

Perceived parental reactions to coming out, attachment, and coping in Ga-Sekororo, Limpopo, South Africa: A qualitative study

By

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A mini dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF ARTS IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

In the

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

(School of Social Sciences)

At the

UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO

SUPERVISOR: PROF JP MOKWENA

2024

DEDICATION

This mini dissertation is dedicated to my father (Moqhakaza King Mkhabela), mother (Temedi Temn Mkhabela) and my siblings (Masehle, Maphawa, Rifumo and Fanisa). It is also dedicated to my grandmother (Emmah Sekgobela) and relatives from both my Maternal and Paternal home (Sekgobela and Mkhabela).

DECLARATION

I, Rejoice Masiza Mkhabela declare that Perceived parental reactions to coming out, attachment, and coping in Ga-Sekororo, Limpopo, South Africa: A qualitative study hereby submitted at the University of Limpopo, for the degree of Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology has not been previously submitted by me or any other university; that it is my original work in design and execution, and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.



2024/01/12

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Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- To begin, I express my gratitude and admiration to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy spirit for providing me with spiritual direction and strength throughout my journey.
- I wish to extend my sincerest appreciation to my supervisor, Professor J. P Mokwena for his unwavering support, professionalism, wisdom, and confidence in my abilities. Throughout my masters' journey you have been a constant source of stability and guidance that ensured I stayed focused and successfully completed the program. I am beyond thankful and appreciative of your support.
- I would like to express my gratitude to Professor S Mashegoane for his valuable support. Your support and availability during difficult times contributed significantly to my successful accomplishment of this research.
- To my loved ones (friends, siblings, and relatives from both my maternal and paternal home) for being a source of motivation, providing emotional and financial support.
- To my father Moqhakaza King Mkhabela, I am grateful for always believing in me since I was a child.
- To my mother, Temedi Temn Mkhabela, my unwavering support system, thank you for your endless prayers, uplifting words, and unwavering support.
- To my aunt, Joyce Mafuyeka, I am grateful for your continuous faith in me and providing financial support whenever I required assistance.
- To my husband, Siyabonga Bongani Masiya, there is no doubt that this dissertation required a significant amount of my time. Yet, throughout the process, you consistently motivated and supported me, and above all else, you always showered me with love.
- Gratitude is extended to the individuals who took part in this research study. This study would not have been viable had you not taken the initiative to participate and devote your time in it. Your kindness has left a lasting impression on me, and I will always cherish it.

ABSTRACT

The global discourse surrounding sexual orientation remains a sensitive topic, particularly presenting challenges for sexual minority youth (SMY) when navigating the process of disclosure. Coming out to family, particularly parents, is especially difficult. While the disclosure process may yield both rejection and adversities, it can concurrently offer a liberating opportunity for individuals to authentically embrace their identity. Nevertheless, parental rejection can engender mental health problems and foster maladaptive coping mechanisms among sexual minority individuals. Conversely, those encountering parental acceptance and support tend to exhibit enhanced mental well-being and employ more adaptive coping strategies. A qualitative study was carried out in Ga-Sekororo, Limpopo Province, South Africa. The study specifically centered on cisgender females identifying as lesbians. Data collection employed semi-structured interviews, with participants selected through snowball sampling method. The data collected was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), with interviews conducted in Sepedi and subsequently translated into English. The findings indicated that parental attitudes towards lesbians can be influenced by factors such as culture and religion. Moreover, the findings also indicated that lesbians employ different strategies to deal with coming out and parental reactions. The research highlights the significance of educational initiatives targeting parents, such programs may improve parental reactions and provide support during the coming out process for lesbians and other sexual minorities.

KEYWORDS: Attachment, Coming out, Coping, LGBTIQ+, Parent-child relationships, Perceived parental reactions.

ACRONYMS

IWM: Internal Working Model

LGBTIQ+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer

SMY: Sexual Minority Youth

TMSC: Transactional Model of Stress and Coping

IPA: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

The crucial element of developing young individuals is the establishment of one's self-identity: What defines me as a person, and how do I convey this to my loved ones and peers? (Kim et al., 2021). People within the LGBTQ+ community face distinct challenges in their journey towards embracing and expressing their authentic identity (Hemphill, 2020). One of the processes individuals undergo is the revealing of their true identity. According to Subrajit (2014), a few younger people shared their homosexuality in the past due to fear of negative reactions. Homosexuality was often not supported and encouraged by those who are homophobic (Das, 2018).

Although laws have been put in place to protect lesbians and other members of the LGBTIQ+ community, many still struggle with the difficult process of coming out. For example, Ravhuhali et al. (2019), states that even though South Africa was the first country to protect the rights of sexual minority groups, homophobia continues to be prevalent. A stigmatising environment can discourage sexual minorities from being themselves out of fear and the risk of being attacked, discriminated against, and bullied (Carbone et al., 2022). Families, especially parents are thought to play a prominent role in the emotional and physical wellness of adolescents. The psychological growth and development greatly depend on the relationships between parents and their children (Stafford et al., 2016). The impact that it has on adolescents inevitably shapes their path towards early adulthood, either positively or negatively (Mills-Koonce et al., 2018).

The response of parents to their child coming out plays a significant role in the well-being of individuals who identify as lesbians. The study at hand examined how the bond between parent and child, along with methods for managing stress, can affect the connection between how a young person perceives their parent's reactions and their mental health outcomes.

1.2. Operational definitions

This section explains the terminologies used in this study. Below are the definitions of the important concepts of the study.

1.2.1. Attachment

Attachment refers to a mutual process whereby a relationship of emotional bonding emerges between a child and their primary caregiver (Crouch, 2015). Within the scope of this study, the term “attachment” denotes the emotional bond and interpersonal connection existing in the parent-child dynamic, specifically concerning individuals undergoing the process of disclosing their lesbian sexual orientation.

1.2.2. Cisgender

An individual whose identity and expression match the gender assigned to them at the time of their birth (Reczek & Smith, 2021). In this study, cisgender people are lesbians since their identities match the female sex they were assigned at birth.

1.2.3. Coming out

Refers to the process of acknowledging and revealing one’s non-heterosexual attraction, also commonly referred to as sexual minority orientation, and encompasses the identification as a member of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, or other non-heterosexual individuals (van Bergen et al., 2021). In this study, coming out is understood as the sharing or revealing of one’s true sexual orientation by those who identify as lesbians.

1.2.4. Coping

Pickens et al. (2019), states that research has defined coping as an exchange that is assessed as burdening or surpassing the assets of an individual. In this study, coping refers to the strategies, behaviours, and resources that lesbians employ to manage the psychological, emotional, and social difficulties that come along with coming out to their parents or their significant others.

1.2.5. Heterosexuality/heterosexual

A person who is typically attracted to individuals of the opposite sex (Reczek & Smith, 2018). In the context of this study, the terms "heterosexual" and "heterosexuality" are utilised interchangeably, with the understanding that they convey identical meanings as explicated previously.

1.2.6. Homophobia

Refers to the dislike, fear, or lack of tolerance towards individuals who have the same-sex desires, whether they are attracted romantically, sexually, or emotionally (Ilyayambwa, 2012). In this study homophobia retains the same meaning as described above.

1.2.7. Homosexuality

Sexual attraction of preference towards individuals of the same gender (Ilyayambwa, 2012). In relation to the sexual orientation under investigation, homosexuality plays a central role in this study. It specifically refers to women who self-identify as lesbians.

1.2.8. Lesbian

A term used to describe a female who is attracted to individuals of the same sex (Moleiro & Pinto, 2015). Within the context of this research, a lesbian individual assumes a pivotal role as a focal point, given the focus on exploring the experiences of this specific demographic.

1.2.9. LGBTIQ+

It is the collective term used for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer/Questioning and other non-heterosexual individuals. In the context of this study the term LGBTIQ+ acknowledges the wide range of identities and orientations that exist and offers a thorough understanding of various parental responses, coming out scenarios and coping.

1.2.10. Parental reactions

Parental reactions in the context of this study refers to the different thoughts and responses that parents or caregivers, who plays a parental role in the lives of lesbian individuals have when these individuals reveal their sexual orientation.

1.2.11. Sexual minority youth (SMY)

Sexual minorities are individuals who have a distinct identity, preference, or behaviour regarding their sexuality that is not aligned with the predominant social norms of their community (Math & Seshandri, 2013). In this study, SMY refers to all individuals whose sexual preference does not correspond with the predominate social norms of their community, including the study's target group.

1.3. Background of the study

Lesbians, gays, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people frequently experience victimisation which can include rejection, physical abuse, and even murder (Mavhundu-Mudzusi & Sandy, 2017). According to Rosati et al. (2020), they frequently face pressure to conform to heterosexual and sexist gender stereotypes. Rejection of heteronormative sexual orientations leads to social stigma, discrimination, and in some cases, even violence. As a result, individuals identifying as LGBTQ+ face challenges related to mental health issues (Puckett et al., 2015).

It has been indicated that parents and families of origin are significant source of social support that affect people's well-being, especially among youth (Herbitter, 2017). As a result, youth heavily rely on adults, particularly parents, to help them satisfy developmental demands and to direct their own personal experiences across a variety of domains (e.g., interpersonal, and romantic) and settings (e.g., school, and work) (Katz-Wise et al., 2016). The influence of parents on the development of human offspring is pivotal (Mills-Koonce et al., 2018).

According to Ceatha et al. (2021), increased LGBTI+ youth's well-being is correlated with parental acceptance and affirmation, belonging and connection, understanding, and advocacy. However, parental rejection of sexual minority people in a heterosexist environment is a significant stressor linked to poorer mental health (Herbitter, 2017). McConnell et al. (2016) further indicates that youth who identify as LGBT are at risk for a variety of mental health problems due to family rejection.

This study was conducted in the rural contexts of Ga-Sekororo, Limpopo province. It was deemed imperative to be studied in a rural area where homophobia is pervasive and there is a high possibility that participants' parents will not be tolerant of them and might be unaccepting of their sexual orientation. Similarly, Mamba (2020), indicates that in most rural homes, homosexuals are isolated by friends, family, majority of the community members after admitting their sexual identities. Ntuli and Ngcobo (2022) contend that in rural areas deeply rooted in traditional, cultural, and religious values, limited exposure to diverse identities leads some to view homosexual relationships as conflicting with African cultural values and biblical principles. Consequently, this research delves into the impact of growing up in a rural community on lesbians'

perceptions of parental responses linked to coming out, as well as their ability to sustain resilience.

1.4. Research problem

One of the formidable challenges confronted by adolescents and adults who identify as part of the LGBTIQ+ is the process of revealing their sexual orientation. Interestingly, individuals within this community commonly perceive parents as the most challenging audience when it comes to disclosure (Carnelly et al., 2011). There has been research on coming out to parents about sexual orientation, their responses (rejection, acceptance, or support), the negative effects of parental rejection, how they handle it, and protective factors against it (Carnelly et al., 2011; Herbitter, 2017; Kim et al., 2021; Mayeza, 2021; & Puckett et al., 2015). LGBTIQ+ youth establish connections with their parents during childhood, well before they gain awareness of their sexual orientation, acknowledge it, and disclose it to their parents. As they mature, these early relationships and childhood encounters can influence various aspects of their lives, shaping their perspectives on the world determining their responses to it, and influencing their ability to navigate different situations.

However, there appears to be a lack of research on the importance of parenting and childhood experiences of parent-child relationships and how it may influence lesbians' perceptions and how they respond to parental reactions and foster resilience to the coming out process. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this study will be the first in the South African literature to investigate the aforementioned through the perspectives of both Attachment theory and the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (TMSC). Moreover, there is a lack of research into the experiences of lesbians and other members of the LGBTIQ+ community, particularly in Ga-Sekororo, situated in the Limpopo Province. Thus, researching on the topic of how parents react when their children come out can offer valuable insights into the unique social and cultural factors that impact the well-being of lesbians in rural communities.

1.5. Study aim

- The study aim was to explore and describe the perceived parental reactions to coming out, attachment, and coping in Ga-Sekororo, Limpopo, South Africa.

1.6. Research objectives

- To establish the nature of parent-child relationships in persons identifying as lesbians.
- To document parental reactions to coming out.
- To characterise meanings attached to parental reactions including coping with the coming out process.
- To describe the role that the established parent-child relationships play in coming out and coping.

1.7. Research questions

- What is the nature of the existing parent-child relationships for persons identifying as Lesbians?
- How do parents react to Lesbian children coming out?
- What meanings are attached to parental reactions by Lesbian children?
- What role do the identified parent-child relationships play in Lesbian children' coming out and coping?

1.8. Significance of the study

The research holds significance as it contributes to expanding our knowledge and understanding of a phenomenon that has not been thoroughly studied. It sheds light on the crucial role of parenting and parent-child relationships in the adjustment of youth identifying as LGBTIQ+ both before and after the coming-out process. The study aims to assist parents in recognising the importance of nurturing strong parent-child relationships and understanding their profound impact on various aspects of children's well-being throughout their lives. Additionally, the research aids valuable for LGBTIQ+ individuals who may have faced adverse effects during their childhood, offering insights on effective coping mechanisms, emotional regulation, and positive ways to address these challenges. The findings of this study can equip individuals with the tools to navigate potential future difficulties. Moreover, the findings also indicated that lesbians employ different strategies to deal with coming out and parental reactions. The research highlights the significance of educational initiatives targeting parents,

such programs may improve parental reactions and provide support during the coming out process for lesbians and other sexual minorities.

1.9. Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the research study, including the research problem, definitions of key terms, the background and motivation for the study, its aims, objectives, and research questions as well as its significance. The chapter that follows provides an overview of previous research on the topic of focus in this study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

This section outlines a review of existing literature that delves into past and current research on the challenges faced by young individuals who identify as sexual minorities when revealing their sexual orientation or coming out. The study specifically focuses on how lesbian youth in Ga-Sekororo, Limpopo Province, South Africa perceive parental reactions to their coming out, as well as exploring attachment and coping mechanisms. This chapter will also present theoretical perspectives to comprehend how lesbians' perceptions of parental reactions (rejection, acceptance, or support), attachment, and coping can be understood by examining parent–child relationships. The Attachment perspective highlights the significance of the parent–child relationship. Additionally, the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping is employed to explore how lesbians cope and resources they use to navigate stressors.

2.2. The coming out experience of lesbians

Coming out is a significant step in the development of lesbian and gay identity (Baiocco et al., 2015). It is the process of acknowledging and revealing one's non-heterosexual attraction, also commonly referred to as sexual minority orientation, and encompasses the identification as a member of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, or other non-heterosexual individuals (van Bergen et al., 2021). The factors influencing an individual's decision to disclose their sexual orientation are complex and the reason for such disclosure varies (Roberts, 2022). A study by Guittar (2013), also indicated that the process of coming out differs considerably among people, as demonstrated by the various interpretations assigned to it.

The decision to reveal one's sexual orientation, especially to caregivers, is significantly influenced by various factors (Roberts, 2022) and entails a lot of labour, especially given the possibility of receiving negative reactions from peers and parents (Kim et al., 2021) including physical harm at the hands of family, friends, co-workers, classmates, and strangers (Mohr & Fassinger, 2003). As a result, the experience can evoke both discouraging and emancipating emotions among the individuals (Henry, 2013). Furthermore, a study by Heatherington and Lavner (2008) also indicated that the most difficult hurdle for those who decide to come out is typically coming out to family,

particularly parents. Reactions to disclosure may leave parents feeling disappointment, anger, shock, or guilt (Carnelly et al., 2011).

Notably, it is unsurprising that SMY face substantial mental distress, such as despair, anxiety, and stress, upon coming out (Marks, 2012) and they are one of society's vulnerable populations due to their greater likelihood of mental health disorders (Wilson & Cariola, 2020). In spite of the potential risks associated with facing rejection and victimisation, as noted by Baiocco et al. (2015), many individuals choose to reveal their sexual orientation to their parents, as highlighted by Carnelly et al. (2022). This decision is often driven by a sincere desire for transparency in their personal relationships, as emphasised by Ghosh (2020). Roe's (2017) research underscores the significance of such disclosures in enhancing the mental well-being of LGBTQ youth, ultimately leading to an augmented sense of self-authenticity.

2.3. Parental reactions and their impact on the wellbeing of lesbian individuals

Reactions are commonly classified into distinct categories, namely positive, negative, neutral, or mixed (Estep & Mirman, 2022). When confronted with their child's disclosure of sexual minority orientation, parents may react in a variety of ways, ranging from accepting to rejecting (Katz-Wise et al., 2016). Positive reactions have the attribute of affirmation and acceptance, negative reactions demonstrate the characteristics of disapproval and rejection, neutral reactions do not exhibit support nor rejection, and mixed reactions encompass two or more of the previously mentioned reactions, which can occur alternately or simultaneously (Estep & Mirman, 2022).

2.3.1. Parental rejection

Parental rejection encompasses negative reactions demonstrated by parents when informed about their child's sexual or gender identity (Taylor & Neppl, 2021). During the process of revealing their sexual orientation, individuals identifying as sexual minorities frequently face instances of rejection from their caregivers (Roberts, 2022). Parents subscribing to the belief that homosexuality, bisexuality, or lesbianism is morally unacceptable and that an individual's sexual orientation can be altered may display rejecting behaviours. These behaviours include attempting to change their child's sexual orientation, excluding them from family events and activities to discourage, minimise, or deny their identity, often invoking religious beliefs such as

prayer to be cured of homosexual behaviour as a means of altering their sexual orientation (Hlalele & Matsumunyane, 2021; Matsumunyane & Hlalele, 2022; Ryan et al., 2020).

The unsupportive reactions may become internalised and show up as patterns of homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in the individual (Poštuvan et al., 2019) and are related to depression and anxiety that queer youth experience after disclosure (Estep & Mirman, 2022). It is unsurprising that punitive, traumatic, and adverse reactions from parents and caregivers may exert detrimental effects on the health status and risk behaviours of young adults given the crucial role of families in the development of children and adolescents (Slimowicz et al., 2020).

Existing studies demonstrates that parental rejection is associated with an increase in emotional distress, including depression, suicidal ideation, and substance abuse (Kibrik et al., 2019; Marks, 2012) and sexual risk-taking behaviours (Rosenkrantz, 2018). Furthermore, parental rejection has been linked to the occurrence of identity struggles (Bregman et al., 2013; Taylor & Neppl, 2021). Hence, encountering an absence of parental support subsequent to revealing one's sexual orientation is connected to a variety of harmful health risk behaviours and conditions (Rothman et al., 2012). Despite facing negative reactions, research shows that some SMY use self-acceptance as a coping mechanism when dealing with unfavourable feedback (Higa et al., 2014). Accepting and acknowledging one's sexual identity is often linked to improved mental well-being (Camp et al., 2021). This suggests that negative reactions might have the potential to result in positive outcomes for certain SMY.

2.3.2. Parental acceptance

Parental acceptance occurs when a parent or parents continue to affirm and express warmth and affection towards their lesbian or gay child after the child has informed them of their sexual orientation (Ghosh, 2020). This affirmation encompasses actions such as expressing pride, displaying genuine interest in the child's personal affairs, using the preferred gender pronouns, engaging with the child's social life circle, encouraging authenticity, and promoting an unwavering support of LGBTQ rights (Diamond et al., 2022). The process of accepting one's identity is intricate and may occur immediately, gradually, or not at all, likening it to the experience of coming out, which can vary in terms of its timing and individuals (Nascimento & Scorsilini-Comin,

2018). Additionally, McConnel et al. (2016) support this notion by illustrating that parental rejection of a child's sexual orientation may initially transpire but can evolve into acceptance over time.

While research suggests that acceptance can change over time, alternative studies propose that some parents exhibit unwavering acceptance for their children as soon as they come out (Butler, 2021). The degree and speed of parental acceptance can vary based on factors such as geographic location, socioeconomic status, and race. These factors have the potential to influence how parents perceive and respond to various situations and shifts in societal norms, ultimately affecting the extent and pace of their acceptance. Therefore, Mills-Koonce et al. (2018) emphasise the importance of future studies considering the sociocultural context of children and families. They highlight how cultural diversity, influenced by geographic, racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic elements, shapes sexual and gender identities (Mills-Koonce et al., 2018).

Supportive and positive family environment is associated with positive young adult health outcomes, such as low level of internalised sexual stigma, depression and suicidal idealisation, and high level of social support and self-esteem (Baiocco et al., 2015; Ryan et al., 2010) reduced negative health outcomes and overall improvement in the quality of life (Dalton, 2015) and it exerts a protective effect against the development of mental illnesses (Diamond et al., 2022).

2.4. The role of culture, religion and society on the perceived parental reactions and coping of lesbians

The perception experienced by young individuals towards unsupportive parental responses is influenced by various family dynamics, with religious affiliation playing a significant role (Mayeza, 2021). Mayeza's (2021) research indicates that parental religious beliefs often hinder open discussions about sexual orientation. Similarly, Herbitter (2017) argues that implicit rejection from parents who exhibit explicit or implicit anti-gay biases can result in delayed disclosure or even dishonesty when asked directly about sexual orientation. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent in cultures or religious contexts that strongly prioritise conformity, as revealing one's sexual orientation may be met with resistance (Pistella et al., 2016).

The high prevalence of negative experiences among LGBQ youth is noteworthy, as many have concerns about potential rejection from their parents (Higa et al., 2014). Consistent with Herbitter (2017) and Mayeza (2021), a study by Higa et al. (2014) highlights that these concerns often compel LGBQ individuals to conceal their sexual orientation in order to avoid negative parental reactions. Mamba (2020) found that sexual minority youth often keep their romantic lives private as a way to cope with cultural and religious pressures. Furthermore, van Bergen et al. (2023) observed that some rely on religious coping strategies, such as prayer or denial, to navigate their sexual identity within religious frameworks. However, there is a lack of research on the long-term effects of specific coping mechanisms used by SMY, particularly lesbians, as well as on culturally and religiously sensitive interventions aimed at promoting parental acceptance for a more positive coming out experience (Macchia, 2020).

2.5. The role of culture, religion, and heteronormativity in shaping parental reactions

The influence of personal religious beliefs and affiliations on attitudes towards homosexuality is well-established (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009). The research conducted by Ntuli and Ngcobo (2021) emphasises the significant impact of culture and religion in shaping attitudes towards homosexuality. Rosenkrantz (2018) identifies the challenges faced by parents with deep religious connections when attempting to accept their LGBT children. Cassar and Sultana (2016) also confirm that cultural and religious elements impact parents' perspectives on their children's coming out, with societal pressures strongly influencing their responses. The study by Ryan et al. (2010) further reveals a notable correlation between family religiosity and acceptance, suggesting that families with strong religious beliefs tend to demonstrate lower levels of acceptance compared to those with lower levels of religiosity.

Moreover, the concept of heteronormativity is also identified as a significant determinant in shaping parental attitudes and responses towards sexual orientation. According to Mayeza (2021), within the framework of heteronormativity, individuals are presumed or expected to be heterosexual. This societal standard often leads to conflicts between generations, especially when SMY challenge established beliefs regarding heteronormativity and cisgender conformity (Reczek & Smith, 2021). Such conflicts can lead to estrangement (Reczek & Smith, 2016). While the aforementioned

factors appear to have an impact on parental responses, as evidenced by Butler's (2021) study. The study suggests that modern parents may be increasingly receptive to non-heterosexual identities and less inclined to adhere to traditional gender stereotypes. This indicates a notable shift in attitudes towards non-heterosexual orientations. As a result, parental reactions may be influenced by their exposure to a variety of perspectives on non-heterosexuality and the evolving societal attitudes.

2.6. Parent-child relationships on the wellbeing of lesbians

The parent-child relationship is a unique type of relationship in which every human is personally involved (Popov & Ilesanmi, 2015). This relation is likened to an enduring affectionate bond of significant intensity with one's parents (Marks, 2012). The caregiver-child bond exerts a significant influence on the manner in which a child shapes and matures in their interpersonal connections with other individuals, as well as their self-perception (Roberts, 2022). Furthermore, parent-child relationship also plays a critical role in how young people deal with situations as they grow older. For example, Popov and Ilesanmi (2015) note that a good relationship between parents and their children has been shown to increase children's overall wellbeing and result to a better social life, protect them from emotional distress and suicide, and discourage children from engaging in risky and unhealthy behaviour. However, poor parent-child relationships are reported to contribute to the development of internalising symptoms such as depression and low self-esteem.

2.6.1. The nature of parent-child relationships in persons identifying as lesbians

Several researchers have highlighted the difficulties faced by lesbians and other sexual minorities in their relationships with their parents due to their sexual orientation. Studies have shown that SMY often encounter unequal treatment and problems with their parents due to sexual orientation (Hlalele & Matsumunyane, 2021; Hemphill, 2020; Ryan et al., 2009). This unequal treatment can lead to psychological problems among SMY, including depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and suicidal behaviour (Carastathis et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2021; Roberts, 2022). Previous studies (Baltezore, 2006; Feinstein et al., 2018; Gattamorta et al., 2019; Grafsky, 2014) have reported that disclosure to parents can lead to problems and strained relationships with their children.

Research suggests that poorer parent-child relationships among SMY are associated with adverse outcomes, such as increased vulnerability to alcohol abuse (Fish et al., 2020). Additionally, studies have indicated that SMY report lower levels of family connectedness compared to their heterosexual counterparts, leading to feelings of estrangement, loneliness, and mental health issues (Watson et al., 2019). However, contrary to some research findings indicating a negative impact on the parent-child relationship due to the disclosure of sexual orientation, Baltezare (2006) proposes in a study that strained parent-child relationships might improve over time. The augmentation of the parent-child relationship could potentially be explained by the research findings of Herbitter (2017), which highlight a prevalent trend of parental acceptance. This trend suggests that parents gradually develop a more open-minded attitude towards their children, accompanied by a shift in their cognitive processes. This shift often involves parents addressing their initial concerns and embracing their children's disclosure of their sexual orientation, thus alleviating the apprehension of alienation or estrangement.

Moreover, Gafsky's (2014) research indicated that parent-child relationships perceived as having a substantial level of emotional intimacy before disclosure were less prone to experiencing a decline in closeness post-disclosure. This implies that alterations in the parent-child dynamic, whether favourable or unfavourable, are likely influenced by the pre-existing nature of the relationship between a parent and a child.

2.6.2. Parent-child relationships, coming out and perceived parental reactions

The decision of SMYs to disclose their sexual orientation is influenced by their relationships with their parents, determining not only the choice of whether to come out but also the specific parent to whom they disclose (Mayeza, 2021). Mills-Koonce et al. (2018) further emphasise that the coming out process unfolds within the context of past relationship experiences, with the decision to disclose being intricately connected to the dynamics of an enduring attachment relationship. In light of their relationship history, adolescents may opt to reveal their sexual orientation to their parents or opt to withhold such information. The quality of relationships is likely to shape the perceptions of how parents will react and confidence in such expectations, given the consistencies and irregularities of parents' past behaviour (Mills-Koonce et al., 2018).

According to the study conducted by Carnelly et al. (2011), individuals were more likely to develop a sense of identification with their mothers if they were perceived as accepting during their childhood. Parental support, which is characterised by qualities such as warmth, care, and closeness in the parent-child relationship, has been proven to have a positive correlation with favourable outcomes in adolescents, even in those who identify as sexual minorities. Another study conducted by Marks (2012) also supports these findings, demonstrating that individuals who perceive their parents as supportive tend to have better adjustment and secure attachments. On the other hand, those who perceive their parents as unaccepting or rejecting are more likely to have insecure attachments and experience heightened psychological distress.

Existing research suggests that the quality of parent-child relationships has a significant influence on how lesbian and other SMY perceive their parents' reactions and navigate the process of coming out. However, there is still a lack of understanding regarding the specific factors that contribute to these relationships. These factors could include past behaviours, levels of communication, and trust, all of which play a crucial role in shaping the coming out experience and determining whether parents are perceived as accepting or rejecting. Therefore, the aim of this current research is to explore these attributes within parent-child relationships in order to gain a better understanding of their impact on development.

2.6.3. The role of the established parent-child relationship to coming out and coping

Research by Gillath et al. (2006) suggests that individuals often turn to their primary caregivers for comfort and support during times of adversity or discomfort. This bond is typically formed in childhood and is particularly important for lesbians when they come out and cope with their sexual orientation. Lesbians may find it easier to navigate the challenges related to their sexual orientation if they have a positive connection with their parents or caregivers. A study conducted by Grafsky (2017) found that sexual minority individuals who had a positive relationship with their caregivers were more likely to seek support regarding their same-sex attractions. On the other hand, if they experience negative reactions and strained interactions with their parents, they may struggle to cope with the difficulties that arise from their sexual orientation. In fact, Grafsky (2017) also observed that individuals who felt less emotionally close to their caregivers were less likely to disclose their sexual orientation to them.

Additionally, when an individual's attachment figures are not readily accessible or supportive, the attempt to seek proximity fails to alleviate distress, leading to reduced feelings of security and formation of negative self-models and this may increase the probability of subsequent emotional difficulties and maladjustment (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012). They may perceive it as unsafe and unhelpful to seek support from their parents when encountering minority stress, such as discrimination, rejection, and victimisation, in environments outside of the family contexts, such as in the workplace or community (Diamond et al., 2022). The parent-child relationship has a significant impact on the coming out process and coping mechanisms of lesbian and other sexual and gender minority youth. It is important to recognise that existing parent-child relationships shape the experiences of lesbians during their coming out journey. Other factors within family dynamics, such as cultural or religious beliefs, can also affect this process.

2.7. Various coping strategies adopted by lesbians in response to parental reactions

Being a member of a minority group presents various challenges and obstacles (Trump, 2003). Coping is considered crucial for individuals within the lesbian community, with numerous coping mechanisms being identified that can improve mental health (Macchia, 2020). These coping mechanisms involve a range of strategies for managing stressors related to lesbian sexuality, including the disclosure of sexual orientation to parents. Lesbians and other sexual minorities have been found to utilise various coping strategies in response to parental reactions. A study by Mulavu et al. (2023) found that LGBTIQ+ youth employ both adaptive and maladaptive coping mechanisms, with a particular reliance on social support and music. However, substance use, particularly alcohol, is also utilised by youth to cope with severe emotional stressors. They turn to substance use as a way to alleviate stress faced on a daily basis.

Another coping strategy identified in this study is concealment or non-disclosure. The study recommends the facilitation and promotion of support formation among sexual minorities to address their diverse range of obstacles (Mulavu et al., 2023). Beyond employing social techniques in coping, youth also expressed the importance of cultivating self-acceptance which involved comprehending and embracing their

individuality and acquiring the ability to feel at ease with themselves (Higa et al., 2014). Despite these findings, there seems to be a lack of research on the effectiveness of coping mechanisms in addressing the various obstacles faced by sexual minorities. Moreover, there is a lack of research on the long-term effects and sustainability of coping strategies used by sexual minorities. Therefore, it is crucial to conduct more research in order to evaluate the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of these mechanisms among sexual minorities (Macchia, 2020).

2.8. Coping strategies' impact on mental health outcomes for lesbians

Lesbian individuals often use coping mechanisms to deal with the challenges related to their sexuality. These mechanisms can significantly impact their mental health. Research by Juhari et al. (2022) suggests that employing problem-focused coping strategies, which involve actively addressing challenges, is associated with a lower risk of mental disorders among sexual minorities. On the other hand, using emotion-focused coping techniques may increase vulnerability to mental health problems. However, Flenar (2013) conducted a study challenging the idea that problem-focused coping universally benefits sexual minority groups due to their unique challenges.

The conflicting conclusions reached by Juhari et al. (2022) and Flenar (2013) suggest inconsistency in research findings regarding the effectiveness of problem-focused coping strategies. These discrepancies indicate that the relationship between coping strategies and mental health outcomes is complex for sexual minority groups and can vary depending on factors such as culture or specific stressors experienced within this population. These findings highlight the importance of exploring coping mechanisms tailored to the specific challenges faced by different members of the LGBTIQ+ community.

A study by Sumbane and Makau (2023) involving LGBTQI individuals revealed that stigma from peers can lead some participants to alcohol use, potentially predisposing them to mental health conditions such as alcohol dependency or substance-induced psychosis. Furthermore, a study by Huynh (2015) found that participants who used passive coping strategies experienced higher levels of depressive feelings. Self-blame coping, which is a non-adaptive strategy, was also associated with poorer mental health. It also acted as a mediator between mental health and perceived discrimination (De Freitas et al., 2021). In contrast, participants who used active coping strategies

reported lower levels of depressive feelings (Huynh, 2015). While factors such as stigma, passive coping, and self-blame are known to have a negative impact on mental health outcomes among SMY, it is important to recognise that there may be other potential stressors or coping strategies that could influence mental health in this population.

2.9. The role of social support networks to the coming out process

Newcomb et al. (2019), defined social support as the provision of assistance across multiple systems that are pertinent to the LGBTQ population. It is characterised by daily emotional assistance, shared recreational or social activities for companionship, and informational guidance and it is essential for coping with chronic life strains (Frost et al., 2016). The impact of social support on the wellbeing of individuals is significant (Fingerhut, 2018) and it promotes the overall welfare of LGBTQ youth (Snapp et al., 2015). Social support has been found to have numerous advantages in the lives of SMY, such as being recognised as a crucial aspect in facilitating the coming out process (Hartig, 2019; Nascimento & Scorsilini-Comin, 2018). This is because it can provide individuals with a sense of belonging and alleviate negative feelings that often accompany the coming out process.

According to a study by Katz-Wise et al. (2016), family support and acceptance are linked to social support, which leads to better overall health, reduced depression, substance use, and thoughts of suicide among LGBT youth. Similarly, Snapp et al. (2015) highlight the important role of family acceptance during adolescence in promoting adjustment in young adulthood, although support from friends also contributes to well-being. However, Roberts (2022) found no correlation between mental health issues and perceived support for sexual minorities and their caregivers. This suggests that there may be other factors influencing the well-being of LGBTIQ+ individuals.

While research emphasises the importance of social support networks, not everyone has access to such support. Higa (2014) and Toomey et al. (2018) advocate for the creation of support groups and participation in LGBTIQ+ organizations to address stigma and promote coping strategies among sexual minority youth. Lucassen et al. (2022) stresses the critical need for adolescents in sexual and gender minority groups

to connect with peers from similar backgrounds for mental well-being. On the other hand, Mamba (2020) highlights the challenges faced by sexual minorities in rural communities, where discrimination and lack of LGBTIQ-specific support exacerbate the absence of social support networks. Therefore, it is important to advocate for inclusive policies, educational interventions, and further research to address the diverse needs and challenges faced by individuals with sensitivity in different cultural, religious, and geographical contexts (Mills-Koonce et al., 2018).

2.10. Improving parental acceptance and support for lesbians

The act of coming out should be accompanied by expressions of affection and approval from family, even if it deviates from their expectations (Hemphill, 2020). Interventions aimed at enhancing parental responses to their child's sexual orientation can help alleviate the negative consequences of the coming out process and promote positive outcomes for the individuals involved. Studies have explored interventions to improve parental responses towards their children's sexual orientations. Therapeutic interventions have been found to show potential for enhancing family acceptance and helping families navigate the challenges of the coming out process (LaSala, 2000). Another alternative intervention approach is narrative therapy, which has shown promise in improving parental responses towards LGBTQ identities and fostering resilience in marginalised populations (Jordan, 2020). The study by Jordan (2020) posits that despite ongoing challenges, narrative therapy holds the potential as an effective intervention.

Diamond et al. (2022) conducted a study on attachment-based family therapy that showed its effectiveness in reducing parental rejection, promoting acceptance, and improving relationships between parents and LGBTQ children. Similarly, the film-based intervention "Lead with Love" resulted in positive changes in parental attitudes towards LGBTQ children by providing evidence-based information and support (Diamond et al., 2022). Zavala and Waters (2022) also explored the benefits of a strengths-based approach in assisting parents of sexual and gender minority youth, emphasising its role in promoting identity exploration, empathy development, and cognitive flexibility among parents, thereby enhancing parent-child relationships.

While these interventions show promising outcomes, further research is needed to comprehensively address the support needs of parents of LGBTQ individuals (Zavala

& Waters, 2022). Huebner (2013) has pointed out the limited empirical validation of existing interventions for parents of SMY, and Newcomb et al. (2016) have highlighted the lack of research on family-based interventions tailored to LGBTQ youth. Therefore, it is crucial to develop evidence-based interventions to promote the well-being of LGBTQ youth (Parker et al., 2018), and additional research efforts are required to develop and validate interventions that provide guidance and support to parents of sexual minorities. Moreover, tailoring interventions to address the unique perspectives of parents can also be beneficial in fostering parental acceptance of their sexual minority children. Grafsky (2014) suggests that a comprehensive understanding of the family context and the parental perspective is necessary for effective intervention. Therefore, future research should incorporate standardised measures of family dynamics (Grafsky, 2014).

2.11. Theoretical perspectives

The theoretical perspectives used for this study are Attachment Theory and the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping. Attachment theory was used to understand the importance of ongoing parent–child relationships and how the ongoing interactions affect various aspects of youth’s lives, such as shaping their perceptions and their ability to respond to various situations. Furthermore, the study also adopted the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping to understand lesbians’ capacity to cope and adjust to problems as a consequence of their transactions (interactions) that occur between them and their environment.

2.11.1. Attachment Theory

Attachment theory is one of the more popular approaches to studying interpersonal relationships and originates from the work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth (Riley, 2012). It is rooted in the belief that in early infancy, relationships with a caregiver have an important influence on individual development and that these early bonds are believed to create long-lasting psychological connections that influence how individuals form relationships as adolescents and adults (Alessi et al., 2011). According to Bowlby’s attachment theory, attachment is characterised by a close bond between a child and a specific individual and emphasises the significance of positive parent-child attachment for the growth and progress of children and such attachment is believed to offer crucial emotional and social benefits (Mo et al., 2021).

At the time of their birth, children are entirely reliant on their caregivers and are subject to their care for the fulfilment of their requirements (Newman, 2017). In order to experience a sense of safety they require a consistent, comfortable, and protective environment provided by their caregivers (Faulkner, 2019). Should their caregivers neglect these fundamental needs, the infant may internalise the adverse interactions and consequently incorporate these into their personal self-concepts (Faulkner, 2019). The quality of care obtained from parent-child interaction influences an individual's attachment pattern during childhood (Carnelly et al., 2011).

The establishment of a secure attachment to the primary caregiver is crucial to the survival and well-being of an individual because the attachment is activated in response to stressful situations and this system involves the assessment and availability and sensitivity of the attachment figure to the emotional distress and perceived threats (Katz-Wise et al., 2016). Detachment, also referred to as insecure attachment, in the context of early life experiences, has been shown to exert detrimental effects on the development of one's self-identity and subsequent intimate relationships over the course of a lifetime, and such negative manifest in difficulties in fostering emotional closeness and connection with others, as well as engaging in high-risk sexual behaviours (Kim & Miller, 2020).

Attachment theory also focuses on the bond or attachment between children and their caregivers and how the continuous interaction between the two facilitates the development of what Bowlby (1958) termed an internal working model (IWM) (Cook & Calebs, 2016). IWM refers to an individual's cognitive representation of their caregivers, which is stored in memory, and subsequently contributes to the development of the individual's sense of self-worth, as well as their expectations regarding attention and support from others (Rosalina et al., 2020). The beliefs and expectations concerning the attachment figure also affect the internal working model of the self, meaning the individual's sense of self-worth (Katz-Wise et al., 2016).

Lesbians are most likely to have a negative view of themselves due to their sexual orientation. Specifically, when they experience emotional distance, from their parents due to rejection, insufficient support, mistrust, or alienation in response to their sexual orientation disclosure (Kim et al., 2021). The process of revealing one's sexual orientation can pose a significant challenge for individuals who identify as sexual minorities, and the ability to regulate and manage potential stressors during this period

is crucial (Roberts, 2022). As a result, the attachment perspective in this study investigated how the continuous interactions with parents may affect how lesbians perceive parental reactions to coming out as well as how the quality of parent-child relationship influence how they regulate emotions and respond or cope with stressful situations pertaining to their sexual orientation.

2.11.2. Transactional Model of Stress and Coping

TMSC originates from the works of Lazarus and Folkman (1984). It is a cognitive model which views stress and coping as a process influenced by cognitive appraisals that evolve over time (Ben-Zur, 2019). This approach emphasises the individual's cognitive evaluation of stressful experiences and their coping strategies in response to the stressors, in order to understand the perception and interpretation of the situation (Martin & Daniels, 2014). This model can be utilised to comprehend personal instances of stress, as well as the techniques employed to handle it. According to Martin and Daniels (2014), cognitive appraisals and coping are two crucial processes that act as mediators in person-environment interactions.

2.11.2.1. Cognitive appraisals (primary and secondary appraisals)

The process of evaluating a stressor involves two distinct appraisals: primary, and secondary appraisals. The primary appraisal involves the individual's assessment of the impact of the stressor (Ghaffari et al., 2021). The secondary appraisal considers the individual's coping resources and coping mechanisms guided by specific questions such as the following: what coping mechanisms are available to me, will the option I select be effective in this circumstance, and do I have the capacity to use the mechanism effectively? (Martin & Daniels, 2014).

Disclosing sexual orientation to parents may lead to stress for lesbians, who may perceive potential threat or challenge based on their assumptions about their parents' reactions. Consequently, these individuals may experience a range of emotions, such as fear, anxiety, and uncertainty about their parents' potential responses. The way in which parents respond to the coming out process can significantly impact the stress experienced by the individuals, requiring the use of coping strategies to alleviate such distress.

2.11.2.2. Coping

The term coping encompasses a spectrum of strategies, including adaptive and maladaptive approaches (Martin & Daniels, 2014). Following cognitive appraisals, individuals may employ problem-focused or emotion-focused coping techniques, or a combination of both (Ghaffari et al., 2021; Kaveh et al., 2023). Problem-focused coping aims to alter or eliminate the source of stress, while emotion regulation coping involves modifying one's emotional or mental response to a stressor (Schoenmakers et al., 2015). Lesbian individuals may utilise adaptive or maladaptive coping strategies based on their perception of stress related to parental reactions or the coming out process. Coping resources encompass various factors, including physical, social, psychological, and material aspects (Berjor & Gillet, 2011). Therefore, this study investigated the coping mechanism and resources employed by lesbians to navigate the coming out process and parental reactions.

2.12. Summary

The chapter provides a comprehensive overview of recent and past literature on the topic, emphasising the significance of the coming out process of lesbians. It underscores the adverse impact of parental rejection on the mental health of LGBTIQ+ individuals, while emphasising the positive effects of parental acceptance. Additionally, it highlights the essential role of parent-child relationships in the development of LGBTIQ+ individuals and how these relationships influence their decision-making regarding disclosure of their sexual orientation. Furthermore, the chapter discussed theoretical perspectives such as Attachment theory and TMSC, offering insights into how lesbians perceive parental reactions and cope with the challenges associated with coming out. The literature also emphasises the need for interventions aimed at improving parental responses to their children's sexual orientations and providing support to LGBTIQ+ individuals.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The outlined chapter elaborates on the research approach employed in the study. The term research methodology pertains to the systematic study of the scientific process utilised in conducting research (Patel & Patel, 2019).

3.2. Research paradigm

This study employed an interpretative research framework within a qualitative approach (Christensen, 2015) to examine lesbians perceived parental reactions to coming out, attachment, and coping in Ga-Sekororo, Limpopo Province, South Africa. Qualitative study delves into gaining a deeper understanding of real-world challenges as defined by Tenny et al. (2021) and utilises methods to grasp the meaning individuals or groups assign to social or human issues (Cresswell, 2014).

The study focused on a sensitive topic such as the perceived parental reactions to coming out, attachment, and coping, and thus adopted a qualitative methodology to provide comprehensive insights into individuals' experiences and perspectives. This approach allowed the researcher to gain a profound understanding of the diverse experiences of individuals who come out to their parents. It was used to elucidate how lesbians navigate the challenges of the coming out process and the coping mechanisms they employ.

3.3. Research design

The study followed a phenomenological research design, specifically hermeneutic phenomenology. Phenomenological research is a technique used by researchers to uncover the fundamental nature of a particular human experience by analysing the way in which participants describe it (Creswell, 2009). According to Kafle (2011), the main focus of hermeneutic phenomenology are the subjective experiences of individuals and groups. It was deemed appropriate for this study because it aims to reveal the subject's view of the world through their personal stories (Kafle, 2011). Through this approach, the researcher was able to analyse and interpret the meanings that lesbians attached to their experiences. The study looked at how lesbians interpret and make sense of their parents' responses to their coming out, how their relationships

with their parents affect their perceptions, coping mechanisms as well as how they deal with hostile or unwelcoming environments.

3.4. Population and sampling

Participants and respondents of this study were selected through a non-probability sampling method, specifically the snowball sampling technique. In the process of snowball sampling, the investigator has the opportunity to contact participants through the contact information shared by other participants (Noy, 2008). The researcher identified prospective participants by directly approaching females who identify as lesbians and, upon obtaining their consent to participate, requested them to refer other lesbians who may be interested in taking part in the study. The study's inclusion criteria consisted of cisgender females who self-identified as lesbians and resided in Ga-Sekororo, Limpopo Province. Participants had to be between the ages of 18 and 35 and of black ethnicity. On the other hand, the exclusion criteria included lesbians who did not have guardianship, were not fluent in the Sepedi language, were outside the specified age range, and were not indigenous to the Ga-Sekororo area in Limpopo Province.

3.5. Data collection

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participant's perceived parental reactions to coming out, attachment, and coping. The instrument facilitated an in-depth exploration of the ontology under study. According to Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik (2021), semi-structured interviews offer the advantage of focusing on specific topics while allowing flexibility to explore any relevant ideas that arise during the interview. Open-ended questions were used to delve deeper into the participants' responses and understand the reasoning behind their answers. The interviews were conducted in Sepedi in order to foster better communication between the researcher and the participants. For participants who were not available for face-to-face interviews, interviews were conducted online using platforms like Zoom and Google Meet, with the participants' consent. Data was provided to participants in order to enhance their interaction with the researcher via online platforms. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and was held in a private and quiet setting.

3.6. Data analysis

The researcher utilised interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to comprehend how lesbians cope with the perceived parental reactions to coming out, as well as their attachment experiences. This methodology helped gain insight into their lived experiences. According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012), the main aim of IPA is to examine how people comprehend their personal experiences.

To achieve this, the researcher used the following steps outlined in Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) to analyse the data:

Step 1. Multiple reading and making notes: The first step is to read the transcript and listen to audios several times and closely. This allows the researchers to become immersed in the data and recall the atmosphere of the interview and the setting in which it was held (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012).

To attain this goal, the researcher thoroughly examined the audio recording by listening to it multiple times, taking notes on her observations and thoughts about the interviews. Additionally, transcribed the audios verbatim and expanded on any notable ideals or remarks. By repeatedly listening to the audios and reading the transcripts, the researcher ensured a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences. To achieve this goal, the researcher highlighted and named sections of the texts to make notes from the data (Sutton & Austin, 2015) to develop codes that highlight significant concepts found within the data in each transcript. The researcher also collaborated with a co-coder in analysing and developing codes. This allowed for diverse perspectives and additional support.

Step 2. Transforming notes into emergent themes: This stage requires the researcher to rely on their notes rather than the transcript (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). During this stage the researcher carefully reviewed the notes multiple times in order to transform the notes into emergent themes. The researcher identified recurring and significant ideas and statements within the notes and the codes developed. The researcher also paid attention to key statements and the common themes that stand out.

Step 3. Seeking relationships and clustering themes: The next step is to look for connections between emerging themes, group them based on conceptual similarities, and give each cluster a descriptive label (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Before

identifying connections and clusters, the researcher gathered all the themes from the full transcripts. The researcher then explored the relationships between the different themes by looking at the connections and linkages between them. To attain this goal, the researcher gathered the common responses or ideas of the participants' lived experiences from the themes that emerged from the data to provide a list of themes. The themes identified were then grouped together by their similarities and relationships to create clusters of themes that formed a broader understanding of the data. To provide an overall analysis structure (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008), the themes and their corresponding subthemes were organised in a table (please refer to table 2 on page 34 for reference).

Step 4. Writing up an IPA study: This step entails writing up the themes identified in the final table one by one. Each of them must be described and illustrated with the interview (s) extracts (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012).

The researcher documented all the themes found in the study and provided detailed explanations and examples using excerpts from the interviews. The themes and quotes were then shared with a qualitative research expert who reviewed them, made suggestions and comments to improve the final results of the study. The researcher then had discussions with the co-coder to further understand and address the suggestions and comments. After considering and incorporating the co-coder's input, the researcher and co-coder collaborated to agree on the final themes and completed the writing of the study.

3.7. Quality Criteria

According to Cypress (2017), trustworthiness refers to quality, validity, and accuracy of findings of qualitative research. Therefore, credibility, neutrality or confirmability, consistency or dependability, and applicability or transferability are the fundamental standards for quality according to qualitative paradigms (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

To increase the study's trustworthiness, the researcher used the following criteria:

3.7.1. Credibility

According to Shenton (2004), credibility deals with triangulation which may involve using a variety of techniques, particularly observation, focus groups, and individual interviews. The researcher used 'member checking' to establish the credibility of the

study. The researcher provided the participants with the analysis and findings from the data so that they could confirm its accuracy and report any mistakes. Additionally, participants were given sufficient time to comprehend the details of the interview in order to thoughtfully respond to the questions. Finally, the researcher sought feedback from a reputable external reviewer who has qualitative research expertise in order to confirm the findings and explore other viewpoints, thus guaranteeing that the conclusions truly reflect the information and the participants' viewpoints. The researcher also integrated the reviewer's suggestions to guarantee that the analysis was impartial and not solely influenced by the researcher's own perspective.

3.7.2. Dependability

According to Shenton (2004), dependability can be achieved by combining techniques like focus groups, and one-on-one interviews. A similar concern to objectivity for qualitative researchers is the notion of confirmability. To achieve dependability, the researchers can assure that the research process is rational, traceable, and well-documented (Nowell et al., 2017), by following well-formulated methodologies. To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the researcher allowed the research supervisors to evaluate the research process by providing them with recorded data.

3.7.3. Transferability

During the research process and data collection, the researcher took note of the place where the interviews took place and acknowledge the context of the participants. This includes knowing the sample's cultural practices and social contexts. A comprehensive report was given on the location of the interviews, along with all the insights gathered during the research process.

3.7.4. Confirmability

Confirmability is established when credibility, transferability, and dependability have been achieved (Nowell et al., 2017). The researcher made written observations for future references during the course of the investigation. The notes provided evidence of the fair manner in which the research was carried out. During the data collection process, topics that were not already established in the literature and theory were noted down. These topics were then analysed through coding techniques and the resulting themes were carefully examined and backed up by relevant research.

3.7.5. Bias

To minimise bias in the research study, the researcher made certain that the participants willingly offered their involvement and were fully cognizant of their involvement level in the study. The researcher exhibited knowledge about the manner in which questions were posed and employed audits from external sources to validate the authenticity of the coding and analysis of the results.

The researcher was careful not to let her personal values and beliefs affect the analysis of the study, in order to avoid bias. Finally, the researcher examined the process of extracting significance from the information and sought advice from the supervisor for direction on occasion, while also maintaining detailed records of the researcher's records, actions, and reasoning.

3.8. Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a system used by researchers to continuously examine and assess their attitudes and context that may influence their research processes (Olmos-Vega et al. al, 2022). Researchers have their own biases and experiences that can impact their interpretation and analysis of data. In the current study, reflexivity was used to acknowledge the researcher's role in the research process and improve its validity and rigor.

The journey embarked upon during this research proved to be an arduous one, marked by numerous disappointments that left the researcher feeling discouraged at times. One particular challenge was the withdrawal of participants during the process of data collection. This presented a significant obstacle in the researcher's quest to gather data for the study. The setbacks served as a constant reminder of how daunting it seemed to collect reliable and comprehensive information.

However, amid these difficulties, the researcher recognised the delicate nature of the topic at hand and the contextual influence within the study location. The research took place in an environment where homophobic attitudes are still prevalent. A deeply touching moment occurred when the researcher was walking alongside a participant after an interview, and a community member known to the participant, commented on the participant's need to "stop acting like a man and get married". This remark opened the researcher's eyes to the harsh treatment lesbians face in society and how it may likely play a role in some of the participants' decisions to withdraw.

Moreover, the researcher acknowledged that the study was the first of its kind to be conducted in Ga-Sekororo, thereby making it unfamiliar territory for the participants. This lack of familiarity could have contributed to the resistance exhibited by some of the participants. Nevertheless, drawing on her professional expertise as a registered counsellor although grew up in a heteronormative society that rejected homosexuality because of cultural and religious beliefs, the researcher realised the importance of embracing diversity and fostering non-judgemental interactions. This perspective allowed for effective engagement with the participants who willingly shared their experiences.

Through this research journey, the researcher also came to a profound realisation that if society could embrace and accept their children's sexual orientations, the world would become a better place. The freedom of other lesbians to express themselves authentically and without reservation would become a reality. This study served as a vital lesson, highlighting the sensitivity surrounding topics encompassing sexual orientation and the potential impacts on the participants.

As I reflect upon this formidable research endeavour, I am reminded of the obstacles faced, the insights gained, and the significance of creating a safe and inclusive environment for research participants. These reflections will undoubtedly, inform and enhance future research projects, furthering our understanding of complexities of society and the individual experiences within it.

3.9. Ethical considerations

3.9.1. Entry into the site

Before collecting data from the participants, the researcher sought for permission at the Research Ethics Committee (TREC) for ethical clearance at the University of Limpopo (See appendix 4). A gatekeeper permission was also sought to conduct the study from the headman in Ga-Sekororo, Limpopo Province (Letter of permission attached in appendix 5).

3.9.2. Informed consent

Fleming (2018), states that it is crucial to provide participants with complete details about the tasks they will be required to complete, the intended use of the collected data, and any potential repercussions that may arise. Research participants were

provided with an informed consent form which provided all aspects of the research study that the research participants needed to be aware of. The participants were also informed about their rights, should they feel to withdraw from the research project, their decision was respected without a penalty. The researcher read the consent form in their native language to ensure that they understood the purpose of the study.

3.9.3. Benefits and risks/harm

One of the most fundamental ethical principles in research is that of beneficence, which requires researchers to minimise harm while maximising benefits to participants (Polit & Beck, 2009). The findings of the current study are envisaged to improve the quality of relationship between lesbians and their parents/caregivers. However, it has the potential to evoke painful emotions. Therefore, arrangements were made for participants who might experience any psychological problems due to the interviews, to be attended by a qualified social worker at Ga-Sekororo hospital and a registered clinical psychologist was arranged for participants who might benefit from further intervention.

3.9.4. Respect and dignity and standard of care

Respect, dignity, and standard of care was ensured. To ensure that their dignity is respected, the use of offensive, discriminatory, or other unacceptable language was prohibited. The researcher also ensured that the research is conducted with respect of, and awareness of, gender differences, religion, and culture of the study participants.

3.9.5. Privacy and confidentiality

Ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants' identity during the research process is crucial (Fleming, 2018). Therefore, confidentiality and anonymity were ensured. Participants' names were not disclosed, and pseudonyms were provided and used to protect the identity of the participants when reporting the findings of the study.

3.9.6. Protection of data

There are various ways in which information can be stored, including physical paper documents, digital computer files, and duplicate copies (Lin, 2009). To conduct this study, the researcher utilised an audio recorder for the interviews and a notebook to

record notes during the interviews. The data gathered from the research was stored on both the researcher and supervisor laptops, safeguarded by a password to ensure security.

3.10. Summary of the chapter

This chapter deliberated the research methodology employed in carrying out this research. The chapter comprised various essential components such as research paradigm, research design, population and sampling, data collection, data analysis, quality criteria, and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER 4: STUDY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis of the study conducted in Ga-Sekororo, Limpopo Province, South Africa focusing on the perceived parental reactions to coming out, attachment, and coping among lesbians. The research utilised the semi-structured interviews with a sample size ranging between 5-25 participants, following the principles of phenomenological research (Cresswell & Poth, 2016). The sampling approach aimed to achieve data saturation, adhering to qualitative research guidelines (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Data analysis employed Phenomenological Interpretative Analysis (IPA). Demographic information along with emerging themes and subthemes were presented in tabular forms while ensuring anonymity through the use of pseudonyms.

4.2. Demographic characteristics of participants

Table 1 below presents the demographic information of the participants. The participants are all cisgender females who identify as lesbians and are residents of Ga-Sekororo area in Limpopo Province. The demographic information includes the age, gender, religion, ethnicity, and occupation of the participants.

Table 1: Demographic Profile: Age, Gender, Religion, Ethnicity, and Occupation.

NAMES	AGE	GENDER	RELIGION	ETHNICITY	OCCUPATION
1. Karabo	22	Female	Christian	Black	Student
2. Keletso	23	Female	Christian	Black	Unemployed
3. Lebo	24	Female	Christian	Black	Unemployed
4. Lethabo	32	Female	Christian	Black	Teacher
5. Lesedi	20	Female	Christian	Black	Student

6.Molebogeng	19	Female	Christian	Black	Student
7. Tharollo	18	Female	African tradition	Black	Student
8. Tshiamo	24	Female	Christian	Black	Student

**Please note that to safeguard the identities of participants, pseudonyms were used.*

Table 1 shows the demographic profiles of all participants. The interviews were conducted in different sections of Ga-Sekororo, located in Maruleng Municipality in Mopani District, Limpopo Province. The results show that all the participants were females between the ages of 18 and 35 years. The number of years that participants have come out to their parents ranged from 1 year to a maximum 5 years. All participants used Sepedi as their main form of communication.

4.3. Presentation of themes and subthemes

The study used an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Five themes emerged from the data analysis, each with several subthemes and are presented in table 2. The themes that emerged are as follows: a) perceived parent-child relationships, b) parental reactions to coming out, c) outcomes of parental reactions to coming out and coping d) multifaceted influences towards parental reactions, and e) coping strategies employed by lesbians. These themes, together with their subthemes, are below with excerpts from the interviews provided as support.

Table 2: Emerging themes and subthemes of the study

Main themes	Sub-themes	Illustration of excerpts
Perceived parent-child relationships	Lesbians' perspectives of parent-child relationships	"In my opinion, it is a parent who gives love to his or her child, support him or her and understands that the child's happiness is important". Participant 8

	Diverse parent-child dynamics between lesbians and parents	“Before coming out, my relationship with my parent was good. However, after coming out things became difficult because it was not what my parent expected”. Participant 2
	Perceived relationship quality	“Everything is going well, and I don’t see any issues. I feel like my parents have approved”. Participant 5 (Lesedi)
	The impact of parent-child relationships on the processes of coming out and coping	“The advantage is that when the parent-child relationship is good I can freely communicate and reach agreements with my parents”. Participant 8 (Tshiamo).
Parental reactions to coming out	Anticipated parental reactions	“I already knew that even if I tell them, they won’t have a problem with my sexuality because they also admitted to seeing it when I was young”. Participant 5 (Lesedi).
	Actual parental reactions	“They haven’t accepted, and they seem unwilling to do so”. Participant 6 (Molebogeng).
Outcomes of parental reactions	Psychological and emotional wellbeing	“I felt loved and valued because my parents provided me with their support”. Participant 3 (Lebogang).
	Strengthening resilience	“I experienced happiness when my parents embraced me, I was not concerned about the opinions of outsiders”. Participant 5 (Lesedi).
	Affirmation of self-identity	“Because of their acceptance, I felt at ease about being open and expressing my true self. We often fear revealing our authentic identity due to the judgement of the society. Thanks to their acceptance, I gained the

		confidence to change my clothing style". Participant 3 (Lebogang).
	Impact on intimate partner relationship	"The struggles a person faces when their family cannot accept them can deeply impact their relationship and overall happiness". Participant 4 (Lethabo).
Multifaceted influences towards parental reactions	Cultural and religious views	"After coming out, they struggled to accept it as they had certain expectations for my future, such as finding a partner for marriage who would pay lobola/dowry for me". Participant 2 (Karabo).
	Parental concerns on wellbeing and safety of lesbian children	"However, my mother often worries about my wellbeing and is afraid of the potential risks and dangers, particularly the risk of sexual assault". Participant 3 (Lebogang).
	Open-mindedness, acknowledgement of diverse sexualities and education	"I believe their acceptance stems from their understanding that in this world, individuals often do not have the opportunity to choose the life they desire. As a result, they empathize with their child's emotions". Participant 5 (Lesedi).
Coping strategies employed by lesbians	Concealment/hiding	"I refrained from revealing any information, I refrained from displaying anything to anyone". Participant 8 (Tshiamo).
	Social media	"I used to watch videos of other lesbians on TikTok. I sought to learn from their experiences and gain insight into possible steps I could take if my family continued to reject me". Participant 6 (Molebogeng).

Seeking support from close family and members of the LGBTIQ+ community

“I was chatting with a fellow lesbian who was a student at the University of Limpopo, and she provided me with valuable advice on a step-by-step basis”. **Participant 6 (Molebogeng).**

Self-acceptance

“But despite her initial reactions, I eventually decided to live my life authentically, because I felt oppressed”. **Participant 7 (Tharollo).**

4.3.1. Perceived parent-child relationships

One of the important findings from the analysis was perceived parent-child relationships and it examined the subjective nature of how lesbians perceive, understand, and navigate parent-child bonds. The theme uncovered lesbians’ perspectives of what constitutes good parenting and positive and negative parent-child relationships. Additionally, the study revealed the various types of parent-child relationships and how lesbians perceive the quality of their relationships with their parents, both before, and after coming out. Along with the findings of the study, the theme additionally revealed the significance of parent-child relationships in regard to the process of coming out and coping.

4.3.1.1. Lesbian perspectives on parent-child relational dynamics

The subtheme explored the various ideas of participants of what constitutes a good parent and bad parent-child relationship. They viewed these relationships on a spectrum from good to bad. In this study participants indicated that a good parent has certain qualities and exhibits certain supportive qualities. The provided excerpts demonstrate the participants’ varying understandings of what makes a good parent:

“A good parent is someone who provides unwavering support, never listens to other people’s opinions or judgements about you, and wholeheartedly supports you in all your endeavours”. **Participant 6 (Molebogeng).**

Additionally, participant 4 adds to this idea of a good parent by explaining:

“In my opinion as a lesbian and a parent, I believe that being a good parent entails developing a close bond with your children, treating them as friends. This allows them to feel comfortable discussing and sharing anything with you, regardless of its nature or potential embarrassment. Creating an environment where they can freely express their true selves and feel free more than outside of home”. **Participant 4 (Lethabo).**

Participant 1 suggested another perspective of what constitutes a good parent. In her own words, she stated:

“A good parent is someone who understands what’s right and what’s best for their child”. **Participant 1 (Keletso).**

Additionally, the study examined participants’ perspectives on positive and negative parent-child relationships, with several viewpoints expressed below:

Participant 4 highlighted that a positive parent-child relationship stems from a friendly dynamic allowing mutual understanding. The following excerpt illustrate her views:

“When a child and a parent have a good parent-child relationship, they relate well and when the parent is present, as a child you don’t feel like you are in the presence of an older authority figure. Instead, you perceive them as both your mother, parent, and also a friend”. **Participant 4 (Lethabo).**

Conversely, a negative relationship was defined by fear-based parenting and lack of interest in children’s needs. Here is an excerpt illustrating these views:

“A bad parent-child relationships occurs when a parent instils fear and only focuses on giving orders without showing interest in your life or emotions. In such a dynamic, there is no opportunity to seek support or find happiness at home”. **Participant 4 (Lethabo).**

Participant 8 emphasised open communication as crucial for building strong parent-child relationships. These views are illustrated in the following excerpt:

“It is characterised by open communication, exchanging advice, absence of judgement, and lack of fear between both parties. Children should feel comfortable pointing out mistakes by parents, just as parents should not be afraid to address their child’s errors, fostering the ability to offer constructive suggestions”. **Participant 8 (Tshiamo).**

Negative parent-child relationships involve limited communication, harsh language, and indirect expressions of emotions. These views can be illustrated in the following excerpt:

“A bad parent-child relationship is marked by a lack of communication, the use of hurtful language, the inability to express feelings openly, and reliance on indirect actions to convey unspoken feelings” **Participant 8 (Tshiamo).**

Participant 6 also highlighted the importance of effective communication and cooperation in the parent-child relationship. The excerpt illustrates the views:

“A good parent-child relationship is built on transparency where parents and children share everything with each other. While parents may sometimes make mistakes, it is important for children to feel comfortable expressing their feelings and pointing out these mistakes, and parents should be able to acknowledge these mistakes. In my opinion, it demonstrates a strong parent-child relationship”. **Participant 6 (Molebogeng).**

The participant further provided her views on bad parent-child relationships: The following excerpt illustrate these views.

“A bad parent-child relationship arises when a parent prioritises the opinions of other people over their own child, leading to a lack of respect and communication”. **Participant 6 (Molebogeng).**

Based on the above findings, it can be understood that lesbians consider an ideal parent-child bond as characterised by qualities such as mutual respect, effective communication, support, understanding and freedom to express emotions. The significance of open communication is frequently highlighted in the bond between parents and children. Conversely, an unfavourable parent-child relationship was thought to be encompassing fear, characterised by lack of communication, neglect, disregard for the child’s needs, and prioritising the viewpoints of others instead of the child’s own emotions and needs.

4.3.1.2. Diverse parent-child dynamics between lesbians and parents

This subtheme explored how lesbians interact with their parents before, during and after coming out. It also investigated the possible changes that may have occurred in these relationships after disclosing their sexual orientation.

The current study also found that disclosures can strain these relationships. This is evident from the following excerpts:

“Before coming out, my relationship with my parent was good. However, after coming out things became difficult because it was not what my parent expected”. **Participant 2 (Karabo).**

“We used to have a good relationship characterised by open communication, respect, and sharing everything. **Participant 6 (Molebogeng).**

Participants face difficulties in their relationships with parents during the period of disclosure and after coming out with certain aspects of the relationship experiencing a strain. These views can be illustrated in the following excerpts:

“Prior revealing my sexuality on Facebook, we had a good relationship characterised by open communication, where we could discuss anything, and they were supportive. However, when one of my relatives discovered my Facebook post and informed them, my parents’ behaviour changed. They began confiding in other people and expressing their dissatisfaction with me”. **Participant 1 (Keletso).**

....“communication deteriorated, and expectations arose for me as I was expected to dress like a girl leading to a strained and unhealthy relationship”. **Participant 6 (Molebogeng).**

The findings of the study also indicate that other participants did not experience any strain in their parent-child relationships after coming out. The following excerpts illustrate these views:

“My relationship with my parents was positive before I revealed my identity as a lesbian. Despite their discovery of my sexual orientation, our relationship remained unchanged”. **Participant 5 (Lesedi).**

“Even after I came out, the relationship was good, there were no ups and downs, although they only found out after two years, but then they were able to ask me, I explained it and there was no problem”. **Participant 8 (Tshiamo).**

Additionally, it was also mentioned that other participants experienced positive transformations in the parent-child relationships after disclosure of sexual orientations

resulting in stronger connections with parents. The following excerpt illustrate these views:

“I believe coming out has significantly improved my relationship with my parents. Living authentically has made me more comfortable and open. Previously we watched TV shows together, but I couldn’t share personal details. Now I no longer hide any aspects of my life and I see home characterised by happiness”. **Participant 4 (Lethabo).**

According to the findings above, it appears that some good parent-child relationships might experience a strain after sexual orientation disclosure. Additionally, the findings suggest that some relationships may remain unaffected, while others could potentially improve significantly following the disclosure.

4.3.1.3. Perceived relationship quality

This subtheme explores the perceptions and experiences of lesbians in relation to the satisfaction of their relationships with their parents. The research findings shed light on the emotional responses of participants towards their relationships with their parents, particularly in the context of parental reactions.

According to the findings of the study, participants who experienced and perceived positive reactions such as parental acceptance and support reported feeling content with their existing parent-child relationships. The following excerpt illustrate these views:

“At the moment there is nothing I could change about this relationship”. **Participant 4 (Lethabo).**

“Everything is going well, and I don’t see any issues. I feel like my parents have approved”.

“I wouldn’t change anything about the relationship”. **Participant 3 (Lebogang).**

“My relationship with my parents is of happiness”.

“I wouldn’t change anything because I believe everything is fine”. **Participant 5 (Lesedi).**

The study also revealed that some participants are content with their current relationships with their parents, but harboured concerns about the dynamics of the relationships in the future. These are the views of these specific participants:

“Although my parents currently support me and have no issue with my chosen path as long as I am happy, I can sense that in the future they may expect me to conform to their expectations. Despite their love and support, they still seem to misunderstand that there are other possibilities to give them grandchildren even though I identify as a lesbian, because they expect children from me”.

Participant 8 (Tshiamo).

The findings of the study also highlight that negative reactions not only put a strain in the parent-child relationship, but it can also create discontentment of the parent-child relationship. The following excerpts provide an illustration of the views:

“The first thing I would change is the lack of communication, and the second one is having their support, like I want them to support me like before they realised that I am a lesbian”. **Participant 6 (Molebogeng).**

“What I would change about the relationship is by having a parent that embraces and gives me motherly love because she knows what I prefer and respects my preferences”. **Participant 2 (Karabo).**

The study also revealed that some participants shared their feelings of frustration and being overwhelmed with their existing relationships with their parents due to rejection. Here is an excerpt illustrating these views:

“Unfortunately, I can’t change the relationship with my parents because what my parents want from me is something that I can’t change, and that is my sexuality. She does not want the life that I want”. **Participant 1 (Keletso).**

Based on the above findings, it appears that participants who have experienced positive reactions tend to have better relationships with their parents and are generally satisfied with their existing relationships. However, it is also suggested that negative reactions may lead to negative consequences, potentially causing discontent in parent-child relationships.

4.3.1.4. Impact of parent-child relationships to coming out and coping

This subtheme studied how parent-child relationships affect lesbians during the coming out process, including parental reactions and their perceptions of coming out. The study found that positive parent-child relationships can create a supportive environment for lesbians, with factors such as open communication and mutual respect prevalent. Strong communication is especially evident in positive relationships, as highlighted in the following excerpts:

“The advantage is that if I have a good parent-child relationship it provides the ease of expressing my challenges and problems to my parent”. **Participant 2 (Karabo).**

“The advantage is that when the parent-child relationship is good I can freely communicate and reach agreements with my parents”. **Participant 8 (Tshiamo).**

Additionally, the study revealed that parent-child relationships can also negatively impact the experience of coming out and coping for lesbians. The detrimental effects can be observed before, during and even after the coming out process.

A strained parent-child relationship is also considered to create a barrier between a child and their parents in engaging in effective communication and important aspects of one’s life. Participant 2 elaborates on the negative consequences of a strained parent-child relationship by illustrating these views:

“If a relationship is strained, it is difficult sharing problems with them (parents) due to the existing tension”. **Participant 2 (Karabo).**

Participant 3 builds upon this concept by providing a more detailed explanation of the potential adverse effects that could arise in parent-child relationships. This participant highlights that a lack of respect, clear boundaries, and accountability within relationships can have detrimental effects on the individuals involved leading to strain in their relationships. The following excerpt exemplifies these perspectives:

“When the parent-child relationship is strained, there is lack of respect, support, and distinction between the older and younger individuals, this makes life

*challenging as one never feels free, as parents may constantly insult and belittle their child". **Participant 3 (Lebogang).***

Participant 5 also added similar sentiments by elaborating the following on strained parent-child relationship:

*"When there is a strained relationship between a parent and child, the consequence is that the child may lose respect for their mother or father. They may engage in disrespectful behaviour towards each other, and the parent may also respond in a similar manner". **Participant 5 (Lesedi).***

According to the excerpts provided, individuals with positive experiences in parent-child relationships often find that such relationships create an environment conducive to open communication, allowing children to express themselves freely to their parents. Conversely, it was noted that strained relationships between parents and their children tend to be associated with a lack of communication, respect, and mutual accountability.

4.3.2. Parental reactions to coming out

This theme focused on the anticipated reactions that participants anticipated to experience from their parents prior to revealing their sexual orientations. It also focused into the varied range of emotions, including acceptance, rejection, support, confusion, denial, or anger that parents might experience upon hearing their child's coming out and learning about their child's identity. Furthermore, the theme also discovered how these reactions can positively or negatively impact the wellbeing of lesbians.

4.3.2.1. Anticipated parental reactions

This subtheme explored the anticipated parental reactions by lesbians, shedding light on the potential range of responses experienced by individuals during this crucial period. The expectations varied depending on factors such as the pre-existing bond between lesbians and their parents, as well as religious and cultural influences. Expectations vary from acceptance, fear of rejection, or disownment.

The findings of the study revealed that individuals who perceived their relationships with parents as strong were more likely to anticipate parental acceptance prior to coming out. The following excerpts illustrate these views:

“I already knew that even if I tell them, they won’t have a problem with my sexuality because they also admitted to seeing it when I was young”.

Participant 5 (Lesedi).

*“I believed that my entire family would not have an issue with my sexuality and would accept it, and I was correct. **Participant 8 (Tshiamo).***

“I expected that my parent would embrace my sexuality and offer their support, understanding that my happiness is the priority”. **Participant 1 (Keletso).**

The study further revealed that other participants did not have any expectations because of perceived acceptance from one parent prior coming out. The following excerpt illustrate the views of Participant 3:

“I didn’t have any expectations because I thought my father had already embraced me. As a result, I didn’t concern myself with my mother might say knowing her character”. **Participant 3 (Lebogang).**

The study findings also shed light on the experiences of individuals who anticipated potential rejection based on their sexual orientations due to societal and cultural norms. The following excerpt illustrates her views:

“ I expected to be disowned or hated when I came out, as it did not align with my parents’ expectations”. **Participant 2 (Karabo).**

“Based on my perception, it seemed like they were going to reject it and not accept”. **Participant 7 (Tharollo).**

Prior to disclosing their sexual orientations, participants in the study recognised the existence of strong relationships with their parents. Consequently, participants who perceived strong relationships with their parents also tended to have confidence in how their parents would respond to their disclosure. However, the study also found that despite having positive parent-child relationships, some participants anticipated rejection due to factors such as cultural and religious beliefs.

4.3.2.2. Perceived parental reactions (acceptance, support, and rejection)

Participants experienced a variety of reactions from parents. The findings of this study revealed that participants’ parents reacted with acceptance, support, and rejection.

Participants reported instances where parents denied and disregarded their attempts to share their identities. The following excerpt illustrate these views:

“I confided in my mother about being a lesbian and pointed out that my actions and behaviour reflect my true identity. However, my mother reacted negatively, emphasising that I am not a lesbian. I used to test her by asking how she would react if I were a lesbian, and her response was dismissive, telling me there are no lesbians in her house”. **Participant 7 (Tharollo).**

Additionally, the findings show that parents in certain instances reacted with rejection and reluctance. The following excerpt provides insights into these perspectives:

“They haven’t accepted, and they seem unwilling to do so”. **Participant 6 (Molebogeng).**

The findings of the study further highlight that some parents initially expressed negative reactions in response to their children coming out, but eventually demonstrated acceptance of their children’s sexual orientations over time. Here is what one of the participants shared:

“After coming out, they struggled to accept”.

“Eventually they accepted it because they realised it was my genuine desire”. **Participant 2 (Karabo).**

In line with the aforementioned findings, Participant 7 adds to the discussion by recalling how her mother gradually accepted her and began to support her as she began to openly identify as a lesbian. The following excerpt illustrates this experience:

“As I started living openly about being a lesbian my mother began to see my truth and became supportive, doing whatever I wanted”. **Participant 7 (Tharollo).**

Findings of the study also revealed that some parents reacted with acceptance upon learning about their children’s sexual orientations. Participant 4 recounted receiving parental acceptance due to her parents prioritising her happiness. The following excerpt illustrate her views:

“My parents embraced and accepted my true self, recognising that every parent desires their child’s happiness”. **Participant 4 (Lethabo).**

In addition to the positive reactions, Participant 3 also reported her father's positive reaction to her sexuality:

*"My father had already embraced me. **Participant 3 (Lebogang).***

The study's findings indicate that reactions to children's sexual orientations can vary significantly. Some parents may initially demonstrate rejection and reluctance, but gradually become more accepting over time. In contrast, other parents may immediately express acceptance towards their children. These varying reactions emphasise the complexity of the coming out process for each individual and within families.

4.3.3. Outcomes of parental reactions to coming out and coping

The theme focused on exploring the various positive and negative impacts lesbians experienced due to a variety of responses they encountered from parents during the coming out process. The study suggests that the reactions of parents to their child's coming out had a discernible impact on the participants, influencing their experiences in both positive and negative ways in relation to coming out and coping.

4.3.3.1. Psychological and emotional wellbeing of lesbians

This subtheme addresses the psychological and emotional challenges that lesbians face after coming out due to the various reactions of parents during the coming out process. Furthermore, it also addresses how these responses were perceived or interpreted by lesbians and how the perceptions or interpretations may have affected their emotional and psychological wellbeing as well as their coping strategies.

The findings of the current study indicate that participants reported positive experiences and outcomes as a result of receiving supportive reactions towards their sexual orientations. The participants attributed these positive outcomes to the presence of parental support. The following excerpt illustrates this perspective:

"I felt loved and valued because my parents provided me with their support".

Participant 3 (Lebogang).

Some participants felt respected by their parents in addition to feeling loved, as their parents reacted positively to their sexual orientations. Here is the participant's statement:

“I felt loved and that my choices were respected by them”. **Participant 5 (Lesedi).**

Participant 8 was happy discussing her parents’ positive response to her sexual orientation, but also recognised the challenges parents may encounter in accepting their children’s sexual orientations. The following excerpt illustrates her views:

“I was happy to realise that my parents accepted me and never judged me, even when they witnessed me being in a relationship with a woman. They made it clear that as long as I am happy, they support my choices. This brought me immense joy, especially considering how challenging it can be for other parents to accept their lesbian children”. **Participant 8 (Tshiamo).**

Some participants reported not needing coping mechanisms due to parental acceptance, providing intriguing insights: The following excerpt provides further illustration of these perspectives:

“Because I felt accepted by them, I did not need to rely on any coping mechanisms”. **Participant 5 (Lesedi).**

Furthermore, other participants expanded on the positive effects of receiving support and acceptance from parents and family members on mental wellbeing. She shared her personal experience, explaining how the process of coming became less difficult and has less of an emotional impact when met with positive reactions from loved ones. Below is her direct excerpt:

“Once you have the support and acceptance of your parents, family, and siblings, the act of coming out becomes easier and less impactful on your wellbeing”. **Participant 4 (Lethabo).**

The findings of the study also suggest that some participants encountered adverse consequences linked to negative responses towards their sexual orientations. Below are excerpts from the participants’ narratives that exemplify these experiences:

“I used to view my parents as my friends, so I felt comfortable coming out to them because I expected acceptance from them, but when they didn’t accept me, I felt like I had let them down”. **Participant 6 (Molebogeng).**

The participant described how the negative reactions from her parents had significant impact on various aspects of her life, as evidenced by the challenges she faced in

coping with the situation. This excerpt provides insight into the specific ways in which these negative reactions affected her wellbeing:

“I was not coping, the situation had negative impact on me, to the extent that I had to repeat a grade due to the mistreatment I experienced. I felt confused and didn’t know how to navigate the situation. At times, I even considered changing myself and trying to be straight, but deep down, I knew I couldn’t force myself to be something I am not”. **Participant 6 (Molebogeng).**

Furthermore, Participant 1 also shared her experiences. The following excerpt sheds light on her perspective:

“The situation became difficult for me because I was staying in their house and facing constant name calling. I felt constant emotional distress as my parent did not communicate with me and instead focused on talking to others. This caused me significant stress, and felt lost, unsure of how to handle the situation and did not know who to confide in”. **Participant 1 (Keletso).**

Further investigation during the interview uncovered that Participant 1 experienced various challenges as a result of negative reactions. This excerpt demonstrates these findings:

“I experienced a feeling of irritation upon encountering an individual, causing me to desire being alone and kept my distance from others”. **Participant 1 (Keletso).**

Like previous findings, the current research suggests that negative parental reactions are often associated with detrimental effects of the wellbeing of individuals who are experiencing these reactions. These negative reactions have been linked to detrimental effects, including feelings of isolation, academic challenges, and confusion among some participants. On the other hand, the findings of the study also suggest that positive parental reactions can have a beneficial impact on the emotional and psychological wellbeing of lesbians. They are associated with feelings of love, care, support, and respect.

4.3.3.2. Affirmation of self-identity

This subtheme explores the impact that parental reactions have on a lesbian' sense of self during the coming out process. It uncovered the impact of various parental reactions towards the strengthening of their authenticity.

The current study discovered that participants who received positive reactions from their parents felt more at ease being open about their identities. The following excerpts offer insight into these perspectives:

“Because of their acceptance, I felt at ease about being open and expressing my true self. We often fear revealing our authentic identity due to the judgement of the society. Thanks to their acceptance, I gained the confidence to change my clothing style. It is common for people to judge others based on their appearance, but with their support, they not only encouraged me but also bought clothes that truly reflected my identity”. **Participant 3 (Lebogang).**

...” I am relieved of stress and fear and allowed to live without restrictions”. **Participant 8 (Tshiamo).**

Acceptance from family played a significant role in contributing to the participants' confidence and encouragement to break free from societal expectations and embrace their own identity. It allowed them to feel more comfortable making their own choices regarding their sexuality, rather than feeling restricted by external pressures.

4.3.3.3. Strengthening resilience

This subtheme explores the ways in which positive parental reactions can foster resilience. The support and acceptance of parents and family members has been found to contribute to the resilience of lesbians, helping them withstand societal discrimination and judgements. Participants in the current study reported that positive reactions from their parents and their families helped them to stand against external pressures. The following excerpt illustrates these views:

“They made things easy for me. They provided guidance and support, preparing me for challenges I may encounter in the outside world. With their acceptance and love, they made the road easy allowing me to feel a sense of belonging at home. I learned not to be by how others perceive me, understanding that even

if I was straight, there will always be negative comments from some individuals”.

Participant 4 (Lethabo).

Furthermore, Participant 5 also shared that receiving positive reactions has been crucial in her ability to stand strong against external judgements and discrimination. Here is the excerpt illustrating her views:

“I experienced happiness when my parents embraced me, I was not concerned about the opinions of outsiders”. **Participant 5 (Lesedi).**

The excerpts suggest that parental support and acceptance of a person’s sexual orientation can play a significant role in bolstering resilience, particularly among lesbians. The findings indicate that lesbians who received positive reactions from parents reported that this support and acceptance helped them withstand societal criticisms.

4.3.3.4. Impact on relationship with intimate partner

This subtheme revealed that parental reactions can extend to impact the individual’s relationship both positively and negatively. The findings of the study suggest that negative reactions from parents regarding sexual orientation can significantly strain the relationship between the individual and their romantic partner, potentially leading to its failure. Participants’ experiences align with the notion that negative parental reactions can have detrimental effects on their romantic relationships. The following excerpt exemplifies these findings:

“The struggles a person faces when their family cannot accept them can deeply impact their relationship and overall happiness. In a specific instance, I was in a relationship with a woman last year, and our relationship ended not because of anything she did, but because her family did not accept her. Therefore, lack of acceptance created barriers and affected our ability to be together”.

Participant 4 (Lethabo).

Moreover, the study findings also suggest that receiving positive reactions from parents plays a significant role in the lives of individuals and their romantic relationships. These findings indicate that when parents show approval and acceptance towards their lesbian children, it can foster an environment where the

individuals feel more comfortable being open about their romantic partners. The following excerpt from participants exemplifies these perspectives:

“The acceptance from my parents has allowed me to be open about my partner, feel a sense of freedom and ensure that my partner knows I am not ashamed of her”. **Participant 8 (Tshiamo).**

According to the above excerpts, it is evident that negative parental reactions can greatly affect the romantic relationships of SMY and their partners. Conversely, positive reactions have the potential to strengthen the relationships of individuals who receive acceptance and support.

4.3.4. Multifaceted influences towards parental reactions

The theme explored the various influences that shape parental reactions. Parental reactions to children’s sexual orientations are influenced by a range of factors such as cultural, religious, personal beliefs, social norms, and understanding of diverse sexual orientations.

4.3.4.1. Cultural expectations and religious beliefs

In the present study, cultural expectations and religious beliefs appear to have played a role in how parents reacted to the coming out of their children and in the way other participants perceived their parents would react upon learning about their sexual orientations.

Based on the study, culture and religion appear to be some of the factors influencing parents towards lesbians. Below are the perspectives shared by the participants:

“After coming out, they struggled to accept it as they had certain expectations for my future, such as finding a partner for marriage who would pay lobola/dowry for me”. **Participant 2 (Karabo).**

“From what I understand about my parents, they view our sexuality as sinful, labelling it as a taboo, and believe that being who we are is impossible”. **Participant 1 (Keletso).**

“During a conversation, I once inquired about their thoughts on lesbians and same-sex relationships. Their response was that it was not possible, as women usually end up marrying men. They cited religious beliefs, specifically

referencing the Bible's teachings that marriage should be between a man and a woman". **Participant 6 (Molebogeng).**

Some parents attributed their children's sexual orientations to spiritual influences, including demons, satanism and witchcraft, in addition to the previously documented findings. Here are some excerpts from the study illustrating these views:

"I shared with my mother that I identify as a lesbian. However, she would dismiss and label me as crazy, associating it with Satanism and witchcraft".

Participant 7 (Tharollo).

"According to their beliefs, they view members of the LGBTIQ+ community as agents of Satan, perceiving me as being under the influence of Satanic forces".

Participant 6 (Molebogeng).

"As I have previously mentioned, according to their perspective, our actions are like Satanism to them. I believe that the reason behind my parents' strong negative reaction and attitudes towards lesbians is rooted in their perception that my sexuality is a taboo which ultimately leads to them viewing me as a disappointment in the family". **Participant 1 (Keletso).**

Based on the findings from the excerpts, it is evident that cultural norms and values, as well as religion, continue to influence how certain parents react or feel towards lesbian children.

4.3.4.2. Parental concerns about wellbeing and safety of lesbian children

Empathy for children's wellbeing and safety appears to be one of the factors that participants believe influenced their parents' reactions or feelings towards them.

One participant highlighted that the safety and wellbeing of a lesbian child significantly influenced her mother's response to her. Here is an excerpt from Participant 3 explaining her views:

"My mother often worries about my wellbeing and is afraid of the potential risks and dangers, particularly the risk of sexual assault". **Participant 3 (Lebogang).**

In addition, this participant also noted that parents may react negatively due to the social challenges lesbian individuals may face due to their sexuality, as observed in the society. The excerpt exemplifies this finding:

“Nowadays there is a growing number of lesbians who encounter various difficulties when navigating public spaces. Parents who possess an understanding of diversity and the ability to identify similarities between their own child and those leading different lifestyles, can develop empathy towards the challenges faced by lesbians because they can acknowledge that their child shares similar traits”. **Participant 3 (Lebogang).**

Contrary to certain parents who expressed their concerns and others who wholeheartedly acknowledged their children’s sexual orientations, the findings also reveal that some parents simultaneously embraced their children’s sexuality while also expressing concerns about their children’s welfare. The following excerpt exemplifies the above findings:

“My parents embraced and accepted my true self, recognising that every parent desires their child’s happiness. However, they also cautioned me about the obstacles I may encounter as I go out there. They advised me to be prepared to face the society’s judgements and criticisms”. **Participant 4 (Lethabo).**

Based on the above excerpts, it is evident that parents can have diverse reactions during the coming out process. The study indicated that some parents express concern for the safety and wellbeing of their children, while other parents exhibit both acceptance and fear for the safety and wellbeing of their children.

4.3.4.3. Open-mindedness and Education

This subtheme explores the significance of open-mindedness and education in influencing parental responses and assisting parents in creating an inclusive and accepting environment for their lesbian children. The findings of the current study revealed that acknowledgement of diverse sexual orientations and education play a role in assisting parents develop positive responses towards their lesbian children.

The research findings suggest that certain parents demonstrated understanding and support for sexual minorities, including lesbians. For instance, Participant 3 has communicated the following:

“My father is very loving and supportive of individuals who identify as lesbians”.
Participant 3 (Lebogang).

Participant 5 also believes that parents who recognise sexual diversity and understand that sexual minorities do not choose their feelings tend to react positively when their children come out as lesbians. The following excerpt illustrate her views:

“I believe their acceptance stems from their understanding that in this world, individuals often do not have the opportunity to choose the life they desire. As a result, they empathise with their child’s emotions”. **Participant 5 (Lesedi).**

Moreover, other participants emphasised the crucial role of education in fostering a better understanding of diverse sexualities among parents and promoting positive reactions. The following excerpt highlight the perspectives of other participants on the impact of parental education:

“Based on my understanding of my parents, they are intellectual individuals who prioritise education. I don’t believe they are heavily influenced by societal or religious pressures”. **Participant 4 (Lethabo).**

“I have this understanding of my mother because I am confident that she also took the time to research and educate herself, even if she never explicitly communicated this to me”. **Participant 4 (Lethabo).**

Based on the above findings, it appears that when parents are well informed about various sexual orientations through education and open-mindedness, there may be a greater likelihood for them to adapt their beliefs towards acceptance, potentially creating a safer space for their lesbian children.

4.3.5. Coping strategies employed by lesbians

This theme addresses the various coping strategies lesbians use to cope with the coming out process and parental reactions. These coping strategies include the strategies lesbians employed even prior coming out and after coming out about their sexual orientation.

4.3.5.1. Social media

According to the findings of the study, social media was one of the coping strategies identified as utilised by lesbians to cope with coming out and parental reactions. The findings indicate that this method was also used prior to coming out by some participants.

In the study it was observed that some participants utilised social media as a means of coping. The following excerpts illustrates some of these views:

“To indirectly address the topic, I began sharing content on social media platforms such as TikTok, hoping they would come across it and initiate a conversation. I didn’t hide my posts, hoping they would question me about my identity, but they never did, leaving me waiting for the right moment to disclose it to them myself”. **Participant 4 (Lethabo).**

“I used to watch videos of other lesbians on TikTok. I sought to learn from their experiences and gain insight into possible steps I could take if my family continued to reject me”. **Participant 6 (Molebogeng).**

According to the findings above, it was observed that certain participants found solace in coping with the negative effects of coming out and parental reactions. Social media also functioned as a coping strategy for some individuals. Moreover, for some participants, social media served as a means to gain confidence by watching content from similar individuals and finding strength and handling the coming out process and negative parental reactions.

4.3.5.2. Concealment

Hiding of sexual orientation appears to be one of the most common coping strategies that most members of the LGBTIQ+ community use. The current study revealed that other participants used concealment as a way of dealing with coming out. One of the reasons why some participants in the study chose not to openly share their sexual orientation with their parents was the concern about potential loss of financial support. Below is an excerpt that reflects the perspective of one of the participants regarding the concealment of her sexuality:

“I took a decision during my years as a student to keep my true identity hidden from my parents because I relied on them for care and support, and I was uncertain how they would react. It was a difficult choice, but I felt it would be easier to reveal my true self once I became independent”. **Participant 4 (Lethabo).**

Participants also expressed concerns about potential differential treatment from their parents compared to their heterosexual siblings, as well as a fear of losing the support and acceptance of their parents. The following excerpt illustrate these views:

“I was afraid of coming out because everyone at home appeared to be straight. I anticipated a challenging experience, so I tried to hide my identity and present myself as straight. The fear of being treated differently and losing the acceptance I had before made it difficult for me to be open about my true self”.

Participant 6 (Molebogeng).

Participant 8 also indicated that she chose not to disclose her sexual orientation to others, even though she did not provide reasons why she chose to hide her sexuality. The following except illustrates her perspectives:

“I refrained from revealing any information, I refrained from displaying anything to anyone”. **Participant 8 (Tshiamo).**

Additionally, participants also engaged in concealment due to concerns about potential eviction by their parents or facing judgement. Here is an excerpt illustrating the views of this participant:

“I was afraid to fully disclose my true self, fearing that she might also kick me out of the house or judge me”. **Participant 7 (Tharollo).**

According to the above passages, some SMY hide their true identity because of many various factors associated with coming out such as losing financial support, being treated differently compared to heterosexual siblings and fear of being kicked out in the house.

4.3.5.3. Social support from family/friends and other LGBTIQ+

Social support from family, friends, and other members of the LGBTIQ+ community, is one of the coping strategies that lesbians in the study utilised. The participants of the study revealed to have sought social support as a way of dealing with various parental reactions.

In this study, some lesbians often spoke about the role of support from close family, as well as other members of the LGBTIQ community. For instance, one participant

mentioned confiding in her cousin about the challenges she faced in relation to the coming out process. The following are the excerpts from the participants:

“As I previously stated, since it was difficult for me to talk to my parent directly, I confided in cousin who was able to communicate effectively with my parent and help them understand, despite their initial difficulty”. **Participant 2 (Karabo).**

Other participants mentioned seeking support from fellow lesbians as a way to navigate the challenges related to coming out and managing their parents’ reactions. Below are examples of the excerpts of these particular participants:

“I was chatting with a fellow lesbian who was a student at the University of Limpopo, and she provided me with valuable advice on a step-by-step basis”. **Participant 6 (Molebogeng).**

“I used to confide in a lesbian who was older than me about my mother. She would advise me to be patient with my mother and give her time to come around. I followed her advice for a while, but eventually became discouraged as it seemed like my mother was unwilling to accept me. Nevertheless, this person continued to encourage me and assure me that things would get better with time”. **Participant 7 (Tharollo).**

The results indicate that other lesbians found solace in confiding with other lesbians and some confided with their close relatives to cope with the coming out process and parental responses. The connections with individuals of similar characteristics seemed to have assisted lesbians with strength to cope with their unaccepting parents and are of greater significance in the lives of lesbians.

4.3.5.4. Self-acceptance

This subtheme highlights the significant impact that parental responses can have on lesbians’ journey towards accepting their sexual orientations. The subtheme explores the ways in which parental reactions can either foster self-acceptance or hinder it.

The study’s findings suggest that while some experienced adverse effects, others reported that these reactions assisted them in their journey towards self-acceptance and embracing their sexuality. This self-acceptance has shown to be pivotal in living authentically despite external negativity.

Notably, some participants expressed a commitment to embracing their true selves and refusing to compromise their identity to meet other people's expectations. The following are some of the excerpts from the participants:

"I eventually reached the conclusion that I have limited power to change who I am, and I am unable to fulfil the expectations my parent has for me. Instead, I believe in prioritising my own happiness and refusing to sacrifice to meet the desires of others". **Participant 1 (Keletso).**

"But despite her initial reactions, I eventually decided to live my life authentically, because I felt oppressed". **Participant 7 (Tharollo).**

According to the above excerpts, some of the participants utilised self-acceptance as a mechanism to handle and address unfavourable parental responses. These individuals expressed that they prioritised themselves before anticipating from their parents. Additionally, some participants also mentioned that they chose to live authentically despite facing disapproval.

4.4. Summary of the chapter

The study presented the data and analysed the findings of the research about the perceived parental reactions to coming out, attachment and coping in Ga-Sekororo: A qualitative study. The study successfully accomplished all its objectives, with participants sharing their personal experiences of the process of coming out and their strategies for coping.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

In this section, the findings of the previous chapter are examined and linked to existing research on the relevant topics investigated in this study. The study's objectives were effectively achieved, and the themes and subthemes that emerged from the data are presented in this chapter.

5.2. Discussion of findings

5.2.1. Perceived parent-child relationships

The theme shed light on the various parent-child relationships between lesbians and their parents. It highlights various interpretations of good parenting and what constitutes good or bad parent-child relationship from lesbians' own perspectives. Additionally, it explores the diverse relationships between lesbians and their parents before and after coming out as well as the perceived relationship quality between lesbians and their parents. Lastly, it also explored how parent-child relationships affect the process of coming out and dealing with associated challenges.

5.2.1.1. Lesbians' perspectives of parent-child relationships

In the study, it is demonstrated that lesbians value consistent support, love, care, and recognition of their child's identity as essential traits of a good parent. The participants perceived a healthy parent-child relationship as one marked by open communication, mutual respect, supportive attitudes, and non-judgemental behaviour. Open communication is highlighted as vital for positive parent-child relationships, contributing for family wellbeing and children's healthy development (Ambhore et al., 2022; Bireda & Pillay, 2017; Cava et al., 2014; Sorrel et al., 2023). Supportive parenting characterised by warmth and responsiveness shown to have a protective effect on young individuals, potentially fostering confidence in their decision-making abilities (Fish et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the study also shed light on the significance of parents prioritising listening to their children over external opinions. Lesbians who experience relationships marked by support and respect may feel heard, understood, and respected. This parental support and respect are seen as crucial in maintaining a

strong bond with their children, as they provide a safe space for their exploration and growth (Bireda & Pillay, 2017).

Conversely, the study revealed that participants who perceive negative parent-child relationships may experience feelings of being unheard, misunderstood, and disrespected by their parents. A study by Popov and Ilesanmi (2017) asserts that such relationships may lead to internalising symptoms like depression, low self-esteem, and struggles with body image, potentially impairing communication with parents. These findings demonstrate the importance of understanding parenting dynamics within the lesbian community and highlight the broader significance of inclusive and supporting parenting practices.

5.2.1.2. Diverse parent-child relationships

The study findings reveal that while participants initially reported positive relationships with their parents prior to coming out, the disclosure of their sexual orientation led to strained relationships in some cases. These findings were also observed in a previous study conducted by Gafsky (2014). This strain was similarly significant among Hispanic parents, whose negative reactions to their children's disclosure resulted in strained parent-child relationships (Gattamorta et al., 2019). A study by Feinstein et al. (2018) focusing on gay and bisexual males also reported similar findings. According to a study by Gattamorta et al. (2019), parental responses to learning about their children's sexual orientations can elicit a range of emotions, which in turn could adversely affect the parent-child relationship.

Conversely, the study also revealed that in some cases parent-child relationships improved following sexual orientation disclosure, with some participants reporting having stronger bonds with their parents. Additionally, some participants reported to have had stronger bonds with their parents and the relationships remained the same even after disclosure. This could be explained by considering that parental reactions can also involve feelings of happiness, delight, and relief upon discovering their child's identity (Butler, 2021; Estep & Mirman, 2022). These findings suggest that the disclosure of sexual orientation can have varied impacts on the parent-child relationships, with some relationships maintaining or strengthening, while others may experience a strain.

5.2.1.3. Perceived relationship quality

In the study it was observed that participants who received positive reactions from their parents tended to report satisfaction with their parent-child relationships, further underscoring the impact of positive reactions on the dynamics of parent-child relationships. Participants reported having parent-child relationships characterised by factors such as open communication. This is consistent with a study conducted by Mirković and Jerković (2021) who revealed that positive reactions make it easier for parents to talk with their child and have open communication. Consequently, this can lead to enhanced satisfaction within the parent-child relationship.

However, the findings of the study also revealed that certain participants in the study were discontent with their relationships with their parents. They mentioned problems like poor communication and unequal treatment compared to their heterosexual siblings, which arose after they revealed their sexual orientation. These participants reported longing for their parents to fully accept their sexual orientation and to embrace them. Baltezare (2006) also found that SMY perceived their relationships with their parents as notably worse after disclosure compared to their perceived relationship qualities before coming out. The study shed light on how positive reactions can foster satisfaction in the parent-child relationship while negative reactions were found to have a negative impact on the parent-child relationship and reduced relationship satisfaction within the parent-child relationships.

5.2.1.4. The impact of parent-child relationships on the processes of coming out and coping

In the lives of SMY, the relationship with their parents plays a vital role in the process of coming out and disclosing their sexual orientation (Mayeza, 2021; Mills-Koonce et al., 2018). The findings of the current study revealed that participants who had positive connections with their parents before coming out felt more confident in their decision and anticipated acceptance. A study by Marks (2012) reported similar findings. This underscores the significance of supportive and accepting parenting in creating an environment where SMY feel comfortable and confident in disclosing their sexual orientation.

Additionally, the study revealed that the quality of parent-child relationship can create a safe space characterised by factors such as open communication, respect, love, and

support if the relationship is positive. Thus, Fish et al. (2020) found that adolescents are more likely to discuss aspects of their lives with parents when nurturing relationship is established. In contrast, the study also revealed that if the relationship is negative, it is likely to be characterised factors such as lack of respect, clear boundaries, and support which participants reported that they can negatively impact the coming out process and coping.

5.2.2. Parental reactions to coming out

The theme of this study involved examining the anticipated and actual reactions of parents to their lesbian children before and after the disclosure of their sexual orientation.

5.2.2.1. Anticipated parental reactions

The findings of the study suggest that participants had varying expectations regarding their parents' reactions to their sexual orientation. Some anticipated acceptance due to their strong parent-child relationships. As noted by Tam and Yeoh (2008), establishing a strong bond between parents contributes to a positive parent-child relationship between them. The study further revealed that others expected rejection, influenced by cultural or religious factors despite having strong parent-child relationships. Mayeza (2021) had similar findings, illustrating the varied parental reactions to SMY' coming out. The study also revealed that some participants anticipated acceptance while being indifferent to the other parent's reaction. For example, one participant in the study expected acceptance from her father and felt indifferent from her mother's reaction, suggesting that the father's acceptance held significance than the mother's approval. These findings indicate the need for further exploration of the dynamics between fathers and their lesbian children.

5.2.2.2. Actual parental reactions

The study explored how parents reacted when their daughters came out as lesbians. It was revealed that some parents demonstrated unconditional acceptance and support for their children's sexual orientations, expressing positive attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ individuals. These parents then responded with understanding and support. A study by Butler (2021) also reported that parents of SMY often responded with acceptance and support upon learning about their children's sexual orientations.

However, other parents reacted negatively to their children's sexual orientations causing significant emotional distress for both parties. Previous studies such as (Katz-Wise et al., 2016; McConnel et al., 2016; Rothman et al., 2012; Ryan et al., 2009) have shown that parental rejection can harm the mental wellbeing and identity of SMY. Additionally, the study also revealed that some parents initially reacted negatively but eventually accepted their children's sexual orientation over time, which is consistent with previous research (Gattamorta et al., 2019; Gattamorta & Quidley-Rodriguez, 2018; McConnel et al., 2016). The findings indicate that parents react in a range of ways upon learning about their children's sexualities.

5.2.3. Outcomes of parental reactions

The exploration of this theme revealed that the reactions and responses from parents during the coming out process can have a significant impact on various aspects on the lives of lesbians such as their emotional and psychological wellbeing, resilience, self-identity, and their intimate relationships with their partners.

5.2.3.1. Psychological and emotional wellbeing

The study discovered that lesbians attribute significance to the various reactions or responses they have experienced, and that these interpretations have an impact on their wellbeing and methods of coping. Positive and accepting parental reactions were linked to feelings of love, care, and respect for their identity and facilitated healthy coping mechanisms. This is similar to previous research by Ryan et al. (2010) and Watson et al. (2019) which revealed that acceptance from family positively influences self-esteem, social support, and overall health in young adults. In addition, the study revealed that parental acceptance contributed to a stronger sense of belonging within the family. A study by Miller et al. (2020) asserts that support from one's family serves as a strong safeguard for LGBTQ youth.

On the contrary, negative parental reactions had detrimental effects, resulting in difficulties such as isolation and declining academic performance, as well as strained parent child relationships. This finding is supported by previous studies such as Gattamorta et al. (2019); Katz-Wise et al. (2016) and Mirković and Jerković (2021, who found that negative parental reactions commonly led to strained relationships. The findings of the current study align with previous research on a similar topic, indicating that positive reactions can improve the emotional and psychological wellbeing of

sexual minorities, whereas unfavourable reactions can negatively impact their psychological and emotional wellbeing.

5.2.3.2. Strengthening resilience

The current study's findings suggest that positive parental reactions towards lesbian children can help them develop resilience against societal discrimination and stigmatisation. Participants of the study indicated that they did not experience stress due to discrimination and stigmatisation from society as long as their families approved of their sexuality and accepted them for who they are. Similarly, a study by Watson et al. (2019) found that family can pose both risks and serve as a source of resilience for lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth. Research by Feinstein et al. (2014) also suggests that lower levels of sensitivity to rejection and discrimination were associated with parental support and overall family support.

The current's study indicate that parental acceptance can significantly influence how well individuals are able to cope with negative social experiences. However, it is important to note that parental acceptance may not always positively impact the resilience of all sexual minorities against external factors as Feinstein et al. (2018) discovered in their study. The study by Feinstein et al. (2018) suggests that knowing that their parents accept their sexual orientations may have limited benefits if others demonstrate intolerance through discriminatory behaviour. This indicates a necessity for additional research into the inconsistency in the impact of parental acceptance on the resilience of sexual minorities.

5.2.3.3. Affirmation of self-identity

Parental acceptance and support appear to have played a crucial role in enabling lesbians to live authentically and express themselves fully. Participants reported that acceptance of their sexual orientation allowed them to gain confidence to live openly and make changes in their way of dressing and self-expression. Additionally, the study further revealed that while some participants were able to express themselves due to positive reactions, others managed to live true to themselves despite negative reactions. This aligns with findings of a study conducted by Gyamerah et al. (2019) which revealed that same-sex men experienced a sense of liberation upon disclosing their sexual orientations and the ability to live openly and authentically was more significant for them than the negative reactions they experienced.

5.2.3.4. Impact on intimate partner relationship

Findings of the study highlight that parental reactions either positive or negative can have an impact on both the individuals and their romantic relationships. Participants of the study reported that negative reactions can lead to a strain in relationships and even result in some relationships ending for lesbians and their partners. This is supported by a study conducted by Reczek (2016) which revealed that SMY facing disapproval due to their sexual orientation experienced difficulties in their relationships with their partners. Conversely, positive reactions were found to have a positive impact, strengthening the participants' relationships with their partners, as they facilitated open discussions about their partners. Participants reported feeling happy that they can freely have open discussions about their partners with their parents without feeling judged. Similar findings were reported in a study conducted by Fuller and Rutter (2018) which revealed that those who felt their parents were more accepting were also more likely to view their intimate relationships positively and as satisfying.

5.2.4. Multifaceted influences towards parental reactions

The theme delved into various factors that affect parental reactions to their children's sexual orientations. Various factors such as culture, religion, parental concerns on children's wellbeing, as well as open-mindedness, acknowledgement of diverse sexual orientations and education were found to be some of the factors that influenced how parents reacted towards their children's sexualities.

5.2.4.1. Cultural and religious views

In the realm of parental attitudes towards their lesbian children, cultural norms, values, and religious beliefs play a significant role. Cultural expectations around marriage and childbearing also led to negative reactions from parents. A study by Mamba (2020) indicates that within certain communities, practices like lobola (dowry) are commonly mandatory, and those who don't comply may be seen as deviant. The study revealed that cultural and religious factors heavily influenced parental responses, as evidenced by references to the Bible and the perception of homosexuality as sinful, taboo, and impossible. This aligns with previous research by Herbitter (2017) and Mayeza (2021) which highlighted the impact of cultural and religious beliefs on parental reactions.

Mayeza (2021) revealed that parents with orthodox religious beliefs and traditional parenting practices were more likely to react negatively. In addition, Mirković and Jerković (2021) discovered that orthodox Christian mothers had difficulty accepting their children's homosexuality due to concerns about moral values and sin. Similarly, a study by Hemphill (2020) also reported that negative experiences to coming out were attributed to families' religion as a significant factor. Furthermore, the current study also revealed that parents often associated their children's sexual orientations with spiritual attacks such as satanism, witchcraft and demons similar to findings from Montali et al. (2023), which revealed that some parents rejected their children's sexual orientations due to beliefs that it was an illness that could be treated through therapy. Some believed it could be cured through prayer (Hlalele & Matsumunyane, 2021).

The findings suggests that culture and religion continue to heavily influence the perceptions of parents towards diverse sexual orientations. Therefore, there is a need for educational initiatives to help parents support and accept their children, even when their children's identities clash with their beliefs.

5.2.4.2. Parental concerns on the wellbeing and safety of lesbians

Parental concerns on wellbeing and safety of lesbian children were a significant factor in how some parents responded to their lesbian children coming out. The study discovered that some parents expressed concerns about the safety and wellbeing of their children. The research participants reported that parents often expressed concerns about the hostile environment lesbians face, including the risk of sexual assault. This is noteworthy due to the reported prevalence of sexual violence among sexual minorities (Rothman et al., 2011). Similar findings were also reported in study conducted by Sullivan (2021) on the fear of physical safety of gay children by parents. Furthermore, mothers of LGBTQ children commonly expressed fear for their children's safety due to hostile, cultural and political context in a study conducted in Serbia (Mirković & Jerković, 2021).

Other previous studies also reported that parents worried about issues such as drug use, risky sexual behaviours, negative stereotypes, disrespect, discrimination, and societal judgements (Gattamorta et al., 2019) as well as fears concerning the child's ability to establish a family (Mirković & Jerković, 2021). Interestingly, the research also

suggests that while some parents accepted their children's sexuality, they still harboured anxieties about their children's safety and wellbeing.

5.2.4.3. Open-mindedness, acknowledgement of diverse sexualities and education

In the study, it was observed that some parents exhibited favourable responses. Participants noted that these parents not only embraced diverse sexual orientations but also conveyed supportive attitudes towards lesbians and their sexual minorities. Findings of a research carried out by Butler (2021) also indicated that modern parents are potentially more open-minded towards individuals who do not identify as heterosexual. Moreover, some participants believed that educational backgrounds and exposure to research of these parents on SMY played a significant role in shaping their positive responses. In a study conducted by La Roi and Mandemakers (2018), comparable results were documented, indicating that education can indeed influence the attitudes towards acceptance of homosexuality.

5.2.5. Coping strategies employed by lesbians

The theme explored the various coping mechanisms employed by lesbians to cope and deal with the coming out process, and parental reactions to coming out. According to the findings, lesbians use coping strategies such as social media, concealment, social support from friends/families and fellow members of the LGBTIQ+ community and self-acceptance.

5.2.5.1. Concealment

The study discovered concealment as one of the coping mechanisms that lesbians used to cope with coming out and parental reactions. Participants reported that before coming out, they hid their sexual orientations due to concerns about losing acceptance and support, fear of being treated differently from their heterosexual siblings, and the worry of losing financial support. The findings align with Gyamerah et al. (2019), Higa et al. (2014) and Mayeza (2021) who all observed that some individuals postponed coming out until they were no longer dependent on their parents. Other studies such as Mulavu et al. (2023) and Nascimento and Scorsilini-Comin (2018) also noted that concealment may stem from a fear of rejection or a desire to keep one's LGBTIQ+ identity private, and familial expectations such as marriage and starting a family.

5.2.5.2. Social media

Another coping strategy that participants of this study utilised was the use of social media. The study revealed that some lesbians turn to social media with the stress of coming out and parental reactions. Participants of the study reported that they use platforms such as TikTok to share their true identities and find comfort in watching videos of other members of the LGBTIQ+ community. Berger et al. (2022) found that social media allows LGBTQ youth to actively control and navigate their identities. Craig et al. (2021) also revealed that social media benefits marginalised youth by connecting them with emotional support, helping them develop their identities, providing valuable information, and offering entertainment.

5.2.5.3. Seeking support from close family/friends and members of the LGBTIQ+ community

According to the findings of the study, some participants utilised social support from various sources including family, and the LGBTIQ+ community to navigate the challenges of coming out and dealing with parental reactions. It was discovered participants sought support from fellow lesbians to manage the stress of coming out and negative parental responses. Additionally, they also confided in close family members to cope with the coming out process, which helped them handle the stress and different parental reactions positively.

Seeking support from fellow lesbians provided a sense of validation and belonging for the participants, while the acceptance of their sexual orientation by their close relatives contributed to feeling heard and validated by loved ones. Thus, a study by Meyer (2003) highlighted the importance of interactions with others in forming a sense of self and overall wellbeing. Through interactions with fellow lesbians and close family relatives, participants were able to navigate the challenges associated with coming out and parental reactions. These findings suggest the importance of SMY in forming close relationships with other people of similar traits such as other members of the LGBTIQ+ community. Previous studies also highlighted the importance of support groups in assisting SMY to address challenges faced due to their sexual orientations (Higa et al., 2014; Mulavu et al., 2023).

5.2.5.4. Self-acceptance

Lastly, the research findings discovered that some participants used self-acceptance to cope with negative responses from parents and embraced their sexualities despite facing negativity. The findings suggest that embracing their sexualities allowed them to stay true to themselves. Similar findings were reported in a study by Higa et al. (2014). A study by Camp et al. (2021) also suggested that improved mental wellbeing is considered to be frequently linked to self-acceptance of sexual identity.

However, while the current study implies that negative parental reactions contributed to self-acceptance and embracing sexuality, the study by Camp et al. (2021), also revealed that some individuals who struggled with self-acceptance also faced a lack of acceptance from family and friends regarding their sexuality.

5.3. Summary of the chapter

This chapter provided a discussion of themes and subthemes that emerged from the previous chapter. The themes that emerged from this study includes the following: perceived parent-child relationships, parental reactions, outcomes of parental reactions, multifaceted influence towards lesbians as well as the coping strategies employed by lesbians. These themes and subthemes were successfully discussed in relation to the existing literature.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1. Introduction

The following chapter summarises the conclusion and recommendations of this study. It begins with a summary of the original goals, and a summary of the literature review. Then the strengths, weaknesses, and limitations of the study are listed. Finally, recommendations of the study are given.

6.2. Summary of the study

The study aimed at exploring the perceived parental reactions to coming, attachment, and coping among lesbian youth in Ga-Sekororo, Limpopo, South Africa. The main objectives of this research were to research the nature of parent-child relationships in persons identifying as lesbians, document parental reactions to coming out, to characterise meanings attached to parental reactions including coping with the coming out process, and to describe the role that the established parent-child relationships play in coming out and coping.

According to previous research, positive parental reactions such as acceptance are often associated with positive outcomes in terms of mental health and self-esteem. Conversely negative parental reactions such as rejection often result in distress, low self-esteem, and poor mental health. The study examined the importance of parent-child relationships between lesbians and their parents or significant other through Attachment theory, and existing literature indicates that those with secure attachment and perceive their parents as supporting are likely to come out to their parents and are likely to employ effective coping strategies. Conversely, those who perceive their parents as unaccepting are likely to suffer from mental health conditions such as depression, and experience heightened stress and are likely to use maladaptive ways of coping.

Furthermore, the literature also indicated that lesbians and other members of the LGBTIQ+ community who come out employ various coping strategies and these strategies vary widely and can have lasting effects on their mental health. For example, social support was identified as one of the effective coping strategies that appeared to improve mental health and has a positive impact on the wellbeing of sexual minority youth. However, maladaptive ways of coping such as alcohol use was

found to have negative impact on the wellbeing of sexual minority youth and is likely to cause mental health disorders such as substance-induced psychosis. For the purpose of this study, the researcher used the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping to examine the coping strategies of the study's participants and the implications of these coping strategies.

The findings of the study also indicated that the parent-child relationship is a very important relationship in the lives of lesbian individuals and good parent-child relationship like previous research indicates, has the potential to shape how lesbians are likely to perceive their parents or significant others will react upon learning about their sexual orientation and their ways of coping as well. However, although good parent-child relationship is likely to predict positive perceptions for lesbians on the coming out process, the study also discovered that other factors such as culture or religion also have the impact on determining how lesbians perceive their parents will react upon learning about their sexuality and subsequently cope regardless of existing good or bad parent-child relationships.

6.3. Strengths of the study

- The study utilised semi-structured interviews, which are suitable for elucidating personal experiences and enabled the participants to provide detailed and expressive accounts of their experiences to the researcher.
- This study employed the Attachment theory and the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping which are apparently lacking from existing literature in South Africa.
- The study was carried out in rural settings and investigated the distinctive obstacles encountered by lesbians as a result of their sexual orientation in rural communities as opposed to those residing in urban environments.
- The study motivated some of the participants to organise events targeting LGBTIQ+ individuals within Ga-Sekororo to create an inclusive environment where LGBTIQ+ individuals can freely express their sexuality and to encourage coming out.

6.4. Weaknesses of the study

- The research took place specifically in Ga-Sekororo, a region within Limpopo Province, and focused exclusively on lesbian individuals as participants.
- The research sample was limited to Sepedi tribe lesbians, so it is unclear if the findings can be generalised to lesbians from other tribes in rural communities.

6.5. Limitations of the study

The research centred on a particular demographic, specifically individuals who identify as lesbians. There is a wide variety of sexual orientations and individuals within the LGBTIQ+ community may have varying experiences when it comes to revealing their sexual identities. Therefore, the results of the research should not be applied broadly to the LGBTIQ+ population. Additionally, the interviews of the study were originally conducted in Sepedi and subsequently translated into English. Translating from one language to another can be a complex process, and it is possible for some words or phrases to lose their exact meaning or not have direct equivalents in the target language. Thus, there is a possibility that the meaning of some words might have been altered during the translation process.

6.6. Recommendations

- Further investigation is required in Limpopo Province and other rural communities in South Africa involving additional participants within the LGBTIQ+ community.
- To obtain further understanding and insight on this subject matter, it is recommended to carry out quantitative research with a larger sample size.
- Further investigation is necessary to establish the significance of attachment styles in influencing the way lesbian individuals and other members of the LGBTIQ+ community perceive their parents' responses to their coming out, as well as their ability to cope with it.
- To improve parental reactions to coming out especially in rural communities, it is important to implement interventions and educational programs for parents to be educated about different sexual orientations and improve their

understanding of sexual minority youth and responses towards these group of people.

- To improve the mental health and coping of LGBTIQ+ individuals, the provision of LGBTIQ+ specific social support should be considered in rural villages.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1a: INFORMED CONSENT FORM (ENGLISH VERSION)

PROJECT TITLE: Perceived parental reactions to coming out, attachment, and coping in Ga-Sekororo, Limpopo, South Africa: A qualitative study.

PROJECT LEADER: R.M Mkhabela

1. You are invited to participate in the following research project: Perceived parental reactions to coming out, attachment and coping in Ga-Sekororo: A qualitative study
2. Participation in the project is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the project (without providing any reasons) at any time.
3. It is possible that you might not personally experience any advantages during the project, although the knowledge that may be accumulated through the study might prove advantageous to others.
4. You are encouraged to ask any questions that you might have in connection with this project at any stage. The project leader and his/her staff will gladly answer your question. They will also discuss the project in detail with you.
5. You may feel upset, anxious, or stressed during the interview designed to help explore your experiences of being lesbian. If you do, please inform me immediately or as soon as you feel able. You will be referred for counselling to appropriate professionals at Sekororo hospital to help you resolve these feelings.
6. Should you at any stage feel uncomfortable or are concerned about the research, please contact **Ms. Noko Shai-Ragoboya at the University of Limpopo, Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, tel: 015 268 2401**

Consent Form

I..... hereby voluntarily consent to participate in the following research project: Perceived parental reactions to coming out, attachment and coping in Ga-Sekororo, Limpopo: A qualitative study.

I realise that:

- a) The study deals with my experiences based on parent-child relationships.

- b) The procedure/treatment/interview may hold some risks for me that cannot be foreseen at this stage.
- c) The Ethics Committee has approved that individuals can be approached to participate in the study.
- d) The aims and extent of the research and methods of the research project have been explained to me.
- e) The research project sets out the risks that can be reasonably expected as well as possible discomfort for persons participating in the research. An explanation of the anticipated advantages for myself that are expected from the research and alternative procedures that may be to my advantage.
- f) I will be informed of any new information that may become available during the research that may influence my willingness to continue with my participation.
- g) Access to the records that pertain to my participation in the study will be restricted to persons directly involved in the research.
- h) Any questions that I may have regarding the research or related matters, will be answered by the researchers.
- i) You may contact my supervisor at: jabu.mokwena@ul.ac.za or myself at: reejoymkhabela@gmail.com if you need more information or feel uncomfortable with the research process at any time.
- j) If I have questions about, or challenges regarding the study, or experience any undesirable effects, I may contact any member of the research team.
- k) Participation in this research study is voluntary and I can withdraw my participation at any stage.
- l) If any medical problem is identified at any stage during the research, or when I am vetted for participation, such condition will be discussed with me in confidence by a qualified person, and/or I will be referred to my doctor.
- m) I indemnify the University of Limpopo and all persons involved with the above project from any liability that may arise from my participation in the above project or that may be related to it, for whatever reasons, including negligence on the part of the mentioned persons.

SIGNATURE

.....

Signed at..... this.... day of20.....

APPENDIX 1b: INFORMED CONSENT FORM (SEPEDI VERSION)

HLOGO YA PROTŠEKE: Dikarabelo tše di lemogwago tša batswadi mabapi le go tšwa, kgokagano, le go lebeletšana le maemo ka Ga-Sekororo, Limpopo, Afrika Borwa

MOETAPELE WA PROTŠEKE: Mkhabela R.M.

- 1) O laletšwa go tšea karolo mo protšekeng ya nyakišišo ye e latelago:
Dikarabelo tše di lemogwago tša batswadi mabapi le go tšwa, kgokagano le go lebeletšana le maemo ka Ga-Sekororo, Limpopo.
- 2) Go tšea karolo mo protšekeng ye ke ya boithaopo gomme o lokologile go ikgogela morago mo protšekeng (ntle le go fa mabaka) nako e nngwe le e nngwe.
- 3) Go a kgonega gore wena ka noši o ka no se itemogele mehola mo protšekeng ye, gaešita le ge tsebo yeo e ka kgoboketšwago go nyakišišo ye e ka ipontšha e le ya mohola go ba bangwe.
- 4) O hlohleletšwa go botšiša dipotšišo tšeo o ka bago le tšona mabapi le protšeke ye nako efe goba efe. Moetapele wa protšeke le bašomi ba gagwe ba tla araba potšišo ya gago ka lethabo. Ba tla ahlaahla le wena ka botlalo mabapi le protšeke ye.
- 5) O ka ikwa o nyamile, o tswenyegile, goba o le ka tlase ga kgatelelo ya monagano ka nako ya poledišano yeo e hlametšwego go thuša go hlahloba dipihlelo tša gago tša go ba mosadi yo a ratanago le basadi ba bangwe.
- 6) Ge o ka ikwa o sa phuthuloga, goba o tswenyegile ka nyakišišo ye, hle ikopanye le **Mohumagadi Noko-Ragoboya Yunibesithing ya Limpopo, Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, mogala: 015 268 2401**

Foromo ya Tumelelo

Nnake a dumela ka boithaopo go tšea karolo mo protšekeng ye e latelago ya nyakišišo: Dikarabelo tše di lemogwago tša batswadi mabapi le go tšwa, kgokagano le go lebeletšana le maemo ka Ga-Sekororo, Limpopo.

Ke a lemoga gore:

- a) Nyakišišo ye e lebane le diphihlelo tša ka tšeo di theilwego ditswalanong tša motswadi le ngwana.
- b) Tshepetšo/kalafo/poledišano e ka swara dikotsi tše dingwe go nna tšeo di ka se bonwego e sa le ka pela mo nakong ye.
- c) Komiti ya Boitshwaro e dumeletše gore batho ba ka batamelwa gore ba tšee karolo nyakišišong ye.
- d) Maikemišetšo le bogolo bja nyakišišo ye di hlalošitšwe go nna.
- e) Protšeke ya nyakišišo e hlagiša dikotsi tšeo di ka letelwago gammogo le go se iketle mo go ka bago gona go batho bao ba tšeago karolo nyakišišong. Tlhalošo ya mehola yeo e letetšwego go nna go tšwa nyakišišo le ditshepedišo tše dingwe tšeo di ka bago le mohola go nna.
- f) Ke tla tsebišwa ka tshedimošo efe goba efe ye mpsha yeo e ka bago gona ka gare ga nyakišišo yeo e ka ba le tutuetšo go maikemišetšo yaka gammogo le go tšwela pele goba go tšea karolo gaka go nyakišišo ye.
- g) Phihlelo ya direkhoto tšeo di lebanego le go tšea karolo gaka nyakišišong e tla lekanyeletšwa go batho bao ba amegago thwii nyakišišong.
- h) Dipotšišo dife goba dife tšeo nka bago le tšona mabapi le nyakišišo goba ditaba tšeo di amanago le yona, di tla arabja ke banyakišiši. O ka ikgokaganya le mookamedi waka go: jabu.mokwena@ul.ac.za goba nna ka noši go: reejoymkhabela@gmail.com ge o nyaka tshedimošo ye ntši goba o ikwa o sa phuthuloga ka tshepedišo ya nyakišišo ka nako efe goba efe.
- i) Ge kena le dipotšišo mabapi le, goba ditlhohlo mabapi le nyakišišo ye, goba ke itemogela ditlamorago dife goba dife tše di sa rategego, nka ikgokaganya le yo mongwe wa leloko la sehlopha sa nyakišišo.
- j) Go tšea karolo nyakišišong ye ke ya boithaopo gomme nka gogela morago nako ye nngwe le ye nngwe.
- k) Ge bothata bo ka lemogwa nakong ya nyakišišo, goba ge ke hlahlobja bakeng sa go tšea karolo, boemo bja mohuta woo bo tla ahlaahlwa ke motho yo a nago le maswanedi, gomme/goba ke tla romelwa ngakeng yaka.
- l) Ke šireletša Yunibesithi ya Limpopo le batho bao ba amegago ka protšeke ye e lego ka mo godimo go maikarabelo afe goba afe ao a ka tšwelelago ka lebaka la go tšea karolo gaka mo protšekeng ye goba yeo e ka amanago le yona, go akaretšwa le go se šetše ka lehlakoreng la batho bao ba boletšwego.

MOSAENO

.....

E saennwe ka letšatši lela.....20.....

APPENDIX 2a: ENGLISH INTERVIEW GUIDE

PART A: Demographic information

Age

Gender

Religion

Ethnicity

Occupation

PART B: PROPOSED QUESTIONS

SECTION A: The nature of parent-child relationships in persons identifying as lesbians

1. What in your opinion, makes a good parent? And what is your definition of a good and bad parent-child relationship?
2. How would you describe the quality of your relationship with your parents as a child before discovering your sexual orientation, during, and after coming out?
3. What are your thoughts on the perceived quality of the parent-child relationship and what would you change about the relationship if you would?

SECTION B: Parental reactions to coming out

1. Given the nature of your relationship with your parents, what are your perceived parental reactions to coming out?
2. Given your understanding of your parents' views on lesbians and other LGBTIQ+ persons, how did you perceive and anticipate they would respond to learning about your sexual orientation before coming out?
3. What, in your opinion, shaped how your parents react and feel about lesbians?

SECTION C: The meanings attached to parental reactions including coping with the coming out process

1. What did you think of the parental reactions (rejection, acceptance, or support) after coming out?

2. What impact did your parents' reactions have on your capacity to manage and respond to the demanding nature of the coming out process?
3. What coping mechanisms did you employ to deal with the parental reactions and the coming out process?

SECTION D: The role that the established parent-child relationship plays in coming out and coping

1. How did your perception of the nature of your relationship with your parents help you mentally prepare for any possible parental responses to coming out?
2. In terms of coping with coming out, what are the advantages and disadvantages of the parent-child relationship?
3. In what we have discussed is there anything you would want to add?
4. Are there any questions or clarity that you want me to address?

APPENDIX 2b: SEPEDI INTERVIEW GUIDE

Poledišano ye e tla swarwa ka diteng tša dinagamagaeng tša Ga-Sekororo, ka Profenseng ya Limpopo. Pele poledišano e thoma, monyakišiši o tla itsebiša gomme a dumelela batšwasehlabelo go itsebiša. Matseno a tla šoma gape hlomeng tswalano, go fa kamano ya potego magareng ga monyakišiši le batšwasehlabelo ba nyakišišo.

Ke moka hlogo taba e tla tsebišwa batšwasehlabelo ka monyakišiši a hlaloša hlogo taba ya nyakišišo le seo e ikemišeditšego go se fihlelela. Go feta fao, monyakišiši o tla kgopela tumelelo ya motswasehlabelo go tšea karolo nyakišišong. Tshedimošo ya palo ya batho e tla kgoboketšwa pele: Leina (leina la bofora le tla fiwa), Mengwaga, Bong, Bodumedi, Morafe, le Mošomo.

Go nyakišiša le go hwetša tshedimošo , monyakišiši o tla hlahlwa ke teori ya Attachment le Transactional Model of Stress and Coping.

Dipotšišo di tla botšišwa ge go lebelelwa diphetogo tše di latelago gomme dikarabo di tla ithekga ka diphetogo tšeo di lokeleditšwego ka mo tlase:

KAROLO YA A: Tshedimošo ya palo ya batho

Mengwaga:

Bong :

Bodumedi:

Morafe:

Mošomo:

KAROLO YA B: DIPOTŠIŠO TŠEO DI ŠIŠINTŠWEGO

KAROLO YA A: Tlhago ya dikamano tša motswadi le ngwana bathong bao ba itlhaolago bjalo ka basadi bao ba ratanago le basadi ba bangwe

- a) Ke eng seo go ya ka wena, se dirago gore motswadi e be yo mokaone? Gomme tlhalošo ya gago ya tswalano ye botse le ye mpe ya motswadi le ngwana ke efe?

- b) O ka hlaloša bjang boemo bja tswalano ya gago le batswadi ba gago bjalo ka ngwana pele o utulla tshekamelo ya gago ya thobalano, nakong ya go tšwa le ka morago ga go tšwa?
- c) Dikgopolo tša gago ke dife ka ga boemo bjo o bo lemogilego ka tswalano ya gago le batswadi ba gago, gomme o be o tla fetša eng ka tswalano yeo ge o be o ka dira bjalo?

KAROLO YA B: Diphetolo tša batswadi mabapi le go tšwa ga bana ba bona

- a) Ge o lebelela mohuta wa tswalano ya gago le batswadi ba gago, ke diphetolo dife goba dikarabelo tšeo o be go o di letetše go batswadi ba gago ge o tšwelela ka tshekamelo ya gago ya thobalano goba bjalo ka mosadi you a ratanago le basadi ba bangwe?
- b) Go ya ka tsebo le kwešišo ya gago ka maikutlo le dipono tša batswadi ba gago mabapi le basadi ba go ratana le basadi ba bangwe , le batho ba bangwe ba LGBTIQ+, o ile wa letela le go lebelela gore ba tla fetola bjang goba go arabela ge ba ithuta ka ga tshekamelo ya gago ya thobalano pele o tšwelela?
- c) Ke eng go ya ka wena, seo se bopilego ka moo batswadi ba gago ba arabelago le go ikwa ka gona ka di lesbian goba basadi ba go ratana le basadi ba bangwe?

KAROLO YA C: Ditlhalošo tšeo di kgomareditšwego go diphetolo tša batswadi le go lebeletšana le maemo mabapi le go tšwa

- a) Naa o ile wa nagana eng ka diphetolo/dikarebelo tša batswadi ba gago (go gana, go amogela, go ba thekgo), ka morago ga go tšwa?
- b) Ke khuetšo efe yeo diphetolo/dikabelo tša batswadi ba gago di bilego le yona go bokgoni bja gago bja go laola le go arabela mathata a tshepedišo ya go tšwelela bjale ka lesbian goba mosadi yo a ratanago le basadi ba bangwe?
- c) Ke mekgwa efe ya go lebeletšana le maemo yeo o e dirišitšego go lebeletšana le diphetolo/dikarabelo tša batswadi le tshepedišo ya go tšwa bjalo ka mosadi wa go ratana le basadi ba bangwe?

KAROLO YA D: Go hlaloša tema yeo tswalano yeo e hlomilwego ya motswadi le ngwana e e kgathago mabapi le go tšwa le go lebeletšana le maemo

- a) Temogo ya gago ya mohuta wa tswalano ya gago le batswadi ba gago e go thušitše bjang monaganong go itokišetsa diphetolo/dikarabelo le ge e le dife tšeo di ka bago gona tša batswadi ge o etšwa?
- b) Mabapi le go lebeletšana le go tšwa, ke mehola efe le go se loke ga kamano ya motswadi le ngwana?
- c) Go seo re ahlaahlilego sona ekaba go na le seo o ka ratago go se oketša?
- d) Go na le dipotšišo tšeo o nyakago gore ke di rarolle?

APPENDIX 3: FACULTY ENDORSEMENT LETTER



University of Limpopo
Faculty of Humanities
Office of the Research Professor
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 4809, Fax: (015) 268 3425, Email: lesibana.rafapa@ul.ac.za

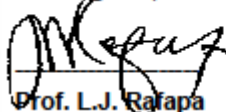
To : Research Development and Administration Director, Dr T. Mabila
Via : Executive Dean, Professor R.S. Maoto
From : Research Professor
Date : 11 July 2023
Subject : Faculty ratification of a mini-dissertation proposal with the title
"Perceived parental reactions to coming out, attachment and coping in
Ga-Sekororo, Limpopo, South Africa: A qualitative study" – RM
Mkhabela (201507030)

Dear Dr Mabila

This is to confirm that the proposal of the specified student should serve at TREC for purposes of ethical clearance. It was approved by the Department of Psychology Research & Ethics Committee and endorsed by the School of Social Sciences Research & Ethics Committee, authorised to do so by and on behalf of the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee (FHDC). The name of the student is RM Mkhabela (student number: 201507030)

I thank you in advance for your support.

Kind regards,


Prof. L.J. Rafapa



Prof. R.S. Maoto
Executive Dean

APPENDIX 4a: FIRST ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE (TREC).



University of Limpopo
Department of Research Administration and Development
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 3935, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email: tukiso.sewapa@ul.ac.za

TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING: 21 AUGUST 2023

PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/568/2023: PG

PROJECT:

Title: Perceived parental reactions to coming out, attachment and coping in Ga-Sekororo, Limpopo: A qualitative study
Researcher: RM Mkhabela
Supervisor: Prof JP Mokwena
Co-Supervisor/s: N/A
School: Social Sciences
Degree: Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology

PROF D MAPOSA
CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031

Note:

- i) This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.
- ii) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for Amendment form.
- iii) PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

Finding solutions for Africa

APPENDIX 4b: REVISED ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE (TREC)



University of Limpopo
Department of Research Administration and Development
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 3935, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email: tukiso.sewapa@ul.ac.za

TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING: 04 DECEMBER 2023

PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/568/2023: PG-Amended

PROJECT:

Title: Perceived parental reactions to coming out, attachment and coping in Ga-Sekororo, Limpopo, South Africa: A qualitative study
Researcher: RM Mkhabela
Supervisor: Prof JP Mokwena
Co-Supervisor/s: N/A
School: Social Sciences
Degree: Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology



PROF D MAPOSA
CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031

Note:

- i) This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.
- ii) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for Amendment form.
- iii) PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

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APPENDIX 5: LETTER OF PERMISSION

	<h1>BANARENG BA-SEKORORO</h1>	
	TEL: 015 383 2198 Cell: 076 915 0170 Email: sekororotradi.council@gmail.com	P. O. BOX 48 TRICHARTSDAL 0990

TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

ENQ : MAKWALA NC

DATE : 13/09/2023

TO WHOM IT MAY BE CONCERN

PERMISSION GRANTED TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This serve to confirm that Banareng Ba-Sekororo Traditional Council has given Mkhabela Rejoice Masiza the right and permission to conduct research Title of Study: Perceived parental reactions to coming out, attachment and coping in Ga-Sekororo area, Limpopo under Kgoshi Sekororo . Banareng Ba-Sekororo has no objection and Permission granted.

Hope you will find this to be in order.

Thank you.

Kind regards

Makwala NC



Date : 13/09/2023

Secretary

DEPT. OF CO-OPERATIVE GOVERNANCE HUMAN SETTLEMENTS & TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS
BANARENG BA-SEKORORO TRADITIONAL COUNCIL
2023 -09- 13
P. O. BOX 48 TRICHARTSDAL 0990 MOPANI DISTRICT SUPPORT CENTRE

APPENDIX 6: EDITORIAL LETTER



07 March 2024

Dear Rejoice Masiza Mkhabela

I am writing to confirm that Ubumbhano Research Consulting has successfully provided editorial services for your master's dissertation titled "Perceived Parental Reactions to Coming Out, Attachment, and Coping in GA-Sekororo, Limpopo, South Africa: A Qualitative Study." We have enjoyed collaborating with you throughout this academic endeavour and believe that our editorial assistance has significantly improved the quality and coherence of your work.

Should you have any queries, please email us at info@ubumbhano.co.za

Thank you for choosing Ubumbhano.

Best regards,
Ubumbhano Research Consulting
18 Ketherine Street
Sandton
Johannesburg
2196
www.ubumbhano.co.za

APPENDIX 7: TURNITIN REPORT

MINI-DISSERTATION EDITED VERSION (REJOICE MKHABELA)
07.03.2024-1.docx

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