into the procedure and the overall perception of the process on the young maidens rights and sexual autonomy from their point of view.

Value to the policy makers: The potential value to the policy makers was that, with

the information received from this study there will no longer be structural and informal barriers when it comes to the topic on virginity testing. There is value as the research will be contributing to policy processes. There will be value to the policy makers as such a topic assisted in contributing to knowledge and understanding generally.

This helped in understanding reasons why maidens undergo virginity testing and also assisted in decision-making specifically for the policy makers on how to better the process of virginity testing. Major value to policy makers included findings regarding the topic that were never discovered before which will be evidence-based and thus contribute to policy-making.

1.7 Limitations of the study

The limitation of this study were that considering the varying narratives and accusation of the procedure maidens may have withheld information relating to how the practice is conducted so as not to implicate their patrons and tarnish the image of a cultural practice they hold in high esteem.

1.8 Definition of Concepts

- **Virginity testing** – “is a traditional cultural practice whereby females are tested to determine if they are still a virgin” (McQuoid-Mason and Dada, 2001:435). Virginity testing is defined as “a practice and process of inspecting the genitalia of unmarried girls and women to determine if they are sexually pure” (Wickstrom, 2008, p.1).
- **Maiden** – Scorgie, (2002) concluded the word maiden best describes a girl or young unmarried woman.

-
- **Umkhosi womhlanga-** Umhlanga is an annual Zulu reed dance ceremony celebrating virginity (Magubane, 2016, p.35). In South Africa, it is practiced, among others, by the Zulu ethnic group who live mainly in the province of KwaZulu- Natal.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

A literature review is consulting very relevant sources that provide an insightful knowledge on which new evidence can be based to substantiate the study of an identified research problem (Grove, Burns, and Gray, 2006:38). A literature review is therefore intended to inform the reader the current knowledge regarding a subject of interest through a discussion of the strengths and limitations of the underlying research (Joubert and Ehrlich, 2007:66). This chapter examines the literature that informs this study and argues that virginity testing is a historical cultural practice that have found relevance in contemporary times for reasons beyond cultural heritage. The chapter begins with the definition of very important concepts in the study. It is followed is an overview of the practice of virginity testing across different regions of the world and with emphasis on the South African society. The study looks into the practice of virginity testing in South Africa, the process and reasons for virginity testing were explored. Following is a critical examination of the legal framework regulating virginity testing in South Africa. The final section highlights some of the reported consequences of virginity testing and how they impact on women lives.

2.2 Global Overview of Virginity Testing

Virginity testing is an age longed practice in several countries of the world like Afghanistan, Brazil, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, Jamaica, Jordan, Libya, Malawi, Morocco,

Palestinian territories, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Turkey, the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland and Zimbabwe (WHO, 2018). While this practice dates centuries, the last two decades have birthed a resurgence of the practice for various reasons in South Africa. Historically, virginity testing was a cultural practice assessing a woman's suitability for marriage but at the same time a reaffirmation of society's collective stress on abstinence from sexual activity for teenage girls and young women (Thornberry, 2015).

The resurgence of virginity testing as a more endowed celebration among the Zulu people of South Africa in the last two decades is attributed to factors such as the clamor for a reemergence of salient African beliefs and practice that are hitherto becoming obscure; its perceived importance in reducing teenage pregnancy that has become a menace; and, its role in curbing the spread of HIV epidemic (George, 2008; Moletsane, 2010). For instance, the low HIV prevalence of 0.10% recorded in 2011 in Turkey was attributed to cultural practice promoting that girls remain virgins until marriage (UNAIDS, 2014). While the practice of virginity testing internationally has come under serious scrutiny from feminists and other interested stakeholders for its non-consensual approach, it is still credited for helping reduce HIV prevalence.

Lasco (2002) reported that virginity was taken seriously to the extent that students enrolling in specialized schools were required to be virgins and vaginal inspection was done before enrollment: nursing and midwives' students were required to be virgins, and to ensure compliance, it was linked with their enrolment. In addition, women who were applying for certain government jobs were also subjected to virginity testing (Lasco 2002). Forced virginity tests on high school students were reported in South Sumatra in the province of Indonesia (Idrus and Aritonang, 2013). After, the physical examination of a woman's hymen for tears, it is determined whether she is still "a girl"; the term doctors use to refer to a virgin in Turkey. It became a norm within the Turkish normative system to label girls whose hymen has been torn before marriage as bringing dishonor to their families and therefore, not eligible for marriage (Lasco 2002). Following strong critics of this non-consensual virginity testing practice in Turkey, it became outlawed in February

2002; after the country was denied membership of the European Union for perpetuating violence against women in the form of forced virginity testing (Lasco 2002).

Virginity testing in India is historically carried out on hundreds of brides at a mass marriage ceremony (Ali 2009). Virginity was a normative prerequisite for marriage as it is the only guarantee for a befitting marriage ceremony (Osborne, 2013). Women who pass the test are given a special badge, which allows them to participate in the wedding ceremony (Ali, 2009). The government provides the brides with household items to the value of R1758.00 (£100); this forces them to undergo virginity testing to get the household items (Ali 2009). This makes the question of consent complicated in India because the financial reward that comes with virginity testing is enough incentive dissuading participants' consent. Considering this consensual conflict, cases of abuse remain widespread and the practice has received serious critics from various stakeholders in India (Tandon, Kanchan, and Wadhwa, 2018).

Virginity testing is common in some sub-Saharan African countries like Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Kenya and South Africa (Win 2004). In Zimbabwe, voluntary virginity testing is performed to curb the further spread of HIV/AIDS (Southern Africa Report, 2008). Karombo (2004) reported that men in the eastern border town of Zimbabwe are eager to marry virgins to the extent that chief Makoni's controversial AIDS campaign stipulates that men must produce documented proof of their HIV- negative status in order to marry a virgin. The chief belief that it is unfair to allow a marriage between a person living with HIV and a virgin who has tested negative (Karonbo 2004). Karombo (2004) further noted that girls who pass the virginity test are called 'angels' in Zimbabwe while those who do not pass the test are often stigmatized. This type of naming could be very fundamental to how stigma and stereotypes are perpetrated against non- virgins.

Importantly stigmatization is one of the most debated influences of virginity testing highlighted by critics (Campbell, Foulis, Maimane and Sibiya, 2005). This stigma also fuels abuse and the violation of the rights of young girls. Chibaya (2013) study in Zimbabwe revealed that some churches make it compulsory to test girls' 'virginity'. In

the study, the girls narrated that any one of them found not to be virgins were targeted by church elders and men who seek to take sexual advantage of them. This exposes girls who are found not to be virgins to sexual abuse from men and stigma from society. This compulsory virginity testing among the apostolic girls can be classified as violation of right.

Virginity testing in Swaziland is accompanied by Umhlanga Reed dance. Just like the Zulu people, there is a traditional dance in Swaziland called '*Umbuso we Swati*', where thousands of maidens who are virgins from all parts of Swaziland perform the dance (Ndabeni, 2015). The dance is about celebrating the beauty and virtue of young women- 'the flower of the nation'. These girls are required to undergo a virginity test before they are allowed to participate in the royal dance, which lasts for three days. Umhlanga Reed dance is believed to encourage young women to keep their virginity until reaching maturity for marriage.

The dance is performed at the stadium attended by a large audience, where the King can choose one of the maidens dancing to become his wife. This encourages maidens to remain virgins so that they can participate in the dance and have a chance of becoming the king's wife. Virgin girls who participate in the Reed dance go home with gifts from the royal house, such as shoes, food hampers and toiletries among other items (Ndabeni 2015). Before the end of the dance, maidens are encouraged to remain virgins and attend classes on HIV/AIDS and how to conduct themselves as young women.

Virginity testing has been practiced since the early twentieth century in KwaZulu-Natal South Africa (Le Roux, 2006). Aside the oral tradition around the historical peculiarity of virginity testing among the Zulu people, there have been empirical studies substantiating the relevance and importance of the practice in KwaZulu-Natal and the Zululand in the early twentieth century (Thornberry, 2015; Scorgie, 2002). One of the key missions of virginity testing is to safeguard fertility and control promiscuity (Leclerc-Madlala, 2001). The verification of a girl's virginity enables her family to demand a larger

lobola (bride price) than normal bridewealth at marriage; an additional cow to be given to the girl's mother (Win, 2004). In practice, it requires the physical examination of a girl to determine if her hymen is intact (Scorgie, 2002:53).

The tradition of virginity testing from above is usually intended to ensure the purity of young women who are most times culturally required to prove their chastity to their parents and husband's family. While this could be argued to be the consensus of the practice across history, presently there are debates regarding the motive and manner in which the tests are conducted.

Interestingly, Leclerc-Madlala (2001) argued that rural women as the most marginalized population in South Africa believe that virginity testing is an important way to reemphasize the lost cultural value of chastity before marriage, self-respect, and pride in womanhood. To these women teaching a girl of this important moral standards are one of the most effective ways to address increasing social menace like teenage pregnancy and HIV and AIDS.

2.2.1 Virginity Testing Festivals in South Africa

Virginity testing festival in South Africa is a cultural event on the request of the traditional chief, who hosts young maidens and appoints an elderly woman to perform the testing (Denis, 2006). Across the six local municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal, camps for virginity testing are set monthly (Mbulu, 2016). On arrival at the camp, chosen elderly women usually referred to as virgin testers; educate maidens on different topics related to female sexuality. This education is conducted in the form of a dialogue and peer education (elderly maidens teaching others) usually during the early hours of the morning before the event (Mbulu, 2016).

The virginity testing festival in KwaZulu-Natal is accompanied by throngs of young women assembling in a park, stadium or school ground queuing up for the test (Leak 2012). When it is the girl's turn in line, she is instructed by an elder woman to remove her underpants,

lie down facing up on a mat and spread her legs. If she passes the test, white clay is placed on her forehead and she is presented with a certificate indicating that she is still a virgin (Leak 2012). Umhlanga is the pride of the Zulu community, where the Zulu monarch presides over the ceremony (Mthethwa, 2005). Over the years, this ceremony has become a pride for young girls, parents and their families at large. Failing to meet up to, societal expectation of remaining a virgin until certain age is often met by stigma from community and shame on family (Mbulu, 2016). Apart from these communal tests, mothers and grandmothers usually check their daughters' to make sure they are still virgins (Kaarsholm, 2006). It is regarded as a shame to the family to send a girl who is not a virgin to the ceremony. Virginity testing is seen as part of the Zulu cultural identity in South Africa and it is strongly associated with self-respect, modesty, and pride (Kaarsholm, 2006).

Virginity testing in South Africa at most times involves three testers who perform different roles. One tester on the right side would hold the right knee, the other tester on the left side would hold the left.

Knee and the last tester at the front would look for the presence of the intact hymen. There is no insertion of the finger or use of water during the test. Once the tester who is at the front does not see the intact hymen, she would need confirmation from the other two testers (Mbulu, 2016). The Iqihikiza (a leader of the maidens) would be called so she can also witness the absence of the intact hymen. The mother or the elders who accompanied the girl (s) would be given the results (Mbulu, 2016). This is not done publicly where the testing takes place but privately. The girl would have to tell her mother the name of the boy who broke her virginity. The incidence would be reported to the family of the boy and the boy would have to cleanse the maiden, using a goat. He would also need to give them a cow, which forms part of paying damages to the mother of the girl (Mbulu, 2016). The girl is then told not to come again for virginity testing (Mbulu, 2016).

2.3 Virginity testing practices and processes across various communities

Virginity testing takes different forms based on society's preference. For instance, in India,

a thread test is used to ensure that the hymen is intact before engagement procedures are concluded (Peterson-Brown, 1998). Maidens are checked for virginity before marriage to ensure chastity and reaffirm the society's standard of sexual abstinence before marriage (WHO, 2018). In Southern Africa, especially in KwaZulu-Natal region and Swaziland, mass testing is done through the examination of the vagina by traditional practitioners preceding large annual cultural events celebrating maidenhood (Behrens, 2015). Among the Yoruba people of western Nigeria, the sheets from the newly married couple's bed are inspected for signs of blood to prove that the girl was a virgin at the time of marriage (Familusi, 2012).

Some virginity testing practices incorporate the western educational constructs of letter grades used to mark tests in schools (A, B, and C). For example, maidens who participate in virginity testing are given scores such as 'A' as a way of indicating that she has met a combination of criteria (Grinker, Lubkemann, and Steiner, 2010). This criterion involves most importantly the features of the genitalia, which are, the colour of the labia should be a very light pink; the size of the vaginal opening should be very small; the vagina should be very dry and tight; and the white dot or white lace veil should be evident and intact (Grinker, Lubkemann, and Steiner, 2010). Moreover, a girl's eyes should reflect virginity in that 'they look innocent' while her

breasts and abdomen should be firm and taunt and muscles behind her knees should be tight and straight (Grinker, Lubkemann, and Steiner, 2010). A girl who scores a 'B' grade is someone who may have had intercourse once or twice, or alternatively 'may have been abused'. A girl who scores a 'C' grade is essentially a failure (Grinker, Lubkemann, and Steiner, 2010).

2.4 Reasons for Virginity Testing

There various reasons discussed in literature motivating virginity testing, some of these reasons are motivated by religion, culture and sometimes geographical locations. This sections discussed popular reasons discussed in literature.

2.5 Virginity Testing as a Cultural Identity

Virginity testing is seen as part of the Zulu cultural identity in South Africa, which is also strongly associated with pride, self-respect, and modesty (Kaarsholm, 2006). Culture is defined as the integrated pattern of human beliefs, knowledge, and behaviour that depends upon man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to next generations (Mubangizi, 2012). This means that culture includes the customary beliefs, social norms and material traits of a religious, racial or social group. Thus, virginity testing is one of the cultural identities of Zulu people. Rumsey (2012) noted that the Zulu people praise virginity testing and it has become part of the renaissance African cultural identities.

According to Ngobese (2015), virginity testing is sacred and spiritual, and it is one of the essential cultural rituals for women. In 1997, Isivivane Samakhosikazi started with an aim to revive the dormant Zulu customs such as virginity testing which was seen as a practical way to reclaim elements of culture that may help to solve the contemporary crisis of identity among indigenous Africans (Grinker, Lubkemann, and Steiner, 2010). Virginity is culturally a source of joy not just for the girl/young woman but a tremendous maternal and parental pride (Mbulu, 2016).

Advocating the resurgence of this African traditional practice are various organizations like Isiggi Sesintu, AmaGugu aseAfrika and Samasiko Nolwasi are among other indigenous post-apartheid cultural organizations that conduct virginity testing in KwaZulu-Natal (Grinker, Lubkemann, and Steiner, 2010).

2.6.1 Virginity Testing as an HIV/AIDS Preventive Measure

Virginity testing has become one of the laudable measures adopted in curbing the spread of HIV/AIDS in South Africa. Aside from the fact that there is a clamour for the resurgence of African beliefs and practices that are becoming forgotten, abstinence is also one of the measures advanced for reducing HIV. The promotion of sexual

abstinence from a cultural point of view through virginity testing has been leveraged upon by various stakeholders in the fight against HIV epidemic. Virginity testing has, therefore, become an HIV/AIDS education and prevention program that enjoys national and some international support (Leak, 2012).

HIV/AIDS remains a major concern to all stakeholders and has gained more attention over the years since its spread is yet to be extinguished. Wathuta (2016) noted that approximately 35 million people are living with HIV globally. However, Baxter and Karim (2016) reported that of the number of people living with HIV globally, sub-Saharan Africa remains the most heavily affected with 66% of all new infections; meanwhile adolescent girls and young women aged 16-24 years bear the disproportionate burden of HIV infection in the region. A disturbing pattern for HIV epidemic infection in sub-Saharan Africa is the age-sex differences in HIV acquisition; young girls acquire HIV infection about 5–7 years earlier than boys; and have a 3– 6-fold higher rate of HIV infection compared to young boys in the same age group (Karim, Kharsany, Frohlich, Werner, Mlotshwa, Madlala, and Karim, 2012).

In addition, South Africa has 7.1 million people (ages 15-49) living with HIV, representing 19% of the global HIV burden (NDOH 2016). Furthermore, the prevalence of HIV amongst the general population of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) which is the research location of this study is 16.9% against the national prevalence of 12.2% (NDOH 2016). There is a need for virginity testing in the province of KZN as the prevalence of HIV is higher. The percentage would be higher had there been no other preventative measures against HIV. Baxter and Karim (2016) reported that while the number of HIV infection has declined by over 30% in the past decade, more worrisome is the fact that the number of people who acquire HIV each year remains unacceptably high. According to Cluver, Orkin, and Yakubovich (2016), 575 young adults daily are infected with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa.

Karim et al., (2012) further explain that South Africa has the largest number of people

living with HIV/AIDS and 60% of all infected adults acquire their infection before age 25 years, while the majority of new infections are heterosexually transmitted. According to Caprisa, (2016), a study between 2014 and 2015 involving nearly 10 000 randomly sampled people within two districts in the province KwaZulu-Natal, discovered that the prevalence of HIV stood at 36% and 15-49 years of age but of importance is the revelation that 66% of this infection is among young women. While this pattern of HIV prevalence among women is not peculiar to South Africa/sub-Saharan Africa; it is particularly worrisome.

UNIADS (2014) reported that young women between the ages of 15-24 years make up the age category for the most prevalent HIV infection in the world. Reports show that 18,7% of South Africa's population is HIV positive, this includes women living with HIV between the ages of 15 to 49 years of age (Mabaso, 2019). Considering the scourge of HIV prevalence among women and in comparison with the fact that they make up just 12% of the world's population; it has become a major concern for governments and stakeholders to roll out measure and mechanisms that could be used to lower the rate of infection among this at-risk category of the population (Harrison, Colvin, Kuo, Swartz, and Lurie, 2015).

Considering the very prevalent nature of HIV/AIDS, various stakeholders have taken concrete steps to curb the spread of the disease. Since the late 1980s, it had been known that individuals could take action to either reduce or avoid altogether the risk of becoming infected with HIV through sexual transmission. UNAIDS, (2005) highlights some strategies that are considered conventional to curbing the spread of the disease:

ABC Strategy

- **Abstinence:** The risk could be avoided altogether by avoiding any sexual activities that could cause the transmission of HIV. While this is a very effective prevention medium, it is not applicable to all especially those who enjoy sexual intimacy. Hence, being denied of such pleasure can lead to frustration. What is most important in this category is that personal value for sex will determine impact of abstinence.

- **Faithfulness:** This practice promotes commitment. It encourages mutual faithfulness among uninfected partners. The challenge with this measure is 'trust'. The safety of each partner is left at the mercy of their partner's commitment and faithfulness to the union. It is supposed to be mutual to be effective, however, if one partner divulges this trust and becomes promiscuous, the other partner becomes at risk.
- **Condom Use:** This advocate for the correct and consistent use of condoms during sexual intercourse. While it is the most popular, easily accessible and readily available measure, the desire by most people to enjoy the unfiltered pleasure of sex makes them avoid using condoms, hence, putting them at risk.

From the above explanation, abstinence has been shown to be one of the three preventive measures of HIV/AIDS infections advocated by The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS. As such, virginity testing fits perfectly into this agenda. Encouraging girls and young women to abstain from sexual intercourse until after marriage from a cultural stands does not just give support orthodox health intervention for mitigating HIV infection but also indigenizes the approach. The intersection between virginity testing and UNAIDS abstinence agenda further reinvigorated community zeal to reawakening the cultural practice to prevent girls from been sexually active (Taylor, et al., 2007). Hundreds of unmarried women and girls as young as 6 years of age are subjected to virginity testing in order to determine if they still have their hymen intact or not (Taylor, Dlamini, Sathiparsad, Jinabhai, and De Vries, 2007). This practice mandates that every young woman remain virgins until marriage; in this regards, as earlier stated that HIV infection (current and new) is more prevalent among young girls between the ages of 15 and 24 (UNAIDS, 2014), culturally emphasizing sexual will mean reducing the risk of infection and in general combating HIV epidemic.

UNAIDS (2014) identifies women as the at-risk population in the spread of HIV As such, apart from the use of male and female condoms there is still no other method that has been scientifically proven to prevent HIV transmission or reduce the risk of HIV transmission in

women. Government and concerned stakeholders need to strengthen the prevention interventions, especially by focusing more on young women since more data show that HIV prevalence is higher among South African women (Shisana, et al., 2014). Literature acknowledges the contribution of traditional practices such as virginity testing in preventing

the spread of HIV/AIDS and urge communities to revive those traditional practices that can assist in reducing HIV infection especially amongst youth (George, 2008; Green, Dlamini, D'Errico, Ruark, and Duby, 2009). In countries where HIV/AIDS prevalence has declined, sexual behaviour change among young people has been identified as a contributing factor (Harrison et al., 2010).

Lindtjorn (2008) study on traditional values of virginity and sexual behavior among Ethiopian youths revealed that the practice of virginity testing was adopted in order to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS by preventing maidens from engaging in pre-marital sexual activities. The study also revealed that more maidens from rural areas observe abstinence from pre-marital sex compared to their counterparts from urban areas. Encouraging the cultural custom of preserving virginity until marriage also played a positive role in the prevention of HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia. According to Mbulu (2016) virginity testing camps give participants the opportunity to learn and discuss issues on sexual and reproductive health including knowledge about HIV/AIDS which the testers take time to discuss with the maidens. This kind of education is very important in the life of a girl.

2.6.2 Virginity testing as a strategy to reduce teenage pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy is a major public health concern, about 16 million adolescent girls give birth every year and it is estimated that about 3 million girls aged 15-19 undergo unsafe abortions every year (WHO, 2012). Khoza (2013) noted that virginity testing has become one of the popular ways of reducing teenage pregnancy alongside the spread of HIV. In addition, Khoza (2013) explained that Zulu people believe that virginity testing helps to curb teenage pregnancy as it encourages abstinence and prevents young maidens from engaging in sexual intercourse. Pregnancy outside wedlock within this social fabric is considered a disgrace.

Mbulu (2016) revealed that by undergoing virginity testing, most girls would delay their sexual relationships. Thus, they are not at risk of becoming pregnant. The Zulu tribe

believes that by continuing to perform virginity tests on maidens, it helps them to curb teenage pregnancy because it encourages abstinence (Khoza 2013). Similarly, Hugo (2012) attests that encouraging girls to treasure and guard their virginity helps to curb unwanted pregnancies and several sexually transmitted diseases. Performance of virginity testing on young children can assist in identifying early cases of sexual assault as the test identifies whether the child has had sex or not (Thornberry, 2016; Olson and García-Moreno, 2017). According to Rumsey (2012), as maidens as young as 6 years of age are inspected to determine if they have had sex or not, it is thus in communities that do virginity tests, it possible to help the abused maiden and also catch the culprits.

2.7 Legal Framework of Virginity Testing

There is a very complex relationship between culture and human rights (Maleche and Day, 2011). The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) opined that culture must be understood broadly to mean the shared way of living of a group of people, including their accumulated knowledge and understandings, skills and values, and which is perceived by them to be unique and meaningful. Under international law, people have a right to their cultural practices, which to them are unique and meaningful, and they have a right to determine how their culture is developed. The right to cultural identity is part of the right to self-determination set out in Article 1 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). However, this right is limited because all countries also have a duty to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms regardless of their cultural, political or economic system.

Virginity testing is of paramount importance across some cultures that men require this as a prerequisite for marriage from their partners (Kamm, 2016; Wynn and Hassanein, 2017). Ahmadi (2016) mentioned that women who are not virgins are often subject to stigma, aggressive relationship and often divorce in Iran, while in Egypt, they go as far as conducting virginity tests on detained female inmates (BBC News, 24 March 2011). Violations against women's rights in Egypt are underreported and this means

rape and sexual assault cases are not reported to authorities for various socio-religious reasons (Yount and Li, 2010). Some other women reported that they were separated into two groups, virgins, and non-virgins. The virgins were coerced to sign papers in military detention, allowing the military to conduct the virginity tests; they were coerced to strip naked and then searched by female guard in a room with open doors and windows, through which male soldiers were watching them and taking photographs using their cell phones (BBC News, 24 March 2011). A male army doctor proceeded to inspect their vagina for the presence of a hymen; his hands were in there for 5 minutes. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) justified themselves for performing virginity testing by saying it was conducted to protect the male soldiers from allegations of rape against women who were not (BBC News, 24 March 2011). These are some of the anomalies that pervade the practice of virginity testing. As the cultural practice, becomes more often debated especially as regards how it affects women's rights, the South African constitution effectively regulates the practice within the ambits of the law.

The South African government is in support of virginity testing practice because of its importance in the prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS in the country. However, in order to protect the rights of its citizens, the government has placed down rules and guidelines to govern the whole activity of virginity testing.

2.7.1 The South African Constitution

The Constitution is the supreme law in South Africa and it is built on basic principles such as the promotion of equality and the protection of human dignity and freedom. The Bill of Rights outlines the rights of people which the Constitution seeks to promote and protect. The practice of virginity testing affects various rights of young girls and women but within a highly contested lens in literature. As such, it is important to understand its constitutional basis. It is argued that the practice of virginity testing is constitutionally backed by the right to culture in section 31 of the Bill of Rights. On the other hand, critics have argued that constitutional provision supporting practices like this

are further patriarchal influences seeking to regulate and control women's sexuality (Bhana, 2016; Moletsane, 2010).

It has been argued that the application of section 36 of the Constitution will further clarify the rights affected by the practice to uncover the possible conclusions to be reached and how it could possibly affect women's rights (Wadesango, Rembe, and Chabaya, 2011; Mubangizi, 2012). Furthermore, this section will probe the practice of virginity testing within the ambiance of the South African Constitution. According to Mubangizi (2012), virginity testing is the cultural practice and tradition that clashes with certain human rights in South Africa (right to privacy, bodily and psychological integrity and dignity). It is generally rooted in a culture of discrimination against women, and as a violation of human rights, its function as an instrument for socializing women into prescribed gender roles in South African society.

Members of the South African Human Rights Commission on Gender Equality have condemned the practice of virginity testing; they argued against the practice on the basis of the constitutional laws that protect the right to equality, privacy, bodily integrity and sexual autonomy (Hugo 2012:2). The Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (RAPCAN) believes that a number of rights are violated by the practice of virginity testing, such rights include:

a. The right to equality [Section 9]

RAPCAN believes that the practice of virginity testing violates the right to equality Advocate Tseliso Thipanyane quotes a newspaper report, which claims that there is a virginity test for boys in South Africa. He mentioned that the test for boys is entirely non-invasive, unlike the one meant for girls. For the unmarried man, active sex life is confirmation of his masculinity, for the woman, it reduces her bride price (Bower 2005).

b. The right to dignity [Section 10]

Virginity testing involves an investigation of whether or not the hymen is intact. However, the presence or absence of the hymen does not necessarily relate to whether or not one has engaged in penetrative sex. The hymen can and does break because of tampon use, or physical activity; some women are born without one. Thus, the presence or absence of the hymen is not a foolproof indicator of 'virginity'. To be identified as a non-virgin is to be exposed to stigmatization and ridicule, both during the ceremony and afterward. Both the public invasion of privacy necessitated by the virginity test and the public humiliation which is often the consequence of it's 'findings' constitute a violation of the right to dignity (Bower 2005).

c. The right to bodily integrity [Section 12]

Those who support the practice of virginity testing claim that those who are inspected have consented to it. The expectations that girls must willingly allow virginity testing and if they do not, they have something to hide which can be evidence that they are sexually active, then it is clear that this is not really informed and willing consent. Under these circumstances, the right to security in and control over your body is violated (Bower, 2005).

d. The right to privacy [Section 14]

Both the testing of virginity and the communication of the results of the test are very public events. Considering the significant negative consequences of being identified as a non-virgin, such public disclosure can place the girl at considerable physical and emotional risk. The public exposure violates the right to privacy, with frequently devastating consequences (Bower 2005).

e. The right to protection [Section 28 (1) (d)]

Maidens identified as non-virgins are exposed to physical and emotional danger, as had already been stated. Maidens who are identified as virgins are also at risk of rape. Some

of the arguments based on the research conducted by Leclerc-Madlala (2003) are that public declaration of virgin status expose virgins to be the targets of rape especially gang rape and that it creates jealousy among those women that are no longer virgins to the extent that they encourage their male relatives and friends to rape these girls. Virgin girls are also exposed to ritual rape and killings.

Virginity testing was included in the Bill of Rights as a specific cultural practice to be prohibited and criminalized. It should be noted that the prohibition only extends to female persons below the age of 16. The passing of the Children Bill by the National Assembly has led to protests and condemnation by supporters of this practice (SAHRC 2013).

2.7.2 The South African Children's Act

The Government Gazette (2006), chapter 2 of the Children's Act (Act No. 38 of 2005), under Social, Cultural and Religious practices talks about virginity testing. Section 12 states the following: virginity testing of children under the age of 16 is prohibited; virginity testing of children older than 16 may only be performed- (if the child has given consent to the testing in the prescribed manner, after proper counseling, and in the manner prescribed); the results of a virginity test may not be disclosed without the consent of the child; the body of a child who has undergone virginity testing may not be marked.

The Department of Social Development (2010) stipulates the manner to be followed when one is conducting virginity testing. It is required that a person who conducts a test must ensure that each child is tested individually and in private and that the test is conducted in a hygienic manner. The process for ensuring hygiene include: the use of separate pair of sterile surgical gloves for each test in the case of a virginity test involving the inspection of any bodily orifice of a child being tested; disposal of such surgical gloves after each virginity test in accordance with medical standards for the disposal of surgical gloves; sterilization of any instrument used in the performance of any virginity test in accordance with the medical standards for the sterilization of

instrument; avoidance of direct blood contact or contact with any bodily fluid between the child undergoing the virginity test and the person performing the virginity test.

The least invasive means of testing for virginity is used with due regard to the child's right to bodily integrity. This further implies that a virginity test may be performed on a girl child only by a female person and on a boy child only by a male person. In addition, no virginity test may be performed on a child unless, consent and the required proof of age have been submitted to the person conducting the test; and, the child has been given proper counseling by a parent, guardian or caregiver, as well as a social service professional.

The age of the child consent to a virginity test must be established by requesting an identity document or birth certificate of the child and in the absence of both an affidavit furnished by the child's parent or caregiver. As a regulatory check, the Department of Social Development (2010) stipulates that any person/authority who fails to adhere to these regulations would be liable for conviction of a fine or for imprisonment for a period not exceeding two years, or to both fines and imprisonment.

2.8 Consequences of Virginity Testing

Consequences of virginity testing are categorized into two; firstly, the harm it causes because of the actual experience of vaginal examination; and, secondly, the harm it causes if the results becoming known to parties other than the person tested (Behrens, 2015). Virginity testing has been identified to cause psychological, social and physical harm to the examinee (Olson and Garcia-Moreno, 2017). In the same light, it is critiqued for promoting sexism through the regulation of women's sexuality (South African Human Rights Commission, 2013). This is because virginity testing tags women as being responsible for immoral sexual relations (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003).

Critics further argue that virginity testing is majorly conducted on women even though it is also legal to test males over the age of 16 (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003). Virginity testing

focuses on women and it entails unfair gender discrimination and perpetuates a negative view of women as being responsible for all acts of sexual misconduct (Taylor et al., 2007). The practice perpetuates patriarchal dominance and further perpetuates a need to regulate women's sexuality. The notion that girls should remain virgins until marriage is rooted in stereotyped notions of female sexuality that have been harmful to girls and women globally (Holzman and Kulish, 1997; Schlegel, 1991).

Netsai Mushongo of the Harare-based Women Coalition of Zimbabwe, a non-governmental organisation, said virginity testing leaves the man free to roam, without enforcing any similar checks and balances on him, while it strips girls of their dignity and ability to express their sexuality freely (Karombo 2004). The practice is also said to perpetuate stigma against girls and young women who are not virgins. In a normal situation, women do not need to undergo virginity tests or be certified that they are virgins to know their virginal status (Behrens, 2015). The tests are conducted precisely because someone or some group of persons other than the person tested, has an interest in knowing the virginal status of the woman (Behrens, 2015). This has serious consequences when the woman fails the virginal test according to the cultural requirements. Lessily Cherry, a medical doctor in Harare, said virginity tests are not "foolproof" because a girl's hymen can break, due to the nature of its elasticity or the nature of sport she participates in (Karombo 2004).

According to Swaartbooi-Xabadiya (2010), one of the arguments against the practice of virginity testing is that it is not voluntarily done in most cases. Testing is alleged to be performed on girls between the ages of 7 and 8 years, and the test is supposedly voluntary but this is doubtful if girls from 7 years are tested. The child may not have a choice whether to go for virginity testing or not to go but maybe under parental and societal pressure to undergo the test. The child at that age cannot possibly understand what virginity testing is all about; therefore, possibility of actual consent is highly reduced under these circumstances (Behrens, 2015). When virginity test is done forcefully, it can cause emotional distress related to the invasion of the girl's privacy and violation of their bodily integrity, which is a form of sexual violence against women

(WHO, 2014). A study conducted in Palestine revealed that forced virginity testing makes women become extremely fearful and feel terrorized and this is expressed through crying, refusal to sit on the examination chair, screaming, freezing-up and even fainting (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2005).

Critics of virginity testing have argued that the procedure is unconstitutional, unhygienic, and a violation of the rights of these young girls (William, 2005). In many occasions, virginity testing is performed on many maidens at once, often by untrained individuals in unhygienic environment or unhygienic manner such as the repetitive use of same gloves on maidens; this could increase the risk of STIs and STDs infections (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Le Roux, 2006). Maidens who fail virginity tests are at risk of other kinds of harm such as shaming, humiliation, ostracization, and stigmatization because they are seen to have brought shame to their families (Leclerc-Madlala, 2001; Brown, 2009). A woman's value is a function of her purity, her virginity status determines her bridewealth and may or may not prevent her from getting married (Ali, 2009). The situation can be more serious in societies where virginity is highly valued because in such societies women who fail virginity tests can be in danger of physical or sexual assault and even being murdered (Solberg, 2009).

Enhle Nthingila of the Children's Rights Centre in Durban South Africa suggests that the rise of virginity testers in KwaZulu-Natal has brought with it a rise in cases of sexual abuse (Hugo, 2012). She refers to actual cases where abusers gained access to girls by claiming to conduct a virginity test (Hugo 2012). This is very worrisome for the health and safety of young women who might unconsciously fall into the hands of these abusers in the bid to carry out a cultural practice. In addition, Hugo (2012), noted that some of the research conducted by Leclerc- Madlala (2003), revealed that publicly declaring your virginity status exposes virgins to be the targets of rape, especially gang rape and that it creates jealousy among those women that are no longer virgins to the extent that they encourage their male relatives and friends to rape these girls.

It is also that virginity testing may create new health risks whereby young people engage

in sexual conduct that is riskier than vaginal intercourse, like anal sex to avoid rupturing their hymen and therefore avoid detection of their sexual activity (Vincent, 2006). The rise of anal sexual intercourse is attributed to the desire to remain a virgin and pass virginity tests and this is because they want to please their boyfriends without affecting their virginity (Smith and Marmo, 2011). This act goes against the main reason for virginity testing which is to ensure that maidens abstain from sexual intercourse to prevent contracting HIV/AIDS as popularized by most government health institutions. According to George (2007), in areas where there is rising social pressure to undergo virginity testing, some doctors report a rise of anal sex among women which is highly related to the current rise in HIV infection rates in young women in the same area.

Children and young girls who are at risk of not passing a virginity test have been known to take steps, which endanger their health to convince the testers that they are virgins (Bower 2005). These measures include the insertion of meat and other foreign objects into their vagina so it can look like the hymen is intact (Bower 2005). Insertion of objects in the vagina is done to create pseudo hymen with the aim of deceiving testers during virginity testing. Hugo (2012) states that girls take extreme measures to avoid failing the virginity test. In addition, Leclerc- Madlala explains that girls try to create the appearance of intact hymen by pushing toothpaste or piece of white lace dipped in tomato sauce into their vagina (Mbulu, 2016). In some countries, maidens go to the extent of having hymen reconstruction surgeries (hymenoplasty) so as not to fail virginity tests (Juth and Lynöe, 2015; Ahmadi, 2014). The desire to pass the virginity test push maidens to result in some extreme measures that can be harmful to their health.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter has examined and critically discussed literature on various aspects of virginity testing. Some resounding arguments in the literature include the fact that virginity testing is a cultural practice associated with respect, honour, self-control, purity, modesty, and chastity before marriage. All these are connected to the idea that a woman is not expected to have sexual intercourse before marriage. More recently, however,

the practice of virginity testing is linked to factors such as the resurgence of cultural practices that may hitherto go into extinction and as a tool to curb the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and reduce teenage pregnancy. Nevertheless, critics have argued that the practice infringes on some fundamental rights of the woman and that it needs to be revisited. There is also argument that the socio-cultural justification for the practice of virginity testing has fueled stigmatization and it is targeted at regulating the sexuality of the woman.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Samui (2016) research methodology is the specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select, process, and analyze information about a topic. It also describes what was done and shows how the research methods match the research aims. The methodology section answers two main questions: How was the data collected or generated? How was it analyzed? This chapter outlines the methodology employed by the study. It discusses the processes by which data was collected, organized and translated into findings. These are achieved through the discussion of the following: a research paradigm, a research design employed in conducting the study, Sampling and sampling strategies, data collection tools and analysis procedures. The chapter further discusses the validity, reliability and rigor of the data. Finally, it highlights the ethical considerations , the limitations of the study and how these were addressed.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The study adopted the interpretivist research paradigm. According to Chillisa (2011), interpretive research investigates social reality from a pluralistic perspective and argues

that values, culture and gender are an integral part of social life. In this study, interpretive research is very essential as it helped the researcher to explore reasons behind interrelated or multifaceted processes, which helped to understand and describe human behaviour (Chillisa, 2011). Interpretist paradigm was employed because the current research was aimed at understanding what meaning and significance the social world has for the young maidains who live within it, thus seeing the world as socially constructed (adapted from Ponelis, 2015). The other reasons for using the interpretive paradigm in the study are as follows: (a) It is well- suited for exploring hidden reasons behind complex, interrelated, or multifaceted social processes; Here the researcher was able to explore the topic of virginity testing which is a complex topic. The participants were able to reveal other reasons which the researcher was not aware of. (b) It helped to uncover exciting and relevant research questions and issues for follow-up research. These are discussed in chapter 5.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

This study adopted a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research allowed the researcher to draw participants' accounts of meaning, experience and perceptions (De Vos, A.S. & Schulze, S, 2002). Furthermore, a qualitative approach enabled the researcher to explore, describe and analyse the meaning of individual's lived experience on "how they perceive describe, feel, judge, remember, make sense and talk about their lived experiences with others" (Patton, 2002:104 cited in Marshall and Rossman, 2011). In this study, the researcher was interested in understanding how young maidens make meaning of virginity testing, their experiences of virginity testing, what influences them to remain virgins, and what they define as the role of virginity testing in their lives.

A qualitative approach gave the study participants a platform to speak and talk about anything they wanted to talk about in relations to their lives as maidens. In the study, the participants were allowed to speak about their joys, challenges, choices, limited choices, pains in their journey as girls who undergo virginity testing.

3.3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopted an exploratory research design. According to Willig (2013), exploratory research designs deal with an investigation that seeks to explore a phenomenon, unpack new narratives and describe varying human experiences of social reality. This was appropriate for the study as it allowed the researcher to take into consideration the participants' thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values and assumptions. In addition, explorative research design facilitated a better understanding of the research questions being investigated.

Notably, exploratory research design does not aim to provide the final and conclusive answers to the research questions, instead, it explores the research topic with varying levels of depth (Reiter, 2017). The preoccupation of exploratory research is to explore new narratives about a social phenomenon towards the generation of new knowledge (Reiter, 2017). In getting a balanced perspective about virginity testing, both negative and positive aspects of virginity testing were looked at. This was due to the researcher needing to gain a non-biased understand of the practice of virginity testing. The exploration of both negative and positive elements of virginity testing was instrumental in influencing a high degree of participants' genuineness during data collection.

3.4 STUDY LOCATION

3.4.1 Brief Description of the Research Site

This study was conducted in a cultural institute in Pietermaritzburg under Umsunduzi Local Municipality in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa. The Cultural Institute was established in the late 1990's, and is situated in the Alexandra area in

Pietermaritzburg, however, there are other satellite institutes located in the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and Johannesburg. The institute in KZN is home to more than +-200 maidens who come from different backgrounds. The maidens differ in age; they range from 13 to 36 years of age. The Cultural institute's main objective is to ensure that maidens abstain from sexual intercourse and prioritise education in their lives. The institute offers virginity testing to the maidens, organises awareness workshops to the maidens on social and health-related issues, and has grooming discussions with the older maidens as preparation for marriage and adult life (cultural institute, 1996). At the institute, workshops are conducted where different experts from different fields of learning are invited to address the maidens on various topics through workshops which are meant to educate maidens on social and health issues through the motivations and provision of guidance by experts that are invited to the workshops. The workshops are organised twice a year for June and December, which is during the school holidays. The workshops are interactive, and the maidens are grouped according to their age.

3.5 SAMPLING STRATEGY

According to Etikan, Musa & Alkassim (2016), a sample is selected to comprise what the researcher considers to be units that are typical of the overall population. The participants of the study were targeted and recruited using the purposive sampling strategy. Purposive sampling strategy was ideal for the study as it comprises participants who are deliberately targeted and thought to have information that will help to achieve the study's aims (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, & McKibbin, K. 2015). Etikan, Musa & Alkassim (2015) state that purposive sampling enables a researcher to select individuals that best enable him or her to answer research questions and meet research objectives. In this study, the participants were purposively and carefully selected for the purpose of obtaining rich data and the strategy involved selecting units that were judged to be the most typical of the population under investigation.

The following was the sampling criteria:

- The study population consisted of maidens who are members of the Cultural Institute.
- The researcher used a sample size of 15 African maidens.
- Participants were between the ages of 18-35 years. The choice of this age group was informed by the provisions of the SA Children's Act which stipulate that virginity testing should be performed to the girls from 16 years of age and above (Act No. 38 of 2005). Only girls above 16 years of age were recruited to participate in the study.
- Only maidens who undergo virginity testing were recruited.
- Those that showed a willingness to participate in the study.

3.5.2 Recruitment strategy

The recruitment process began with several meetings with the founder of the cultural institute. The main reason for meeting with the founder was firstly to meet in person and to explain the research topic, learn more about the institute and get recommendations on how best to approach the study in this research site. The other reason for communicating with the founder of the Cultural Institute was to enquire about potential participants. The several meetings with the founder of the institute produced positive results.

Once the founder of the institute was satisfied with the details of the study presented, a permission to conduct the study at the institute was granted (see appendix B). The permission letter served as a gatekeeper letter and it was submitted to the university ethics committee. The researcher was then introduced to the maidens by the founder of the cultural institute. After the researcher introduced the research study to the maidens there were volunteers who wanted to be participants in the study. These volunteers saw the study as a way to make their voices heard regarding virginity testing. There were other maidens that were recommended by the founder of the cultural institute as they met the sampling criteria. Lastly, there were other participants that were approached

by the researcher as they met the sampling criteria. The researcher did a background check before approaching the participants to ensure they met the criteria of being a participant for the study. After the researcher had introduced herself as well as the research study to the potential participants. There were many questions around anonymity and the language of communication during the interviews; the researcher assured the potential participants that their names will remain confidential and the language of their choice was used to ensure they are comfortable.

Some of the questions were on the length and type of each interview from the participants. The style and the length of each interview was explained to the potential participants. They were also assured that interviews will take place after they have given full consent and that they can withdraw from participating in the study at any time. During the recruitment sessions with the participants, it was stressed that participation to the study was voluntary.

3.5.3 Difficulties in recruitment for research studies

There are many potential pitfalls in the identification and enlistment of suitable candidates for any research (Patel & Tennakoon, 2003). The first challenge regarding recruitment was who to include in the study and who not to include. This was because most of the maidens wanted to be part of the study and most of them met the sampling criteria. The researcher then chose participants based on their availability on the set interview dates. This assisted the researcher to reach the number of participants that met the sampling criteria as the interview date that was chosen was during the holidays, and most maidens were visiting.

There were many maidens who showed interest in being participants, however had the fear of speaking and being interviewed. Many of the maidens have never participated in a research study before, and they feared that they might not be able to

answer the questions appropriately. However, the researcher assured the participants that there is no correct way of answering questions, and that they simply just have to be themselves when answering.

The other challenge with the participants was the issue of using tape recorders during the interview. One maiden did not want to use it when she was being interviewed and hence she had to be withdrawn from the study. The other challenge was the distance between the participant's recruitment period and the actual interviews with the participants. The participants were interviewed five months after the recruitment period. The process of interviews was far apart from the recruitment phase which resulted in having to recruit new participants as some of the maidens were no longer the members at the institute by the time the interviews started

3.6 DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. De Vos & Schulze (2002) advise semi-structured interviews are useful for gaining a detailed picture of a participant's belief about, or perceptions or accounts of a particular topic. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as they allowed the individuals to disclose their thoughts and feelings which were private (Clough & Nutbrown, 2007). Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to engage deeper with the participants on the subject under discussion. Their discussions were not only about the process of virginity testing but the participants' feelings, thoughts and beliefs about virginity testing were explored. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to treat and see the participants as cultural beings who are experts in matters concerning their lives.

Before any interview was conducted, the researcher made appointments for the

interviews with each participant, through calling them and agreed to conduct the interviews at a time convenient for the participants. Interviews were conducted at the Cultural Institute and four out of the fifteen were conducted in the participant's homes. Each interview was approximately 40 minutes long. Permission from each participant to tape record the interview was asked, all participants agreed to being tape recorded (See appendix A). To conduct the interviews, the researcher developed a set of questions which were used as an interview schedule (see appendix B). The interview schedule was used as a guide and helped the researcher not to lose focus during the interviews. As such, the interviews relied on the researcher's inter-personal skills and her ability to establish a relationship and rapport (Aleandri, 2012). In addition, the flexibility of the method allowed the researcher to reformulate questions based on the direction in which the interview responses led. Furthermore, it allowed the researcher to probe specific responses participants raise in order to understand their experiences better.

Although the semi-structured interview technique has some limitations (De Vos et al., 2002); the strengths of the semi-structured interview technique outweighed its limitations, and that is why it was adopted in this study. Some of the strengths of the semi-structured interview technique included the fact that it allowed the researcher and the participants much more flexibility and opportunity to follow up particularly interesting avenues that emerged in the interview (De Vos et al., 2002). When the researcher was interviewing the participants, there were times when the researcher had to ask follow up questions so to get more information from the participants. There were interviews that took longer than expected and this was helpful to the researcher as it gave more time to the researcher to question and probe where it was not clear.

One participant had to leave the interview due to a personal crises. However the researcher arranged to meet with the participant at another time to finish the interview and this was achieved. All the interviews were recorded, according to De Vos et al. (2002), it is important to record interviews so the researcher could refer back to them while writing the research report for clarity. Tape recording of interviews allow for a more detailed record than notes taken during interviews and allowed the researcher to concentrate on how the interview proceeded without any distractions.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face in isiZulu and English. To ensure that the participants were comfortable, the researcher ensured that the research environment was conducive and a quiet place. This allowed the researcher and the participants being able to hear each other and not be distracted by any noise.

3.7 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Thematic content analysis was adopted to make sense of the data collected during the fieldwork in this study. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that, thematic data analysis is a method for “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data”. Data analysis was defined by De Vos (2005) as the process of bringing order, structure and

meaning to the mass of collected data. The data analysis in this study was patterned after Braun and Clarke (2006) model namely:

- ***Familiarizing myself with data:*** This requires that the researcher is immersed in the transcripts of the interviews and become very familiar with it. It includes both the transcription and transcript reading phase. The primary feature of this phase was the ability of the researcher to develop a familiar relationship and knowledge of the research data. The researcher kept an open mind when collecting data because, according to Patton (2002), cited in De Vos (2005:336), the recording and tracking of analytic insights that occur during data collection are part of fieldwork and the beginning of the qualitative process. The researcher viewed the data from different angles, and became familiar with the data and understood the data. The researcher was involved in reading many articles related to the topic to gain knowledge on the practice. After the data collection, the researcher read the transcripts a number of times in order to understand the results.
- ***Generating initial codes:*** Thematic coding is a form of qualitative analysis which involves recording or identifying passages of text or images that are linked by a common theme or idea allowing you to index the text into categories and therefore establish a “framework of thematic ideas about it” (Gibbs, 2007). This is the phase where common patterns, thoughts and ideas were highlighted on the transcript. The coding of the study was carried out manually hence, highlighters or colored pens was used to identify potential themes. The researcher read all the transcripts and spotted the similarities in the answers of the participants. Thereafter, the researcher grouped the interview results according to similarities. The researcher also had to listen to the interviews that were tape recorded to take note of the common ideas that were spoken by participants and group those answers accordingly. Finally generating initial codes assisted the researcher to integrate the study throughout.
- ***Searching for themes:*** At this phase all the identified codes in the previous stage were classified into themes. This study at this stage categorized codes into themes and sub- themes. At this stage, the researcher had a list of all the codes that were collected at the previous stage. The researcher used different

colour highlighters to differentiate the different codes and searched for similarities in the codes to put together under different themes.

- **Reviewing themes:** Themes were redefined or accessed at this point. There were many themes and at the end of collecting data. The researcher found that other themes needed to be paired together to make one. Pairing the themes into one assisted the researcher in managing and organising the data. Reviewing themes took more time and required the researcher to be aware of all the transcripts so to theme correctly.
- **Defining and naming themes:** This phase captured and described the essence of each identified themes. By so doing, it highlighted what part of the entire study the themes addresses. This analytic process demanded a heightened awareness of the data, and openness to the subtle, tacit undercurrents of social life (De Vos, 2005:338). In defining and naming the themes, the researcher broke down the data into small and manageable sets. After doing this, the researcher then looked for the commonality in the sets of data; the themes were named according to the essence of what each theme is about and what aspect of the data each theme captures. The researcher first had working titles which were then themes. This phase took more time, and the researcher had difficulty in shortening the themes and coming up with short, precise and catchy names for the themes.

3.8 CRITICAL REFLEXIVITY

The researcher used a reflexive journal before and after conducting interviews with the participants, which is important because it minimised the bias and made the research more trustworthy. Watt (2007:84) pointed out that “An introspective record of a researcher’s work potentially helps them to take stock of biases, feelings, and thoughts, so they can understand how these may be influencing the research”. The ethnical and cultural background of the researcher was a major factor that necessitated critical reflectivity in this research to avoid bias and sentiment in the entire process of the research. Critical reflexivity entails a “careful consideration of the phenomenon

under study as well the ways a researcher's own assumption and behaviour may be impacting the inquiry" (Watt, 2007:82). Meanwhile, Cunliffe (2004) defines the critical reflexive practice as embracing a subjective understanding of reality as a basis for thinking more critically about the impact of our assumptions, values, and actions on others. Given the participants' location, as the researcher is also from Pietermaritzburg it was very important for the researcher to reflect critically on her own bias on the research which might impact on the research findings. This is due to the researcher being in favor of culture and traditions and after interviewing the participants the researcher understood the reasons for participants being part of this practice.

The researcher was aware that some of her preconceived assumptions and beliefs about virginity testing might have impacted on the process of researching this subject matter. There was an assumption from the researcher that all maidens who participate in virginity testing in the Cultural Institute were aware of the health implications when the process of virginity testing is not followed correctly by the testers. The assumption was based on all maidens in the Cultural institute are over the age of 16 years. Hence after conducting the interviews, the researcher came to realise that not all participants were aware of the health implications involved in virginity testing if not done correctly. Health implications can arise from, for example, when the tester use one glove, there will be hygiene issues that might affect the maiden tested.

The researcher also assumed that the maidens receive discrimination for participating in virginity testing. The assumption was that females who don't practice virginity testing discriminated those that did, this was however proved untrue. It was evidenced through conversation with majority of the maidens that the maidens have an attitude of moral superiority over females that are no longer virgins. This was demonstrated by some of the maidens who undergo the practice and were participants in the study. The participants shared that being a maiden is a daily choice. Choosing to remain a maiden shows they have the discipline that females who are not virgins lack, this shows they are not well disciplined and are loose.

3.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Trustworthiness is an important part of qualitative research. In order for trustworthiness to be achieved it must be divided into four components of trustworthiness, which are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. The four components are discussed below.

3.9.1 Credibility

According to (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) credibility is the extent to which the findings in the interviews or focus groups are said to be accurate, sufficiently rich, grounded in, supported by narrative data, and show a logical relationship to each other. In resemblance, the credibility of qualitative research depends partly on the credibility of the researcher 'because he or she is the instrument of data collection and analytic process' (Patton, 1990). In this proposed study, all interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and translated to English.

To ensure that the meanings contained in the interviews were not lost during translation, the researcher used herself as a translator since she is fluent in both isiZulu and English. The researcher also took notes during the interviews. The main purpose was to ensure that both verbal and non-verbal expressions that might be missed by the tape recordings were recorded. Hence, Terre Blanche et al., (2006) assert that credibility is further ensured by reflecting and reciting the original voices of the participants during the reporting of the research findings and conclusions. The researcher is planning to strengthen the discussions in her analysis and conclusion

chapters through direct quotations from the interview transcripts. Furthermore, “by methodically reporting the details of data collection and the processes of analyses, this study made it possible for others to judge the quality towards ensuring the credibility of the resulting product” (Patton, 1990).

3.9.2 Transferability

Transferability is the ability to transfer research findings or methods from one group to another (Thomas and Magilvy, 2011). According to Terre Blanche et al., (2006), transferability refers to whether the findings of the research in question are transferrable to other contexts or not. This study was a context-specific study whose aim was not to transfer the findings to other contexts. Notably, qualitative research aims to produce conceptual findings that are representative of specific groups or populations within a given context. Thus, the findings of this study accurately represent the reasons for virginity testing in the 21st century.

3.9.3 Dependability

According to Ulin, Robinson, Tolley, and McNeill, (2002), dependability is determined by the consistency of the research process. The overall research questions in this study were considered to be clear and logically connected to the research design and objectives. Notably, the use of face to face interviews is consistent with qualitative research processes. Thus, the discussions took place in the language the participants were comfortable in which was isiZulu or English. This ensured that the participants were given a voice and were treated as active agents who are experts in matters concerning their own lives. The use of the participant’s language minimised misinterpretations between the researcher and the researched. In this regard, care was taken not to assume meanings.

3.9.4 Conformability

Conformability refers to whether or not the findings and conclusions of a study are amenable to the research objectives despite the values and biases of the researcher (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Although the researcher recognised and documented her subjective self in the research process, the distinction was maintained between her personal values and those of the research participants. Pragmatically speaking, this was achieved by documenting and reviewing the field notes, tape records and also had the expectations of the study reviewed in accordance with the stated objectives of the study.

3.10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

A topic such as the one investigated in this study steers a lot of ethical issues. De Vos et al. (2002) explained that the fact that human beings are the objects of study in the social sciences brings unique ethical problems to the fore that would never be relevant in the pure, clinical laboratory settings of the natural sciences. Babbie (2001) also points out that anyone involved in research needs to be aware of the general agreements about what is proper and improper in scientific research. Marshall and Rossman (2011) reiterate that ethical research practice was grounded in the moral principles of respect for persons, beneficence and justice. As such this study ensured that for ethical purpose the participants were not coerced, lured, induced or deceived to participate in this research.

Prior to data collection, the permission letter was received from the cultural institute which allowed the participants to be interviewed. This served as the gatekeeper. The ethical approval was received prior to data collection from the ethical committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Additionally, signed informed consent was obtained from each

participant before commencing with data collection. The details, objectives of the study was explained to all participants, each participant participated voluntarily and had the right to withdraw from the study at point where they feel uncomfortable. Moreover, all the participants were made aware that participating in this study will not cause them any harm or/and discomfort, and their confidentiality will be maintained.

3.10.1 Informed consent

According to De Vos et al. (2003), participants must be legally and psychologically competent to consent and must be free to withdraw from the investigation at any time. Consistent with the requirement(s) regulating informed consent, the participants were informed about the purpose, the nature of the study and the approximate amount of time the interviews would take (Schurink 1998; Strydom 1998). The aims of this study were explained to the participants at the time when they were solicited to consider volunteering their participation in the research. After negotiating a suitable date and time to meet, they were briefed again about the aims and purpose of the study, that is, to hear about their reasons and experiences of undergoing virginity testing in the 21st century.

The participants were given consent forms see Appendix (C) which the participants signed to confirm their participation in the study. It bears repeating that the participation of the respondents was based on their willingness to do so. Therefore, they were free to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants who chose to participate were asked to sign an informed consent form and were told that they were able to withdraw at any time if they felt the need to do so. They were also assured that participation or non-

participation to the study will not jeopardize their benefits as the service users at the Cultural Institute.

During the fieldwork phase, the consent of each participant was sought before their interviews were tape recorded. The data collected in this study will be stored in a safe place and will be destroyed after five years in line with the university policy. Ethical clearance was given by the UKZN Research Office.

3.10.2 Confidentiality

All the participants were assured of confidentiality. The definition of confidentiality adopted in this study is what (Strydom, 1998) defined as 'a continuation of privacy which refers to an agreement between persons that limit others' access to private information except in reporting research results as agreed and that the information will not be used for any purpose other than research. Confidentiality ensures that the right to privacy of the individual is maintained (Polit & Beck, 2010:129; LaBiondo-Wood & Haber, 2010:252). All collected data was handled carefully and strictly to maintain confidentiality and privacy. Their names and identities will not be reflected in research report.

3.10.3 Do no harm

Participants can be harmed in a physical and/or emotional manner. In terms of this study, participants were not at risk of physical harm. However, participants could have been at risk of experiencing emotional distress due to the researcher requiring them to think of their own feelings and experiences on the subject matter (Strydom, 2005). If this happened, the researcher would have referred participants to the social worker, who works at the Department of Social Development. Arrangements were made with a specific social worker to be on standby should the researcher require her services. This

was not a problem to the social worker because the institute was part of the areas she is allocated to work with. When the interviews were completed, there was no participant that needed to be referred to the social worker. To further reduce harm to the participants, the researcher ensured that all research participants were informed through a letter about the research, regarding the overall purpose of the study, the procedures, the main features of the design as well as the possible risks and benefits of participation in the research project (Kvale, 2007).

3.11. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following were the limitations of the study:

Open sharing of information about the virginity testing: During the interview, some participants felt they have to share only the good elements of the practice of virginity testing. Some participants felt that virginity testing was a sacred practice that should be kept sacred and be discussed only among the members of the institute. These require the research to be patient with the research participants and treat informed consent as an iterative process. She was required to negotiate and renegotiate her entry into the lived experiences of the participants. After clear explanations and understanding concerning the actual aims and objectives of the research were achieved by the research participants, they opened up and communicated freely about the practice. The interviews were time consuming and this took more time than expected. The interview process took several weeks instead of two weeks that was set for interviews. The final limitation is that the study was labour intensive, the researcher had to do the recording, categorization of the collected data and the travelling to the participants. This was a limitation even though it yielded good results.

3.12 Conclusion

The methodology chapter has discussed and reported on the research design and sampling method. Some interesting discussions in the methodology include the steps and materials used to collect and analyze the data. More interestingly, the Methodology chapter reported on how trustworthiness was maintained throughout the research and reports on matters relating to ethical issues and limitations of the study. In the chapter, it was made clear that there are various factors to consider when attempting to understand the reasons for maidens to be part of the practice of virginity testing.

The research methodology chapter used an exploratory research design, and it has allowed consideration of participant's thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and assumptions and new knowledge, where the researcher discovered a need to preserve culture and tradition.

The study location was a cultural institution in Pietermaritzburg. There were 15 participants between 18-35 years who were interviewed. The sampling strategy used purposive sampling strategy as the participants were deliberately chosen for the study. In the recruitment strategy, the researcher first had to get permission to conduct the research. Thereafter was introduced to the potential participants. There were difficulties with recruitment which are included in the body of this chapter. Under Data collection, semi-structured interviews were used.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The study was conducted to explore the meanings girls attach to virginity testing in the 21st century. This chapter presents the findings that emerged from the data gathered during individual interviews with the fifteen participants concerning the study objectives. As mentioned in chapter three, the findings were analyzed using a thematic content analysis which allowed the researcher to closely examine and identify thought patterns/processes that emerged repeatedly. The discussion section is divided into participants' profiles, major themes that emerged during data collection, and a conclusion of the chapter.

The major themes that emerged from the transcripts of the individual interviews are the following: Participants construction of virginity testing (VT), initiation into the practice of virginity testing, the development of cultural identity through virginity testing, development of sisterhood through the practice of virginity testing, opinions on the call to ban virginity testing, HIV prevention, and virginity testing, and virginity and the risk of contracting HIV. For noting- the names used in this study are not the participant's real names but pseudonyms.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PRESENTATION OF PARTICIPANTS

Table 1. Demographic Profiles of the sample group maidens who practice virginity testing

Name	Age	Age at first participation inVT	Education level	Place of origin
Nobuhle	27	17	MA degree	Howick
Zanele	26	17	Degree	Kwa-Swayimani

Fisiwe	18	12	Grade 12	Imbali
Kwenzakele	25	17	Diploma	Nongoma
Philile	25	18	Grade 12	Imbali
Sandiso	22	15	Tertiary student	Mhlabuyalingana
Nonhle	32	19	Grade 12	Nongoma
Andiswa	24	18	Tertiary student	Mbumbulu
Gabisile	21	19	Grade 12	Kwa-Pata
Sibongakonke	21	16	Tertiary student	Mtubatuba
Ayanda	23	17	Tertiary student	Kwa Ximba
Phumlile	30	23	Honors degree	Pinetown

Zizipho	25	22	Grade 12	Estcourt
Nonqubeko	27	21	MA degree	Imbali
Abongiwe	23	19	Tertiary student	Imbali

Table 1 above presents the demographics of the 15 participants of the study under the following categories:

Age

The participants of the study were maidens between 18-32 years of age. All participants were of consenting age. The age gap between the youngest and oldest maiden was 14 years, which gave the researcher an advantage of getting views and opinions of maidens across three decades. As much

as all participants of the study were from age 18 and above, it was interesting to learn from the participants that five of them started the practice of virginity testing when they were younger than 18 years of age. The participants were able to share insight into the experiences of younger girls who were excluded from the sample of the current study. This added to the rich data presented in this chapter.

Level of Education

Table 1 above shows that all participants either had a tertiary qualification or were working towards it, or were in high school. Five participants had finished their tertiary education with three of them completed their degrees, one completed her diploma, and one obtained a postgraduate education. Five other participants were still working towards attaining their tertiary qualifications. The other five participants were still in their last year of high school when the study was conducted.

The participants' level of education was an indication that participants were aware of the practice and were not forced into it. many studies on virginity testing have positioned girls who undergo virginity testing as forced into the practice, the level of education of the participants tells otherwise (Mohlaka cited in Rakubu, 2019). The fact that these girls' level of education was from grade 12 to postgraduate qualification was telling a different story about girls who undergo the practice of virginity testing in the 21st century. Educated women and girls are better informed about their sexuality, reproductive health, and their human rights (Zibane, 2017)

Place of Origin

The participants come from vastly different communities around KwaZulu Natal namely: Howick (1), KwaSwayimane (1), Imbali (4), Nongoma (2), Mhlabuyalingana (1), Mbumbulu (1), KwaPata (1), Kwa Ximba (1), Pinetown (1), and Estcourt (1).

These communities are rural, urban, and suburban areas. Moreover, they represent a

variety of socioeconomic statuses. The diversity of these areas denotes that the practice of virginity testing cannot be localized in one type of community or a certain category of women or girls. This challenges the dominant literature, which states that virginity testing is a cultural and social norm that is firmly fixed and prevalent in rural settings, in South Africa" (Kandala & Komba cited in Rakubu, 2019:184).

4.3 PARTICIPANTS' CONSTRUCTIONS OF VIRGINITY TESTING

Every conversation with all research participants started with the researcher seeking to understand the participants' constructions and the meanings they attach to the practice of virginity testing. During the interviews, participants attached different meanings to the practice of virginity testing. The participants defined the practice of virginity testing based on their experience of it. Below is what was said:

"The test took about two seconds, and it was done. I was very confused because I had thought it would take longer. I loved the sound of the drums when we went to the practice and when we danced. I started as a child, it's like taking a shower, it's like taking your child to church, and they do not like it, but if they go there and become conscious, they end up liking it. I was becoming an African woman, I was growing, and this was good." (Nonhle)

"It is heritage, it is pride, it is history, it is our origin, it is the embodiment and the very essence of being an African. It's being clean; it's being beautiful, being a virgin is being educated and being smart. We are virgins, and they are tested every month. In a Zulu way, they are considered to be holy, are respectful and are different in a way that they respect themselves" (Nonhle)

"To me, it means a lot of different things; it means I have found my culture. Being that I was brought up in the 21 century. I do not exactly know much about being a Zulu, and this is the only part that I know that makes me being a Zulu person. I have heard of Shaka Zulu, I can never stand in an argument of who Shaka was because I was never taught about that. Our history was lost in the process of a new South Africa. To me, it makes me a Zulu person, and I'm proud of being an African and not losing my culture

through being a maiden." (Fisiwe)

The above extracts depict the diverse meanings that the participants attach to the practice of virginity testing. The meanings are influenced by many factors such as how the practice is experienced or how the participants were recruited into the practice. It was also interesting to note that some of the participants joined the practice with no prior knowledge about it. Evidently, the extract above clearly highlighted that although the practice of virginity testing is not understood by many, there is an important role it plays in the lives of the females who are part of the practice. For example, Nonhle above spoke about how the practice made her develop a strong African identity and a positive self-image. Nonhle uses the terms such as 'being clean', 'being beautiful', and 'being smart', which are the terms associated with a positive self-concept. The terms used by Nonhle to describe the practice of virginity testing are contrary to the dominant constructions of the practice of virginity testing, which view it as unconstitutional and a violation of the women's bodies (Burch, 2016).

4.3.1 Virginity Testing and Positive self-Image

To some participants, the practice of virginity testing is about building a positive character. The following was said by the participants:

"A Virgin is respectful, it is someone who is not only socially aware but also spiritually aware because virginity and spirituality and Africanism are intertwined. That is how a virgin behaves because they are taught respect above all they carry the Spirit of their forefathers through their actions and the way they view the world." (Ayanda)
"A maiden that is tested needs to respect themselves by keeping themselves pure. If you attend the reed festival, there is a level of respect you have for yourself that guides how you behave because, at the end of the day, you are not only doing this for yourself, but you are a role model for other young people." (Phumlile)

A maiden should respect herself, be humble, and be grounded. This does not mean you cannot enjoy your life, but when it comes to certain things, you need to have boundaries within you." (Gabisile)

"It is my rite of passage as a Zulu woman; it is an old custom that has since lost its

meaning in the 21st century. Yet, I still see its meaning for me it's a way of living for a female to grow up and respect herself and her body." (Fisiwe)

"Virginity testing is an act of self-respect and self-love. People find you different and not easily influenced". (Philile) "The relevance of virginity testing in the 21st century to me I can say it's greater than the church. I love the church, I love God, but here I am connected; this is one holy practice, it is that one practice that taps into the consciousness of a person, and it promotes self-control in modern times. It teaches you discipline, it teaches you self-control, it teaches you how to be human". (Nonhle).

The above statements confirm the findings by Crosby et al. (2019), that virginity is treated as a crucial social norm that identified the sexual purity and honor of individual young women. This means that if a young woman participates in virginity testing, they are regarded as Godly, sexually pure and honorable. In the African context, these are highly rated virtues and among the Zulu tribe, being sexually pure is very prestigious (Rakubu, 2019; Rudwick and Posel, 2014 and Bhana, 2016). During the discussions of defining a virgin and the practice of virginity testing; a strong link of being a virgin and of not having a boyfriend was mentioned by several participants. The maidens did not have boyfriends. They did not see the need to have partners as they are unable to be sexual with their partners in the relationship. The following statements were said by the participants:

"No, we are not allowed to have boyfriends, maidens do not engage in sex. Maidens do nothing in my institution; we do not even have thigh sex. I do not even know what that is." (Zizipho)

"A maiden is a young virgin who has never had any sexual intercourse of any sort, whether penetration or non-penetration sex. A young girl who has been raised by the Zulu culture to sustain herself in a certain way and to follow certain rules and stay as a Zulu Maiden."(Fisiwe)

"As maidens we gather in Camps where we get tested, we get tested month after month, this is for the elders to check if we are still virgins. To check whether one has slept with a boy or not." (Sandiso)

"We are motivated to abstain from sexual intercourse and encouraged to be educated and independent, boys are simply out of the picture". (Philile)

It was interesting to learn from the participants' statements above that the role of the testers was not only to conduct the tests but testing was coupled with education and mentoring. The testers educated the maidens on how to carry themselves if ever they start dating before they get married. In the study, one maiden stated that virginity testing teaches them to protect themselves against unprotected sex, drugs, and older men. It's not surprising that they are taught that because the purpose of virginity testing is to check if they are still virgins and encourage them to abstain and remain virgins before marriage (Crosby et al., 2020).

4.4 INITIATION TO THE PRACTICE OF VIRGINITY TESTING

The question of how the research participants were introduced to the practice of virginity testing was one of the questions that afforded the researcher an opportunity to assess if participation in the practice was voluntary or not. The following are some of the stories shared by research participants on how they were initiated into the practice:

"A friend of mine introduced me to this practice; unfortunately, she is not a maiden anymore because she now has a kid. She was my best friend, and she was like, "you know I go to this maiden thing, and I know that you are still a virgin; do you want to try it out"? Then I went home and spoke to my parents about it and my mom said, I should go whether I like it or not. If I like it I must stand my ground. Then when I told my grandmother, and she said I could not do it because she thought I am going to shame the family. After all, I grow up in a male dominant hood and I was friends with lots of males, so she thought that I am no longer a virgin. I am proud of my friend even though she's no longer a virgin". (Sibongakonke)

"We are inspired by older sisters who have gone before us, seeing them successfully maintaining their virginity motives us". (Zizipho)

These statements by Zizipho and Sibongakonke indicate that they are introduced into the practice of virginity testing by various people. Zizipho was inspired by her sister who participated in the practice before her. On the other hand, Sibongakonke was first introduced to the practice by her friend. The statement by Sibongakonke also revealed that her mother told her that she should participate in the practice whether she likes it or not, while her grandmother did not feel like she should participate before she was suspecting that she was not a virgin and hence might embarrass the family. This statement that Sibongakonke made about her grandmother is in agreement with the notion that being a virgin can bring a sense of pride for both individual women and the family. Hence because her grandmother was suspecting she had already lost her virginity, she didn't want her to go. Majority of the participants were recruited by friends at school, while a few were recruited into the practice through the festivals that the cultural institution hosts twice a year. In preparation for the festivals, there are radio interviews and newspaper articles where other participants saw the articles and read about virginity testing and wanted to be part of it.

4.5 THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL IDENTITY THROUGH VIRGINITY TESTING

Throughout the conversations with the individual participants, the term culture was frequently mentioned. In some instances, it was used interchangeably with the practice of virginity testing. Below are some of the statements made by the research participants to highlight the link between the practice of virginity testing and culture:

"Being tested is a ritual derived from the Zulu tribe, we gather in camps where we get tested. We get tested month after month, this is for the elders to check if we are still virgins. Our private parts are assessed because it is our private parts that determine whether one has slept with a boy or not." (Sandiso)

"I have always known about it because our Aunty (Ma Mkhize) who conducts the

tests is my relative, she is pro culture and always stresses we stay true to our roots. Being a maiden came naturally". (Philile)

"I love the traditional Zulu dance from home, I used to host events even when my dad did not approve. That is how I was introduced; Mam Mkhize told me how it works but also that I can leave when I am no longer interested. At the time I was in search of something such as a job that would keep me busy and committed and something that would help brighten my future, and as a Zulu proud person virginity testing for me came as a rescue." (Abongiwe)

Being part of the practice of virginity testing has been viewed traditionally as a rite of passage for many young people (Thomas, 2014). Kale (2016) asserts that virginity testing is a part of our culture that is sacred to us, and we are not ashamed of it. Similarly, most maidens viewed the practice of virginity testing as an important element in developing their cultural identity.

This study results show that the maidens experience virginity testing as a platform that teaches self-respect. In the below excerpt, Philile explained her experience:

"Being part of virginity testing has opened our eyes and has taught us many things about life in general and about womanhood. Most importantly it has awaken many participants into their cultural identity." (Nonhle)

"I have kept my virginity to protect my future and gain respect. I have gained a lot of self- confidence and my self-esteem has been boosted. I am proud of myself, I walk tall, knowing that I am still a virgin." (Nonqubeko)

The maidens reported that there was a sense of cultural identity that they discovered when participating in the practice of virginity testing. For Ayanda, attending VT was a chance for her to focus on her culture and not the western culture. Ayanda reported that the virginity testing practice has taught her many things regarding her culture. It gave her knowledge of her culture as she explicated in the quote below:

"I think it is more important now, even more than back in the days. Back in the day, there was virginity testing because it was part of our tradition. It's especially important

now because everything is Westernized, our culture is put aside." (Ayanda)

The statements indicate that the participants associate virginity testing with self-respect, modesty, and pride. Many studies surrounding being a virgin and virginity testing have reported the same view (Zibane, 2017, Bhana, 2016 and Valenti, 2009). Furthermore, this is also in agreement with Bhana (2014) who found that teenagers believe that virginity embodies and evokes respect from others. In a school-based ethnography, being a virgin was equated to being intelligent and to have class (Zibane, 2017). Virginity testing is seen as part of the Zulu cultural identity in South Africa, and it is strongly associated with self-respect, modesty, and pride (Kaarsholm, 2006). Furthermore, virginity testing is regarded as a meaningful communal tradition and celebration of cultural values (Hans, 2013).

The findings are not in agreement with Korombo (2004) who held the view that virginity testing is a horrible practice that violates the integrity of young girls. Nonetheless, the participants in this study indicated that the practice of virginity testing is not horrific to them. Some of the participants said it is a way of life for a Zulu girl child to grow up knowing her heritage and culture.

This is in agreement with what has been reported by other scholars (Rakubu, 2019; Rudwick and Posel, 2014 and Bhana, 2016).

4.6 DEVELOPMENT OF SISTERHOOD THROUGH THE PRACTICE OF VIRGINITY TESTING

During the conversations with the participants, the researcher learnt that the practice of virginity testing is not embraced by all peers of those participating in it. Some participants reported that they tend to feel judged and isolated by others who oppose the practice of virginity testing. Whilst they feel accepted and united with other maidens. The participants reported:

“

“This virginity testing is heaven and earth for us. We fight for our rights, for sisterhood and for womanhood. Here we are all a family. We are one and when I come here, I have my older sisters who have been in the game for quite some time. They will teach you, how to overcome certain challenges. We are like sister and give each other advises. I speak to my elder sisters for direction on things like, am I supposed to date and how”. (Fisiwe)

The practice thus gives some girls a sense of belonging and sisterhood as they find it easy to bond and relate to other maidens. The statements below show the sisterhood that some participants get from participating in the virginity testing practice.

“I like being a maiden, it's a gathering of sisterhood on its own, and it removes feeling ashamed of yourself because you find that there is another person like you. So to me, I wish

this thing can be spread all over, and have every young girl joining the Institution. So they can witness that there is life in virginity testing.” (Sibongakonke)

“In High school, my peers judged me, saying that I am inexperienced in life because I am not doing what they are doing. People look down on me; they treat me as if I am old school. They think I am not smart”. (Gabisile)

So maiden face judgment from people who are against the practice and also people who don't believe that they are telling the truth. According to Bower (2005) also observed that “young girls who are at risk of not passing the virginity test have been known to take steps which endanger their health to convince the testers that they are virgins. This measure includes the insertion of meat into the vagina”. It is interesting to find that other maidens observed that other people do not believe that there are still females who undergo virginity testing. Below are the participants quotes:

"There are people who do not trust us when we tell them our age and that we are virgins. Since we say we are virgins, people say that we bribe the women who test us, so they can provide results that indicate we are still virgins.” (Abongwe)

The above statements indicates that the practice of virginity testing is not embraced by everyone. Some reported that they tend to feel there is no support from those close to them on the practice of virginity testing. Others pride themselves and feel the obligation to remain

virgins so to make their family and community proud. These findings revealed that the maidens enjoy the practice of virginity testing and have built solid relations with other maidens who participate in the practice of virginity testing.

Through the practice of virginity testing, the maidens see themselves as being involved in their culture and in assisting in the continuation of the practice for the upcoming generation. This is similar to the findings of Zibane (2017) that acknowledged girls as active agents in matters concerning their culture and sexuality. Furthermore, virginity testing is regarded as a meaningful communal tradition and celebration of cultural values (Hans, 2013). It is a rite of passage.

4.7 OPINIONS ON THE CALL TO BAN VIRGINITY TESTING

On the ban of virginity testing, during this study, the researcher attended a rally against the UN as it sent a call to ban virginity testing. The researcher was also invited to be part of the Cultural institute's annual visit to the reed dance, where the maidens called on the cultural leaders to do something against maidens being seen as sex tools when wearing traditional attire. The maidens also called to leadership to stand for their culture and challenge social media that portrays African traditions as wrong and abusive. The maidens called on having social media platforms that would be culture friendly. Currently, social media removes one's profile if they post themselves bare-breasted and their accounts are deleted due to the post being seen as sexual. Abongile expresses herself below:

"Another challenge is that people are saying the virginity testing tradition should be abandoned, as people claim we are being abused. Before we test, there is a form that the parent and the maiden fill-in, we sign as consent to being tested." (Abongile)

This is confirmed in a study conducted by Mhlongo (2009), which found that the participants were opposed to the idea of banning virginity testing. In a similar context,

they shared they felt that if it is banned, it will encourage promiscuity among young girls because they may engage in sexual intercourse without fear of the consequences. They also felt that virginity testing is an important part of their culture. According to George (2007), opponents of virginity testing argue that girls rarely exercise their right to refuse because of pressure from their families. RAPCAN (2006) stated that the Bill of Rights clearly states that children have the right to be protected from potentially harmful cultural, religious, and social practices.

WHO (2018) states virginity testing is often performed by inspecting the hymen for tears or its size of opening, and/or inserting fingers into the vagina. They further state that there is no evidence that either method can prove whether a woman or girl has had vaginal intercourse or not. Section 12 of the South African Constitution assert 'that everyone has the right to bodily and psychological integrity, which includes the rights to make decisions concerning reproduction and to security and control over their body' (Dlamini ,2016). Women and girls are subjected, and often forced, to undergo virginity testing for various reasons. These include requests from parents or potential partners to establish marriage eligibility or from employers for employment eligibility. The Constitutional protection for cultural rights does not, however, provide a license for the continuation of practices of any kind that may seek to continue discrimination and violence against women and girls (Dlamini ,2016).

When asked about the harmful nature of virginity testing, the participants in this study reported that they didn't find the practice harmful.

"Who likes pain and would endure pain for so many years? I would have never continued with testing if it was painful. Most people who say virginity testing is painful have never done it, so they want to paint the practice badly." (Gabisile)

The above statement indicates that the maidens do not agree with what the UN and other opposers of the virginity testing practice are saying. These findings are similar to the findings of a study conducted by Magubane (2016) which found that maidens are sick and tired of being

spoon-fed policies that were drafted without them but destroying their society (Magubane, 2016). Opposers of virginity testing also hold the view that the practice “strips young women of their dignity, freedom of privacy and choice” (Church 2016) while the Commission on Gender Equality described it as “discriminatory, invasive of privacy, unfair, impinging on the dignity of young girls and unconstitutional”(Magubane 2016).

This study has found that maidens do not find the practice of virginity testing to be invasive to them. They did not have good feelings about having the practice of virginity testing banned. They were worried and unsure if their Practice will one day be banned as advocated. This worry made Fisiwe reflect on what the practice means to her as a participant in virginity testing. Her words are expressed below:

"To me, it means a lot of different things; it means I have found a true place where i say i belong . Being that I was brought up in the 21 century. To me, it makes me a Zulu person, and I'm proud of being an African and not losing my culture through being a maiden." (Fisiwe)

For Nonhle, the ban of virginity testing was a difficult decision to accept, and she did not think it would be well understood by the other maidens and different organizations that support the practice of virginity testing. While Fisiwe expressed that she was worried about the ban because she feared that it might mean losing their cultural practice. Below the maidens expressed what virginity testing means to them.

"It is heritage, it is pride, it is history, it is the embodiment and the very essence of being an African." (Nonhle)

"Being a virgin that is educated is being smart about your future. Why must such a helpful practice be ended?" (Sibongakonke)

"To me it means a lot of different things, it means I have found my culture. Being that I was brought up the in 21 century. Our history was lost in the process of a new South Africa To me, it makes me a Zulu person and I'm really proud of being an African and not losing my culture through being a maiden." (Fisiwe)

These findings revealed that the maidens did not agree with banning virginity testing and disputed some of the statements that are said about virginity testing on how it is painful and no consent was given by the participants of VT which makes it wrong and unconstitutional.

4.8 HIV PREVENTION AND VIRGINITY TESTING

Some maidens are participants in virginity testing due to their fear of being infected by HIV/AIDS. According to George (2007), virginity testing was a traditional custom previously associated with marriage; and a strong emphasis was placed on total abstinence from sexual intercourse by girls, but nowadays, virginity testing is associated with HIV/AIDS prevention. At the peak of the HIV epidemic, the practice was revived to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. In this context, given the high statistic rate in HIV/AIDS in South Africa, HIV infection must be considered a serious stressor among virginity testing participants. In this study, participants were asked about their opinion on HIV prevention and virginity testing.

“If youth can be part of virginity testing even statistics can drop because as maiden the risk is too low as we abstain or go for testing should you feel that you are ready for a partner.” (Zizipho)

“Is that you contract it through sex, there is no cure for the disease. HIV is a serious disease, but people have managed to live with it, and now they are treating it like any other disease. However, for me, I think people should be scared because HIV can only be maintained not cured and for this reason, I can encourage people to abstain from sex. Have a background check for your potential partner and get them tested as well.” (Sibongakonke)

The statements above show that fear of acquiring HIV or/and falling pregnant play a role when the young maidens decide to stay virgins. These findings are in line with George's (2008) findings that some young adolescents undergo virginity testing to protect themselves against the risk of HIV infection. Additionally, The HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa is defined by UNAIDS (2008) as being a hyper-endemic as a result of the country having more than 15% of the population aged 15-49 living with

HIV/AIDS.

To mitigate HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy challenges, all participants of this study relied on virginity testing and the lessons they receive from the Nomkhubulwane cultural center. Unfortunately, even though they relied on the lessons and teachings obtained, not all maidens who undergo virginity testing remain virgins until they get married or old enough to be educated and independent. An example of this is Sibongakonke's friend, who introduced her to the practice of virginity testing; she is 21 years of age and had a child at the age of 19 years.

"Could you imagine what would happen to the Stats of teenage pregnancy, how large would it be?" (Sibongakonke)

"In the height of HIV and AIDS I chose to remain a virgin. This means I subscribe to different values and different actions compared to other people it means that people should aspire to be like virgins because they stand a small chance of being infected".
(Nonhle)

"The practice is a good approach to help reduce teenage pregnancy and the spread of HIV. I got to know about virginity testing through a teacher at school. I was motivated then I joined the practice." (Sandiso)

Although maidens live by the lessons and the teachings they receive from the cultural center, there cannot be guaranteed proof that they will remain virgins as Sibongakonke's friend left the practice. In virginity testing, one challenge is to be sure that all the virginity testing participants are well educated on the topic of HIV/AIDS. Buthelezi (2006) states that virginity testing promotes abstinence, but while abstinence is a guaranteed way of preventing HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, abstinence before marriage has not been able to adequately respond to the questions and concerns relating to sexual matters which trouble young people in their everyday lives. Many married women who were virgins on their wedding day are at risk of acquiring HIV infection from their partners (Buthelezi, 2006:6).

Khoza (2013) noted that virginity testing has become of the popular ways of reducing teenage pregnancy alongside the spread of HIV. In addition, Khoza (2013) explained that Zulu people believe that virginity testing helps to curb teenage pregnancy as it encourages abstinence and prevents young maidens from engaging in sexual intercourse. Pregnancy outside wedlock within this social fabric is considered a disgrace.

Mbulu (2016) revealed that by undergoing virginity testing, most girls would delay their sexual relationships. Thus, they are not at risk of becoming pregnant. The Zulu tribe believes that by continuing to perform virginity tests on maidens, it helps them to curb teenage pregnancy because it encourages abstinence (Khoza 2013). Similarly, Hugo (2012) attests that encouraging girls to treasure and guard their virginity helps to curb unwanted pregnancies and several sexually transmitted diseases. Performance of virginity testing on young children can assist in identifying early cases of sexual assault as the test identifies whether the child has had sex or not (Thornberry, 2016; Olson and García-Moreno, 2017). According to Rumsey (2012), as maidens as young as 6 years of age are inspected to determine if they have had sex or not, it is thus in communities that do virginity tests, it possible to help the abused maiden and also catch the culprits.

4.9 VIRGINITY AND THE RISK OF CONTRACTING HIV

There is the belief that when 'African people turned away from their core spiritual entities, Nomkhubulwane in particular, society lost its balance' (Masondo 2013: 36). This loss of balance is perceived to have resulted in: disease, particularly the ravages of HIV/AIDS; a high incidence of rape and abuse of women; high levels of crime and civil discontent; and the political violence that engulfed the Amazulu in the 1980's and 1990's (Masondo, 2013:36). Participants were asked what their understanding of HIV/AIDS is. HIV/AIDS is highly feared by the participants. Most of the participants are in the practice of virginity testing as they fear being infected by the virus.

Lack of understanding of HIV/AIDS can cause many maidens to get infected with the

virus. The study participants were asked about their knowledge of their risks for contracting HIV, as virgins. Zizipho and Gabisile share their knowledge in the statements below:

“NO, as a virgin I am not at risk because I am not sexually active unless I got it through fluid cuts. So I think I am not at risk at all.” (Zizipho)

“We are taught that if you abstain, you will not be infected with the HIV disease. If a person is a virgin, they will not get the HIV disease either. If you remove the sex equation, I can say no, but, as we know that one does not only contract the disease from having sex. I cannot say we are completely safe. We are at risk if we do not take care of ourselves.” (Andiswa)

“In the height of HIV and AIDS people think if you sleep with a virgin you will be cured, and that was a misconception and miss education above that being a virgin in this 21st century it is viewed as something backward. I am scared of being raped and of being a target”. (Nonhle)

“We are getting our certificates that indicate we are virgins, the white dots on our foreheads are no longer being put on our foreheads due to the fear that the young maidens will be victims of rape after being tested. This is because there are sick people who think they can be cured of HIV/AIDS if they have sex with a virgin”

The statements above show that the maidens are aware that even though staying virgins protect them from the risk of contracting HIV, the protection is not 100% as they can get infected through other routes. Notably, sexual intercourse remains the main route for contracting HIV.

According to UNAIDS (2018) of all HIV infections occurring among adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa, 80% are in girls aged 15–19 years. Adolescent girls and young women are also twice more likely to be living with HIV than young men of the same age. The participants were also asked about their knowledge of limiting the spread of HIV once they become sexually active. The data shows that the young maidens are taught about what to do to prevent HIV once they are sexually active. The participant’s comments are presented below:

“As maidens, we are taught about the whole process of using a condom, what they tell us is when you are ready, when you are married, you get tested with your partner.”
(Kwenzakele)

“They teach us that prevention is better than cure. To be safe, start by getting married and get your partner to be tested before engaging in sex. The world would a better place if people can learn to abstain and protect themselves using all protective measures to avoid spreading the disease. We need to implement somethings to prevent it and educate youth”. (Andiswa)

“We need to protect ourselves to not contract HIV. If you find yourself a boyfriend, ask him that you both go and test together. What many sexual partners do is that they wait until they find a life partner, one should not be hasty in having many partners”. (Fisiwe)

The statements above show that the young maidens are taught a lot about HIV and safe sex and the importance of getting tested. From the above statements, it is clear that the practice of virginity testing encourages the respondents to abstain. It is obvious to see that the lessons they learn in the testing center are valuable, and it's plausible to suggest that there should be maiden centered lessons on HIV/AIDS to help broaden their understanding. This would include having lessons that encourage maidens to date and be open about it so that they can be advised well. Most of the respondents noted they were not dating while they were. They want to portray a life of purity, which can still be achieved even when one is dating. This would encourage safe alternatives for sexual pleasures.

4.10 CONCLUSION

The data provided in this chapter included the key findings of the study undertaken at a cultural institute in Pietermaritzburg. The participants had the interviews where their views, concerns, and opinions about virginity testing were discussed. It was found that

virginity testing is done voluntarily and is a painless practice. Some participants are motivated to be in the practice of virginity testing as some see the practice as HIV/AIDS prevention method. It was presented that culture should play a better role in advocating for maidens right and for leaders to promote and encourage the practice of virginity testing as it promotes ones identity.

This chapter presented experiences, perceptions, and the attitudes that maidens have towards the practice of virginity testing. The statements revealed that the young maidens have positive notions regarding the practice of virginity testing. There are various reasons why they participate in the practice, and those reasons included the following: celebrating and honoring their culture as young Zulu women, wanting to make their families and community proud. The statements by the participants also revealed that the practice of virginity testing symbolizes self-confidence, self-respect, security for their future because in a way, they are encouraged to abstain, which then helps them from getting pregnant or/and acquiring sexually transmitted infections like HIV. Furthermore, none of the participants indicated that the practice was harmful to them or felt violated by it. Instead, the responses indicated a sense of belonging, identity, support and sisterhood that the young maidens get from being part of the virginity testing practice. The study concludes that young maidens should be allowed to participate in the practice of virginity testing if it's something that they want and feel it's beneficial to them.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Female virginity testing has been carried out in Natal and Zululand long before the contemporary campaigns driven by the African Renaissance activities and the fight against HIV Infections. According to Wickström (2010), in the early twentieth century, and probably earlier, young girls in a specific area were tested by a local elderly woman individually, their mothers or grandmothers in the homesteads.

This study was centered on a qualitative research method to explore the meanings girls attach to virginity testing in the 21st century. Black maidens were selected through purposive sampling driven by the aim of the researcher to acquire rich information. Explorative research design facilitated a better understanding of the research questions being investigated. The purposive sampling strategy was used when recruiting the participants. This is because purposive sampling comprises participants who are deliberately targeted and thought to have information that will help to achieve the study's aims. The sample comprised of 15 maidens aged between 18 to 35 years old. Semi-structured interviews were appropriate for this study. They permitted the researcher to convey questions that allowed participants to be part of the study by giving subjective responses to the subject matter. The researcher organized their responses and presented them into themes as expounded in the previous chapter.

This chapter presents the major conclusions and the recommendations of the study. The objectives of the study are used to frame the discussions and the major themes that summarize the major findings of the study. The objectives of this study were:-

1. To explore how the maidens define and interpret the practice of virginity testing
2. To explore the maidens' views and beliefs about virginity testing;

3. To explore the maidens' experiences of virginity testing.

5.2 MAJOR CONCLUSIONS

5.2.1 Conclusions on the constructions of virginity testing

In trying to understand the constructions and the meaning attached to the practice of virginity testing. This study produced findings that maidens have different meanings to the practice of virginity testing. How virginity testing is defined is based on maidens' experience of virginity testing. The meanings are influenced by many factors such as how the practice is experienced or how the participants were recruited into the practice. The study found that some of the maidens joined the practice with no prior knowledge about it. The practice of virginity testing is not understood by many, however there is an important role it plays in the lives of the females who are part of the practice. The findings of the current study clearly demonstrate that the practice made maidens develop a strong African identity and a positive self-image.

To the maidens, the practice of virginity testing is about building a positive character. Virginity is treated as a crucial social norm that identified individual young women's sexual purity and honor. In the African context, these are highly rated virtues and among the Zulu tribe, being sexually pure is very prestigious (Rakubu, 2019; Rudwick and Posel, 2014 and Bhana, 2016). As part of the construction of virginity testing the maidens saw the role of the testers was not only to conduct the tests but testing was coupled with education and mentoring. These finding show that virginity testing teaches maidens to protect themselves against unprotected sex and older men. It's not surprising that they are taught that because the purpose of virginity testing is to check if they are still virgins and encourage them to abstain and remain virgins before marriage (Crosby et al., 2020).

5.2.2 Conclusion on the initiation to virginity testing

An important finding of this study is on the introduction or initiation to the practice of virginity testing. The findings present that maidens are introduced into the practice of virginity testing by various people. However the decision to participate in the practice after being introduced to the practice is voluntary. The study findings reveal some family members are not keen in having their young participate in the practice of virginity testing due to suspecting that they are no longer virgins or their testing will be short lived and hence might embarrass the family. The finding of this study is that being a virgin can bring a sense of pride for both individual women and the family. The dominant discourse that maidens are coerced to participate in virginity testing did not come out during the discussion. Since the study participants were all adults of consenting age, they displayed agency in matters concerning their sexuality.

5.2.2.1 Conclusion of the development of cultural identity through virginity testing

The development of cultural identity through virginity testing was highlighted. Being part of the practice of virginity testing has been viewed traditionally as a rite of passage for many young people (Thomas, 2014). Kale (2016) asserts that virginity testing is a part of our culture that is sacred to us, and we are not ashamed of it. The practice of virginity testing is seen as an important element in developing their cultural identity. Virginity testing is seen as part of the Zulu cultural identity in South Africa, and it is strongly associated with self-respect, modesty, and pride (Kaarsholm, 2006). Furthermore, virginity testing is regarded as a meaningful communal tradition and celebration of cultural values (Hans, 2013).

The findings indicate that virginity testing is not a horrible practice that violates the integrity of young girls. To the participants, it is one of the ways of life for a Zulu girl to grow up knowing her heritage and culture. It was viewed as one of the rite of passages. This view is in agreement with what has been reported by other scholars (Rakubu, 2019; Rudwick and Posel, 2014 and Bhana, 2016).

5.2.3. Conclusion on the development of sisterhood through the practice of virginity testing

The development of sisterly relations in virginity testing is important and is embraced by participants of virginity testing. It was highlighted in the study that there are some maidens who tend to feel judged and isolated by others who oppose the practice of virginity testing. Even though this hurts them, it does not have a lasting effect on them. Maidens face judgment from people who are against the practice and also people who don't believe that they are telling the truth. It is interesting to find that other maidens observed that other people do not believe that there are still females who undergo virginity testing. Due to this, there is not enough support from those close to them on the practice of virginity testing. There is however support from other maidens, and through supporting each other the maidens have built lasting relations with other maidens. The most important to the maidens is having a relationship with those that practice virginity testing where one tends to feel accepted and united with other maidens as they have a common belief.

The practice gives some girls a sense of belonging and sisterhood as they find it easy to bond and relate to other maidens. These findings revealed that the maidens enjoy the practice of virginity testing and have built solid relations with other maidens who participate in the practice of virginity testing. Through the practice of virginity testing, the maidens see themselves as being involved in their culture and in assisting in the continuation of the practice for the upcoming generation. This is similar to the findings of Zibane (2017) that acknowledged girls as active agents in matters concerning their culture and sexuality.

5.2.4 Conclusion on the Opinions to ban virginity testing

On the call to ban virginity testing, the study, concluded that leadership is to stand for their culture and challenge social media that portrays African traditions as wrong and abusive. The maidens called on having social media

platforms that would be culture friendly. The study found maidens to be protective of the practice of virginity testing. This is confirmed in a study conducted by Mhlongo (2009), which found that the maidens were opposed to the idea of banning virginity testing. In a similar context, they shared they felt that if it is banned, it will encourage promiscuity among young girls because they may engage in sexual intercourse without fear of the consequences. They also felt that virginity testing is an important part of their culture. The Constitutional protection for cultural rights does not, provide a license for the continuation of practices of any kind that may seek to continue discrimination and violence against women and girls (Dlamini ,2016).When asked about the harmful nature of virginity testing, the maidens in this study reported that they didn't find the practice harmful. A study conducted by Magubane (2016) which found that maidens are sick and tired of being spoon-fed policies that were drafted without them but destroying their society (Magubane, 2016).

This study has found that maidens do not find the practice of virginity testing to be invasive to them. They did not have good feelings about having the practice of virginity testing banned. They were worried and unsure if their Practice will one day be banned as advocated. The study revealed that the maidens did not agree with banning virginity testing and disputed some of the statements that are said about virginity testing on how it is painful and no consent was given by the participants of VT which makes it wrong and unconstitutional.

5.2.5 Conclusion on HIV prevention and virginity testing

The fear of contracting HIV/AIDS is a major concern to the maidens practicing virginity testing. It was concluded that some maidens are part of virginity testing due to their fear of being infected by HIV/AIDS.

To mitigate HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy challenges, maidens relied on virginity testing and the lessons they receive from the Nomkhubulwane cultural center. Although maidens live by the lessons and the teachings they receive from the cultural center, there cannot be guaranteed proof that they

will remain virgins and not contract HIV/AIDS. It was concluded that maidens and all young females need to be well educated on the topic of HIV/AIDS.

Khoza (2013) noted that virginity testing has become of the popular ways of reducing teenage pregnancy alongside the spread of HIV. In addition, Khoza (2013) explained that Zulu people believe that virginity testing helps to curb teenage pregnancy as it encourages abstinence and prevents young maidens from engaging in sexual intercourse. Mbulu (2016) revealed that by undergoing virginity testing, most girls would delay their sexual relationships. Thus, they are not at risk of becoming pregnant. Similarly, Hugo (2012) attests that encouraging girls to treasure and guard their virginity helps to curb unwanted pregnancies and several sexually transmitted diseases. Performance of virginity testing on young children can assist in identifying early cases of sexual assault as the test identifies whether the child has had sex or not (Thornberry, 2016; Olson and García-Moreno, 2017).

5.2.6 Conclusions on virginity and the risk of contracting HIV

The cultural institute has included in their workshops as part of their educational guide to the maidens the importance of protection against the virus. Here they talk about the risks of contracting HIV/AIDS and how to avoid the risks as a maiden. Lack of understanding of HIV/AIDS can cause many maidens to get infected with the virus. Thus it is important to know how to protect themselves from the risks. The study concluded that the maidens are aware that even though staying virgins protect them from the risk of contracting HIV, the protection is not 100% as they can get infected through other routes. It was concluded that sexual intercourse remains the main route for contracting HIV.

According to UNAIDS (2018) of all HIV infections occurring among adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa, 80% are in girls aged 15–19 years. Adolescent girls and young women are also twice more likely to be living with HIV than young men of the same age. The study revealed that the maidens are aware of how they can limit the spread of HIV once they become sexually active. The study also reveals that that the young maidens are taught about what to do to prevent HIV once they are

sexually active. Further to this they are taught a lot about HIV and safe sex and the importance of getting tested. The study made it clear that the practice of virginity testing encourages maidens to abstain so to avoid the risks of HIV/AIDS infections.

While the study found that the practice has the potential to prevent the contraction of HIV and AIDS by ensuring non-involvement in sexual acts and other behaviour change lessons, there cannot be guarantee that the maidens will remain virgins and would not contract HIV and AIDS. Thus, the 'maidens and all young females need to be well educated on the topic of HIV/AIDS'. Overall, the cultural practice may be effective in preventing early sexual debut, teenage pregnancies and early marriages.

5.3 The potential contributions of the study

The current study will contribute on the following:

5.3.1 Social work practice

For the social work practice the research study has contributed by writing about the practice of virginity testing. This has created an awareness of the practice and more people in communities are now knowledgeable about the practice. This in turn will improve social work practices in cultural practices. It will give the ability to social workers to provide proper referral and counseling to those who are participants of virginity testing. More social workers can be employed in the traditional and cultural department to provide support and run workshops to educate communities on myths and truths regarding practices.

5.3.2 Policy and intervention programmes

All participants of virginity testing noted there is poor assistance provided by the government towards educating and investing in cultural practices and maidens. The study will contribute in the development of cultural guidelines that need to be published for the different communities regarding virginity testing. The guidelines will assist the traditional leaders and members of the Department of Health to work as a team. Furthermore the policies must be

strengthened so to have collaborations between all role players in the community and beyond. This will improve the access to information and then provide intervention strategies on community needs when it comes to culture and practice. Policies are to be updated and measures to be put in place in terms of understanding virginity testing in the 21st century. Once policies and intervention are in place there will be an improved service delivery to maidens and those who practice cultural practices.

5.3.3 Further research

In view of the fact that this research study was not representative of all the maidens around the Pietermaritzburg area, it is recommended that a follow-up study be conducted using a sample of maidens who are part of virginity testing but are not under a cultural institution or organization under the Pietermaritzburg area. The research study focused on the reasons for virginity testing in the 21st century. In view of the finding that maidens are not forced to be practicing virginity testing nor is the practice painful. Some testers are involved in testing children under 16 years of age, it is recommended that further research be conducted to explore the factors that influence practitioners to provide testing to the young while they are fully aware of the children's Act and the age to start testing

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are made:

5.4.1 To the community and schools

It is recommended that the topic of VT should be included in conversations and community advertisements and forums. The schools in connection with the Department of Education should include in their Life orientation curriculum information about the practice of virginity testing. The information included is recommended to stress out the importance of the practice of VT and how it is performed, experiences of the maidens to be shared so to have a clear idea of the practice. The information will be linked to that of abstinence and also share ways of being protected from HIV/AIDS. The practice is to be included

also in the Arts and culture curriculum. This is to revive cultural practices that have aided the community against teenage pregnancy. Furthermore For the communities, they are to be available to support all members of the community that choose to be part of the practice. They are to seek more information on the practice should there be any misunderstanding. The community plays a huge role in motivating and discouraging other cultural practices depending on how well they are received by the community.

5.4.2 To parliament and traditional leaders

It is evident that the leaders should encourage culture and heritage to all communities. The findings show there is not much advocacy when it comes to traditional practices in the communities. The recommendation is that the leaders should advocate for the people who still believe and practice cultural practices. This will inform the types of traditional practices that are helpful to our communities and those that are not. This can address the challenge of some practices being extinct and others having no clear understanding of how and why they are practiced. This will enhance participation in cultural practices and enrich the future of future generations. Most importantly, leaders should monitor the practices and discard all the harmful activities associated with cultural practices. The harm may not be physical but also the psychological harm should be addressed.

5.4.3 To Department of Health

The study found the Department of Health to be needed to support the maidens. The support is available from the department of Health but some maidens and cultural institutions seem to not benefit from the department. The department has programmes for the maidens and the ladies that test them which comprise of teaching and learning on hygiene, HIV/AIDS and protective gloves to be given every time the ladies are to be tested. Even though there are programmes from the department not all cultural institutes are receiving the assistance. Some maidens find the departments assistance to be unhelpful as they fail to provide the basic resources to assist in the practice of virginity

testing.

In order to keep the support from the Department of Health functional, the cultural institutes should consider the following guidelines:

- Make sure to communicate with the department at the beginning of each year and inform of the dates when they will have testing and when they require the gloves for testing as well as the team from the department to offer talks on female health and HIV/AIDS. This will require the institutions to be organized and to be well run.
- Avoid providing more financial support for only teenagers and youth that are no longer virgins but should consider having preventions programmes for the teenagers and youth that are still abstaining.
- Participate in conferences where cultural institutions convene to discuss matters of maiden support in our communities. This can include izimbizo as well as parent meetings for maidens..
- Emerge with South African or cultural role models that speak to abstinence and about maidenhood. This will diversify races, gender, and ethnicities of the personnel providing support to maidens and culture in general.

5.4.4 To Social Workers Practicing in cultural/traditional Sector

- Social workers are in the front line in the provision of community work and development. While they are always available to assist the community, findings from the study recommend that social workers invent support programs to be implemented pre and post maiden workshops or camps. It is suggested that social workers advocate for psychosocial support of maidens. This will change the minds of practitioners and the community in how they see the practice of VT. Furthermore there is a suggestion that social workers advocate for African people, communities and leaders to have the final say on their culture and traditions. This will discourage other nations in making

decisions on behalf of Africa and its people.

5.5 Recommendations for further Research

There is a need for research in following areas:

- For the De-colonization of the constitution to equally accommodate the current South African maiden cultural practices. Black maidens can be sampled to ensure they come up with ideas to achieve this. This can be a qualitative study so that it can give enough space for participants to speak out freely.
- The feasibility of practicing cultural and traditional practices in South Africa without being judged and accused for being abusive by other nations. This can be a quantitative study and sample government officials, policy makers, businessmen, academics, students and the public.
- Experiences of ladies that were maidens who practiced VT before the emergence of HIV/AIDS. This can be both a qualitative and quantitative study and sample any lady who was a maiden prior to the 21st century.
- Evaluating present maidens support system in the South African communities and within the departments of Arts & culture and Health. This should sample practitioners specializing in community development and support as well as maidens using their services. This should be a qualitative study to give participants some enough time to share their experiences.
- Which services are provided by the governments that are sensitive to cultural differences? This will not be an issue of gender equality. This will be a qualitative study given to participant and those in leadership.

Recommending the modernisation of the practice by mainstreaming it in reproductive health practices. For example, the way male circumcision has become a prominent healthcare practice. This would dispel the 'unhygienic' notion and enhance its HIV and AIDS prevention role as well as remove the stigma associated with it. This way, WHO would easily buy into the practice and recommend it world-wide

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter of informed consent

INFORMED CONSENT BY PARTICIPANT

Researcher : **Ms. Zamansele Nsele**

Contact details : **0795353298**

zama@reap.org.za

Name of institution : **University of Kwa -Zulu Natal**

Name of participant : _____

Date : _____

1. Research title

Virginity testing in the 21st Century: A study on maidens from the Nomkhubulwane Cultural Institute in Pietermaritzburg - Kwa Zulu Natal.

2. Purpose of the research study

To explore why maidens undergo the practice of virginity testing.

3. Procedures

The researcher will conduct an interview with the participant where study-related questions will be asked. The interview will take approximately one and a half hours. Taking into consideration the age of the participant, scheduled breaks will be included in the interview. The researcher will be utilising an audio tape recorder during the interview in order to ensure precision of the data collected. The recordings will only be accessible

to those directly involved in the research, namely the researcher and her supervisor. Participant identity is kept confidential at all times.

4. Risks involved in the research study

There are no known physical risks or discomfort associated with this research study. It is, however, a possibility that the participant may experience emotional discomfort, should the interviewing process bring up negative emotions and memories that are linked to the participant's experiences of virginity testing. Debriefing will occur straight after the interviewing process. If it is apparent that the participant has suffered any negative effects from the interviewing process, she will be referred to a social worker in the Department of Social development for further debriefing and therapy.

5. Benefits of the research study

There are no direct benefits to the participant for participation in this study. There will also be no financial gain for the participant. However, participation in this study may contribute to a better understanding of why maidens undergo the practice of virginity testing subsequently improve how the practice is known by the general society.

6. Voluntary participation

The participant is under no obligation to participate, and should she choose not to or feel that she wants to withdraw after the study has commenced, she will be allowed to do so immediately without any negative consequences whatsoever.

7. Records of participation in this research

The information provided by participants will be protected and responses will be kept confidential. Recordings will be stored on the researcher's password-protected laptop and the transcripts will be secured in a locked cabinet. The only individuals who will have access to the research data will be those directly involved with this research project, namely the researcher and her supervisor. The data will be kept in a secure safe or locked vault in the School of Social Work at Howard College Campus. Only the researchers will have access to this safe in order to maintain confidentiality. After five

years the data will be destroyed by shredding all the interviews that were administered and completed as part of the study. Furthermore, no names or personal details will be recorded. The participants will be assigned numbers for identification purposes. This is to ensure that participant anonymity is upheld. After five years all computer evidence will be erased and purged by the responsible authorities.

8. Contact persons

If more information is required about this research, please feel free to contact the researcher as per the details provided on the first page of this document.

9. Agreement to participate in the research study

My signature indicates that I have read, or listened to, the information provided above and that all my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I have freely given consent to participate in this research study, and I understand that by doing so, I have not relinquished any of my own legal rights.

I _____ hereby freely give my consent to participate in this research study.

This document was signed at _____ on the _____ day of _____ 2018.

Name:

Signature:

Signature of researcher:

(Ms Z. Nsele)

Research Supervisor details:

Dr Sibonsile Zibane

School of Applied Human Sciences, Discipline of Social Work

University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard College Campus

Tel 031 260 1216

Email address : ZibaneS@ukzn.ac.za

University Research Office:

Ms Sazise Melodious Ndlovu (Postgrad/Research administrator)

College of Humanities Research

University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard College Campus

Tel 031 260 1201

Email address : ndlovums@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix B: Interview Schedule

Appendix B: Semi structured
interview schedule

RESEARCH TITLE:

Virginity testing in the 21st
Century: A study on maidens from
the Nomkhubulwane Cultural
Institute in Pietermaritzburg - Kwa
Zulu Natal.

Section A: Biographical information

Age :
18-35 years old

Gender :
Female (Maiden)

Race :
African

Cultural practices

: Virginity Testing

Section B: Interviewing

themes

1. Virginity

testing:

- How would you define virginity testing?
- How do you feel about virginity testing?
- Who introduced you to the practice of virginity testing?
- What motivates you to remain a virgin at the age you are in?

2. Maidenhood:

- What does it mean to
- Page | 120

be a virgin to you?

- How does a virgin behave?
- What are your views, understanding and beliefs about virginity testing?

3. Cultural influence:

- What does your culture say about virginity testing?
- What do you think culture should teach to maidens about virginity testing?
- How would you describe behaviour modelled by females who undergo virginity testing?
- What lessons taught to you through virginity testing about sexual behaviour and relationships will you teach your own child one day?

risks of being infected by HIV/AIDS?

- What learnings are you thought as a maiden as ways to limit being infected by HIV/AIDS ?

HIV/AIDS:

- What is your understanding of HIV/AIDS?
- As a virgin what are the

7 Silverton Road

Musgrave

Appendix C: Gate Keeper Letter

4000

The Director (Dr Nomagugu Ngobese)

Nomkhubulwane Cultural Institute

Pietermaritzburg

Dear Madam

RE: CONSENT FOR MAIDENS TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

My name is Zamansele Nsele studying towards Masters in Social Work with the University of KwaZulu Natal. I am doing a research titled Virginit testing in the 21st Century: A study on maidens from the Nomkhubulwane Cultural Institute in Pietermaritzburg - Kwa Zulu Natal

The criterion for selection of participants is as follows:

- Maidens;
- Maidens who live in Pietermaritzburg;
- Maidens between the ages 18-35 years;
- Participants who undergo virginity testing.

The researcher will arrange with the maidens for the interviews to take place during their available time. Participation of participants will be voluntary and their identity will be protected as the researcher will assign numbers for identification purposes when compiling the report.

Your positive response will be highly appreciated.

Researcher details

Zamansele Nsele

School of Applied Human Sciences, Discipline of Social Work

University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard College Campus

Tel 079 5353 298

Email address : zama@reap.,org.za

Research Supervisor details:

Dr Sibonsile Zibane

School of Applied Human Sciences, Discipline of Social Work

University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Howard College Campus

Tel 031 260 1216

Email address : ZibaneS@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix D: Ethical clea



25 October 2018

Ms Zamansele Nsele 210520384
School of Applied Human Sciences – Social Work
Howard College Campus

Dear Ms Nsele

Reference number: HSS/1561/018M

Project title: Exploring the meanings girls attach to virginity testing in the 21st century: A study on maidens from a Cultural Institute in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal.

Full Approval - Full Committee Reviewed Application

With regards to your response received 23 October 2018 to our letter of 28 September 2018, the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the above mentioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

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

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

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

Yours faithfully

Prof S Singh

/pk

cc Supervisor: Dr Sibonisile Zibane
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Maud Mthembu
cc School Administrator: Ms Ayanda Nguli

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
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Funding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

