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**EXPLORING THE ATTITUDES AND EXPERIENCES OF HIGH SCHOOL  
TEACHERS TOWARDS LGBTIQ STUDENTS IN LESOTHO SCHOOLS**

**By**

**MAHLAPE SYLVIA MOTA**

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**STUDY LEADER: Dr. HJ Nichols**

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## DECLARATION

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I, Mahlape Sylvia Mota declare that:

- (i) This dissertation that I herewith submit at the University of the Free State is my independent work and I have not previously submitted it for qualification at another institution of higher education.
- (ii) I am aware that the copyright is vested in the University of the Free State.
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**Signed**

16-11-2022

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**Date**

## **DEDICATION**

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This thesis is wholeheartedly dedicated to my beloved mother, 'Mamahlape Mota, for providing me with moral, spiritual, emotional and financial support and for always being my source of inspiration.

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### **My sincere thanks to the following:**

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## ABSTRACT

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A growing body of research shows that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) students, or those who do not conform to heterosexual identities or expressions in Lesotho, experience discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation within the school environment. This is happening despite the Lesotho Constitution, which prohibits all forms of discrimination, and the Education Act of 2010, which makes provision for education for all and ensures that no form of discrimination exists in accessing education. The aim of this study was to explore the attitudes and experiences of high school teachers towards LGBTIQ students.

This research study adopted a socio-ecological theory to explore teachers' attitudes and to determine how their social backgrounds, influenced their attitudes. The researcher used a qualitative approach located within the interpretivist paradigm to collect data. Purposive and convenience sampling techniques were used to select the study sample. Using a case study methodology, semi-structured telephonic interviews were conducted with five high school teachers from three high schools in Teya-teyaneng Lesotho. Data were analysed and presented thematically. The findings indicate that teachers promote and enforce heterosexuality in schools due to a lack of knowledge of gender and sexual diversity. The results showed that masculinity and femininity were used as gender and sexuality descriptors. The study also revealed that gender and sexual diversity is silenced and ignored in schools.

Therefore, I recommend that the management and the board of schools engage in a process of producing school policies that incorporate school ethos and prohibit discrimination based on gender and sexual diversity. It is also recommended that teachers receive pre-service and in-service training so that they can feel confident in providing educational programmes aimed at promoting acceptance of gender and sexual diversity among students.

**Key words:** Sexuality, Homosexuality, LGBTIQ, Life Skills Education, Heteronormativity, Equality, Inclusion, Non-discrimination, Human rights

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## LISTS OF ACRONYMS

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APA	American Psychological Association
AU	African Union
B.Ed.	Bachelor of Education
BSc.Ed.	Bachelor of Science in Education
COVID 19	Corona Virus Disease of 2019
Dip.Ed.	Diploma of Education
Eng.Lit.	English Literature
GLSEN	Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer
LSE	Life Skills Education
Maths	Mathematics
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SEM	Socio-Ecological Model
TA	Thematic Analysis
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
WHO	World Health Organisation

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

---

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) people in Lesotho continuously experience negative societal attitudes and inequalities within social, economic and education systems (Logie et al., 2019; Matsúmunyane & Hlalele, 2020). This is due to heteronormative and heterosexism that prevail in communities as well as in schools. Matsúmunyane and Hlalele (2020) argue that homophobia and homophobic attitudes continue to be the primary challenge for LGBTIQ students in Lesotho because nothing or very little is being done to accommodate them in schools. Homophobic attitudes refer to prejudice against sexual and diverse people that sometimes manifest itself in legal restrictions, bullying or even violence against sexual and diverse people. Religion and culture are among the factors that reinforce homophobia in Lesotho. One study focusing on Lesotho explored the experiences of LGBTIQ students in high schools (Matsúmunyane and Hlalele (2020), however, no study was conducted among teachers in Lesotho schools, indicating a gap in understanding teachers' attitudes towards and experiences with LGBTIQ students.

This chapter discusses the background of the study, the problem statement, and the rationale for this research. It also presents the research questions, the aim and objectives of the study, as well as a brief discussion of the theoretical framework and an overview of the research design and methodology. The chapter also discusses ethical considerations and limitations, concluding with an outline of chapters.

### 1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

According to a World Health Organisation report (WHO, 2015), millions of lesbians, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) individuals worldwide face pervasive human rights violations on account of their sexual orientation and gender identity. This is despite the call by the United Nations

Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to its member states to protect the rights of LGBTIQ people and proposing comprehensive sexuality education as a priority in schools.

The rights of LGBTIQ individuals and groups were recognised in 2011 by UNHRC, and all United Nations (UN) member states were mandated to establish laws that prohibit any form of discrimination of an individual based on sexual orientation or gender identity (UN, 2011). Mats'ela et al. (2015) indicate that Western countries have shown the most commitment to protecting the rights of LGBTIQ persons, while African countries are still lagging behind. Logie et al. (2019) report that only 38 African countries have legalised same-sex practices thus far. Jjuuko and Tabengwa (2018) add that countries such as Uganda, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe criminalise same-sex practices. In Uganda, homosexuality could be punished severely, up to life in prison (Du Plessis, 2014). Research also shows that, in Nigeria, there is a law that imposes the death penalty for homosexuality (Jjuuko & Tabengwa, 2018). Thus, LGBTIQ persons in these countries are subject to state-sanctioned discrimination, stigmatisation, marginalisation and violence.

Similarly, in the context of Lesotho, despite the decriminalisation of same-sex practices in 2012, heteronormative and heterosexual practices still prevail in communities and schools (Adams & Nkuebe, 2018; Logie et al., 2019; Matsúmunyane & Hlalele, 2020; Poteat et al., 2016 ; Stahlman et al., 2015). Carroll and Mendos (2017) argue that, even though same-sex practices are decriminalised in Lesotho, there is no law that explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. In essence, there is no law in Lesotho that explicitly either protects or prohibits homosexual acts (Meer et al., 2017). Mats'ela et al. (2015) are of the opinion that decriminalising same-sex practices without enacting laws that protect LGBTIQ persons exposes them to discrimination, stigmatisation, marginalisation and violence. The findings of a study conducted by Subhrajit (2014) in India concur with Mats'ela et al. by indicating that heteronormative and heterosexist attitudes are caused by inadequate legal protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Nonetheless, this is not always the case. South African Constitution and other law offers provisions for non-discrimination against people based on sexual orientation and legalises same-sex marriages (Msibi, 2018; Muzenda & Kessman, 2017).

However, Mavhandau-Mudzusi (2017, p.209) argues that “LGBTIQ individuals in South Africa continue to face hostility and violence.” Nichols (2016) adds that, despite all attempts at intervention and legislation, LGBTIQ people, particularly youth, continue to face discrimination and prejudice.

Lesotho’s case is no different from that of South Africa, as a considerable body of literature suggests that many LGBTIQ persons in Lesotho experience physical or verbal harassment due to their sexuality (Bakare, 2016; Meer et al., 2017; Netshandam et al., 2017; Poteat et al., 2016). Research conducted in Lesotho among the LGBTIQ population indicates that 76.2% of LGBTIQ persons reported having experienced discrimination and 59.8% experienced physical or verbal harassment (Bakare, 2016). Logie et al. (2019) also find that LGBTIQ persons in Lesotho face marginalisation in the legal, health, employment and education spheres. According to Martinez-Guzman and Iniguez-Rueda (2017, p.367), “symbolic violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community operates in a normalized way and enhances relationships of inequality in diverse social spaces.” Therefore, students who identify or question their sexual orientation or gender identity are marginalised and not treated in the same way as their heterosexual and cisgender fellow students in schools.

Schools are seen as effective locations for supporting and creating an inclusive and safe environment for all students to learn and develop. In the context of Lesotho, the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) made several attempts to create a safe school environment that includes the adoption of legislation pertaining to education matters. This includes the Education Act (2010) to ensure equal education opportunities for all (MoET, 2010). However, the Education Act (2010) does not speak directly to gender and sexual diversity (GSD). Therefore, Lesotho schools continue to be heteronormative within heterosexual environments, where many LGBTIQ students experience social vulnerability.

A recent study by Matsúmunyane and Hlalele (2020) provides evidence that schools in Lesotho are indeed unsafe spaces for LGBTIQ students. Their study establishes that schools have policies discriminating against and excluding LGBTIQ students. This is consistent with a five-country comparison study by Francis et al. (2018b) on gender and sexual diversity and schooling in Southern Africa. Their study reveals that policies and educational systems of countries such

as Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland prioritise discourses that marginalise, silence and make gender and sexual minorities invisible.

Studies also found that LGBTIQ students in Lesotho are harassed and discriminated against by both students and teachers (Logie et al., 2019; Matsúmunyane & Hlalele, 2020). A participant in the Logie et al. study narrates an incident where lesbian students in a school were asked to undress and show teachers their boxer shorts. Failure to do so resulted to their expulsion from school. This shows that community norms stigmatising sexual minorities influence the harassment of LGBTIQ students in Lesotho schools. Logie et al. further discovered that heterosexual and cisgender students harass LGBTIQ people. This is depicted in the narrative below:

*My duty is to go out to schools to mentor children about HIV and AIDS and we work in groups. They will be criticising me saying 'your voice is low; are you stabane? [Sesotho derogatory term for non-heterosexuals]... When I smile at my colleague they ask: 'why are you smiling? Are you lesbian?' (p.6).*

This narrative emphasises the need to educate both students and teachers about sexual and gender diversity to change their stereotypical community norms of normalising heterosexuality over homosexuality. However, studies in South Africa indicate that sexual and gender diversity is ignored in schools, as teachers and school management teams (SMT) seem to resist addressing gender identity and sexual orientation issues (DePalma & Francis, 2014; Francis et al., 2018b). The Lesotho education system is no exception in this regard. Studies show that little is known about gender and sexual diversity in Lesotho's education, where patriarchy is reinforced by prevailing traditional and cultural practices (De Wet, 2007; Morojele, 2013).

Kabi (2020) argues that traditional beliefs are prioritised over human rights in Lesotho, and they all play a role in developing the curriculum. This is evident in the development of the Life Skills Education (LSE) curriculum. LSE was introduced in 2007 to address gender and sexual diversity, and it is taught in grades 4-12. Sexuality education gives young people a platform to ask, explore and evaluate values and attitudes towards human sexuality (Francis, 2019b). However, Khau (2012) indicates that the sexuality component of LSE is silent on sexual diversity

and orientation. Khau further articulates that this silence reflects traditional and religious beliefs, and this denies students an opportunity to shape their sexual and gender identity and inform their relationships. Francis (2012) is of the opinion that the effect of silencing homosexuality puts LGBTIQ students at risk of being isolated and marginalised.

In the advent of Inclusive Education, research has begun to consider how teachers may facilitate a more inclusive schooling environment for all students; hence, this study explores teachers' attitudes towards and experiences with LGBTIQ students.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The rejection and harassment of LGBTIQ students in schools have been highlighted at the beginning of this chapter. Schools as microcosms of society are supposed to reflect the country's constitutional values. However, schools tend to reflect the more negative aspects of society. In Lesotho, cultural and religious doctrines create and support a belief that associates homosexuality with immorality (Khau, 2012). Muzenda and Kessman (2017) add that Pentecostal churches in Lesotho openly discriminate against sexual and gender diversity people. Therefore, since culture and religion are the most powerful precepts of shaping attitudes (Amoah & Gyasi, 2016), they influence how schools and teachers address issues of sexual and gender diversity as they form part of the broader society where homosexuality is denied. Lesotho is a religious country with the majority of people being Christian; therefore, it could be hypothesised that religion shapes teachers' attitudes toward sexual and gender diversity. A study by Khau (2012) establishes that teachers in Lesotho ignore sexual and gender diversity as a result of their religious beliefs. Similarly, a study that was conducted in South Africa by Francis (2012) shows that teachers' prejudices towards sexuality education arose from their religious beliefs. Francis (2017) believes that heterosexual prejudice and discrimination are the result of attitudes held by peers, teachers, and school administrators. The question one may ask is how teachers' attitudes towards LGBTIQ students manifest in and beyond the classrooms, since homosexuality in Lesotho remains a contentious issue.

According to the findings of Matsúmunyane and Hlalele's (2020) study, classroom education in Lesotho is heterosexualised, and LGBTIQ students' freedom and rights

are fundamentally compromised. It is important to note that teachers are a group of professionals whose educational responsibilities mean that they may influence whether or not learners develop negative or positive attitudes toward sexual diversity (De Wet & Van Wyk, 2021). However, teachers' voices in Lesotho are seldom heard.

#### **1.4 RATIONALE**

The motivation to conduct this study emanates from the fact that, as far as my knowledge extends, this research area has not been explored in Lesotho. Available studies in Lesotho only examine the impact of human rights violations and discrimination towards LGBTIQ people in the workplace, health-care services, and in broader communities. For instance, Mats'ela et al. (2015) assessed the sexual and reproductive health (SRH) needs of the LGBTIQ population in Lesotho. Their findings reveal that SRH services are mostly heterosexual, and LGBTIQ people find it difficult to access these services as the language is not inclusive of all sexual orientations. Logie et al. (2019) did a study on the experiences and perceptions of social constraints and social change among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in Lesotho. They found that LGBTIQ people are constrained and marginalised in legal systems, employment and education. Their study also reveals that sexual and gender diverse people face marginalisation in their communities because of a belief that sexual and gender diversity is against the Basotho culture.

There is a considerable gap in much of the literature that assesses gender and sexual diversity in schools. Thus, Lesotho schools remain largely unexplored spaces. International research on LGBTIQ people in schools report negative experiences, including issues such as marginalisation and harassment by teachers. Matsúmunyane and Hlalele (2020) find that schools in Lesotho are unsafe spaces for LGBTIQ students because this is where compulsory heteronormativity is tolerated and even promoted. From a self-reflective position, this is similar to my observation during my teaching practice at a high school in Teya-teyaneng. There was a gay student who was bullied by both teachers and students for not conforming to heterosexual identities and expressions. All teachers expressed themselves as heterosexual and cisgender and the school had no policies protecting the rights of sexual and gender diverse students. It is

within this context that this study attempts to contribute to the body of knowledge exploring the attitudes and experiences of high school teachers with LGBTIQ students in Lesotho schools.

## **1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Urie Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological model is used in this study to explore teachers' attitudes towards and experiences with LGBTIQ students. This model offers a theoretical framework for understanding how an individual is affected by his or her ecological systems. The model is represented by four nested layers, each representing a different level of ecological proximity where individuals and their environments interact. According to Bronfenbrenner (1986), development occurs within four nested layers, namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem.

The first layer is the microsystem, which includes family, teachers, school, peers, etc. The socio-ecological model places LGBTIQ students at the centre of the microsystem, which influences and is influenced by other systems (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017). For the purpose of this study, the microsystem focuses on school as an institutional system consisting of teachers, students and curriculum. The school is identified as an immediate environment that contributes directly to the child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 2012). Interactions within the microsystem are critical for promoting and supporting the LGBTIQ student (Guy-Evans, 2020). However, research finds that homophobia and heteronormativity are tolerated and promoted in schools (Mailula, 2018; McArthur, 2015; Ngabaza et al, 2016; Okanlawon, 2020), and teachers are seen as instrumental in promoting heteronormativity in schools because they bring subjective, stereotypical, and homophobic knowledge to the classroom. For this reason, Bronfenbrenner's model is ideal for framing this study.

The second layer is known as the mesosystem. According to Bronfenbrenner (2012), the mesosystem provides an interconnection between the structures of different microsystems that have a direct effect on the child. In relation to this study, the most important microsystems of LGBTIQ student are home and school. A positive relationship among these structures contributes to the development of LGBTIQ students. However, a study conducted by Nichols (2021) in South Africa

found that teachers and parents do not work together to address homophobic violence against LGBTIQ students. The study also reveals that, while parents are willing to collaborate with schools, teachers and school authorities are not. Michaud and Stelmach (2019) argue that the attitude and assumptions held by both parents and teachers contribute to establishing and maintaining or impeding positive school-family relationships between LGBTIQ students' parents and the school.

The exosystem consists of external factors with which LGBTIQ students are not directly involved, but that influence their development. According to Khau (2012), homosexuality is considered deviant and immoral in Lesotho. Undoubtedly, the school system and the mass media in Lesotho strengthen this belief. In school, students do not learn about gender and sexual diversity to challenge this stereotypical misinterpretation because the curriculum is silent on sexual and gender diversity issues. As a result, homophobia, compulsory heterosexuality, and the social vulnerability among LGBTIQ students in Lesotho continue to be the norm (Matsúmunyane & Hlalele, 2020).

The macrosystem, the most distant layer of the socio-ecological model, includes societal, religious, and cultural values and influences (Kilanowski, 2017). Traditional societies, such as those in Africa, are often strongly patriarchal, which is not supportive of sexual and diverse people (Mkasi, 2016). Van Zyl et al. (2018) contend that societal values, particularly those instilled by religion, are important factors in the formation of attitudes and stereotypes toward specific groups. More importantly, for a culture to have an impact on a student, it must be experienced through his or her microsystems (family and school) (Tudge et al., 2009). In Lesotho, Khau's (2012), findings reveal that teachers ignore teaching about homosexuality in their classrooms because it is denied in their communities. She also finds that teachers perceive sexuality education as being against their societal norms. Teachers are part of a larger social context, and the denial and limitations on sexual freedoms mentioned here are part of a larger context in which homosexuality is regulated and denied. Furthermore, a study conducted in South Africa by Maseko and Mabalane (2021) discovered that parents are unable to participate in sexuality education due to cultural and religious beliefs.

One additional system in Bronfenbrenner's ecological model is called the chronosystem. The chronosystem is concerned with the events and transitions that occur in the child's environment throughout his or her life (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). When examining an individual in context, it is critical to remember that cultures and systems evolve over time. At the chronosystem level, attitudes towards same-sex orientations influence the development of LGBTIQ students over time. These attitudes can be found at the microsystem level, and they can directly affect the LGBTIQ student. In fact, the entire system has the potential to influence LGBTIQ students' developmental outcomes over time (Sahamkhadam, 2020).

## **1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions were formulated to address the research problem.

### **1.6.1 Primary research question**

What are the attitudes and experiences of high school teachers towards LGBTIQ students?

### **1.6.2 Secondary research questions**

1. How do teachers' attitudes towards and experiences with LGBTIQ students manifest in and beyond classrooms?
2. What are the identifying factors for teachers to perceive students as LGBTIQ?
3. How do teachers address issues of gender and sexual diversity in their classrooms?
4. What strategies do schools use to support and protect learners who identify as LGBTIQ?

## **1.7 RESEARCH AIM**

The study aims to explore the attitudes and experiences of high school teachers towards LGBTIQ students in Lesotho schools.

## **1.8 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. The primary objective of this study is to explore teachers' attitudes and experiences with LGBTIQ students as manifest in and outside of the classroom.
2. This study seeks to discover identifying factors that cause teachers' perception of LGBTIQ students.
3. The study will determine how teachers address sexual diversity issues in their classrooms.
4. Lastly, the study seeks to learn about the strategies that schools use to support and protect LGBTIQ students.

## **1.9 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

This study was guided by the interpretive paradigm. Dudovskiy (2018) points out that this paradigm interprets feelings and perceptions from the participants' point of view. Therefore, this paradigm allowed me to capture and interpret teachers' unique feelings towards and experiences with LGBTIQ students in their interaction with their social context. A qualitative approach was employed to explore teachers' attitudes towards and experiences with LGBTIQ students. According to Kumar (2019), the qualitative approach seeks to describe and narrate the feelings, perceptions and experiences of participants. Therefore, this approach was best suited for the study because it allowed me to describe the experiences of teachers and explore in detail their attitudes towards LGBTIQ students.

The study was an exploratory case study in three high schools. The exploratory case study design was found to be suitable for this study because it explored a topic that had no pre-determined outcomes (Neiwenhuis, 2016). Robert (2014) adds that a case study is used to gain an understanding of the problem in real-life settings.

Both convenience and purposive sampling methods were used to select the participants. According to Etikan et al. (2016), convenience sampling is used to select participants who are accessible and available. Three urban high schools in Teya-teyaneng were selected for their convenient geographic proximity (close to

one another and easily accessible to the researcher for both time and financial reasons). Purposive sampling allows a researcher to select participants who have meaningful knowledge of the subject being studied (Flynn & McDermott, 2016). Therefore, only teachers with at least five years' teaching experience in the subject of LSE were included in this study for their familiarity with the topic. Two teachers per school were purposefully selected and the principals assisted me in identifying them. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain information from the selected teachers. Due to the coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19), face-to-face interactions were not permitted; therefore, interviews were conducted through WhatsApp voice recording. Interviews lasted 20 to 30 minutes, and the voice messages were saved with participants' consent. Semi-structured interviews enabled me to gain insight into teachers' attitudes because they included open-ended questions that encouraged probing (Maree, 2017; Widavsky & Hammer, 2018). Smith (2015) adds that semi-structured interviews help the respondents to introduce issues the researcher may not have considered, thus allowing flexibility of coverage and the production of rich data.

I adopted Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of thematic analysis to analyse data; I firstly collected and organised data, then assigned codes to the data, searched for repeated patterns or themes in the codes, reviewed and named themes. The benefit of using thematic analysis is that it is very flexible; however, its flexibility can also be regarded as a limitation, since it allows a wide range of analytic options (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). However, I avoided a wide analysis by always reflecting on my research questions. A detailed methodology is provided in Chapter 3.

### **1.10 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS**

For the purpose of this study, the term LGBTIQ is used to refer to any sexuality other than heterosexual, as well as gender identities that are trans-gender or non-conforming. Homosexuality is also used to refer to people who are primarily attracted to people of the same sex. I refrained from using the word 'homosexual' because of its potentially negative connotations, with the exception of this term being used by the references cited in this work.

The following terms are frequently used throughout the study and are defined according to scholarly sources and how they are used in this study. When a scholar's definition of a term is used, a citation is provided.

**LGBTIQ** is an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer people.

**Lesbian** refers to a female who is emotionally, romantically and or sexually attracted to other females (WHO, 2016).

**Gay** refers to a male who is emotionally, romantically and or sexually attracted to other males (WHO, 2016).

**Bisexual** is defined by The WHO (2016) as a person of any gender who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to males and females, as well as people with different sexual and gender identities.

**Transgender/Trans** is defined by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2012) as a person who changed sex organs to align with a choice of gender. According to the WHO (2016), some transgender people choose to have surgery or hormone therapy to align their bodies with their gender identity. Long et al. (2003) add that transgender refers to people whose inner gender identity differs from their physical characteristics at birth. This means that female-to-male (FTM) transgender people were born with female bodies but primarily male gender identities, whereas male-to-female (MTF) transgender people were born with male bodies but primarily female gender identities (Long et al., 2003).

**Intersex people** are defined by the WHO (2016) as those born with two sex organs due to a chromosome malfunction. It further indicates that intersex people do not fit the definitions of male or female.

**Queer** is an umbrella term used to refer to LGBTIQ persons (Long et al., 2003). It can also be used to refer to anyone who rejects labels and classifications.

**Gender** is defined as what a person, society, or legal system considers being female or male (Cameron & Kulick, 2003). Gender is said to be social in the sense that society determines what is appropriate masculine and feminine behaviour for those with male and female bodies (WHO, 2022). Thus, gender is not 'natural', but rather a social construct.

**Gender identity** is an individual's "deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth" (WHO, 2016, p.1). For example, when a person's gender identity matches their sex, they are referred to as cisgender, whereas when a person's gender identity does not match their sex, they are referred to as queer and transgender (WHO, 2016).

**Sexual orientation** is defined as a person's sexual identity in relation to their physical and romantic attraction towards people of the opposite sex or people of the same sex (WHO, 2016).

**Sexuality** denotes a stable erotic preference for people of the same sex (homosexual) or other sex (heterosexual), as well as the social identities that are based on having such a preference, such as lesbian and gay (Cameron & Kulick, 2003). The WHO (2016) defines sexuality as a fundamental aspect of human existence that includes sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction.

**Sexual diversity** refers to differences in people's ability to feel intense emotional and sexual attraction to people of the same gender, the opposite gender or more than one gender (UNESCO, 2016).

**Heteronormativity** is the concept that heterosexuality is the preferred or normal sexual orientation (Harris & White, 2018). In other words, heteronormativity is defined as an underlying value system that assumes that being heterosexual or cisgender is the only normal way to exist (Norman et al., 2006).

**Heterosexism** is a term used "to describe all forms of discrimination against people who encompass lesbian, gay, or bisexual sexual orientations" (WHO, 2016, p.4).

**Homosexuality** is a term used to refer to people who are primarily attracted to people of the same sex. According to Msibi (2011), the term homosexuality was introduced in the West to control societal and social relations by labelling those who engaged in same-sex relationships as deviant.

**Heterosexuality** is a term used to refer to people who are romantically or sexually attracted to people of the opposite sex and gender (Manning, 2009). For example, men who are attracted to women and women who are attracted to men are heterosexual.

**Cisgender** is a person whose gender identity and expression corresponds to the gender associated with their biological sex. For example, a female identifying as female (WHO, 2016).

## **1.11 ORGANISATION OF CHAPTERS**

This thesis is divided into five chapters;

### **Chapter 1**

This introductory chapter provides the background of the study. It also entails the problem statement, rationale, research questions, aim and objectives. An overview of the research design and methodology is briefly discussed, as well as the layout of chapters. I provided a brief discussion of the framework and the interconnectedness of ecologies in this chapter. A thorough discussion is provided in Chapter 3.

### **Chapter 2**

This chapter reviews both local and international literature under the following themes; (1) a historical overview of non-normative gender identities and sexual orientations, (2) homosexuality in Lesotho (3), homosexuality from the African perspective, (4) patriarchal and compulsive heteronormativity and heterosexism in Lesotho, (5) teachers' attitudes towards LGBTIQ students, (6) The lives of the LGBTIQ youth in schools, (7) gender and sexual diversity in schools, (8) supporting LGBTIQ students in school, and lastly, (9) the legal framework. The second part of this chapter discusses Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological theory, which is the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

### **Chapter 3**

This chapter discusses the methodology of the study. It explains the research approach, design, sampling and data collection procedures of the study. The chapter also outlines trustworthiness and the ethical issues that the study took into account.

### **Chapter 4**

This chapter presents the data analysis, findings and discussions.

### **Chapter 5**

This chapter provides the summary; conclusions and recommendations drawn from the findings presented in Chapter 4 and discusses the limitations of the study.

## **1.12 CONCLUSION**

This chapter introduces the background of the study. The chapter also presents the rationale for the study as well as the statement of the problem, the objectives and research questions guiding the study. The value of this study is outlined. The overview of research design and methodology is also presented. The next chapter summarises the literature focusing on teachers' attitudes towards and experiences with LGBTIQ students and the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

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#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study sought to explore the attitudes and experiences of high school teachers with LGBTIQ students in Lesotho schools. To achieve this aim, I reviewed current and past literature that dealt with the same problem, both locally and internationally. I highlighted the gaps that exist in the literature on LGBTIQ, with reference to heteronormative and heterosexist attitudes in schools as well as teachers' attitudes towards and experiences with LGBTIQ students. As Kumar (2019) points out, a review of previous literature helps a researcher to be familiar with what other researchers have done on the specific topic and to be able to determine the gaps in the literature.

Due to the scarcity of literature on the attitudes and experiences of teachers with LGBTIQ students in Lesotho, the study draws on international studies, while specifically focusing on South African literature. The literature review is organised into the following themes: (1) a historical overview of non-normative gender identities and sexual orientations, (2) homosexuality in Lesotho, (3) homosexuality from the African perspective, (4) patriarchal and compulsive heteronormativity and heterosexism in Lesotho, (5) teachers' attitudes towards LGBTIQ students, (6) the lives of the LGBTIQ youth in schools, (7) gender and sexual diversity in schools, (8) supporting LGBTIQ students in schools, and lastly, (9) the legal framework.

The second part of this chapter provides the theoretical framework underpinning the study. The socio-ecological theory was considered to be the most appropriate theoretical lens for this study because it explains the interactions and relations between various systems that shape teachers' attitudes.

## **2.2 A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF NON-NORMATIVE GENDER IDENTITIES AND SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS**

According to the literature, homosexuality has existed for a long time, and every ancient civilization has records of same-sex relationships (Zive, 2018). According to Al-Juboury (2009, p.4), "...the lives of many historical figures including Socrates, Alexander the Great, Lord Byron, Edward II, Hadrian, Julius Caesar, Michelangelo, Donatello and Christopher Marlowe included or were centered upon love and sexual relationships with people of their own sex." This indicates that homosexuality was accepted in various historical periods and societies, including Africa.

Although it is not possible to specify precisely the occurrence of the first case of homosexuality, it is documented that homosexuality was initially labelled as a mental illness in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), but it was removed from the DSM in December 1973 after the APA's Board of Trustees voted for its removal (Silverstein, 2008).

## **2.3 HOMOSEXUALITY: THE LESOTHO CONTEXT**

According to the anthropological and literary evidence, homosexuality has existed in Africa for a long time, but it was restrained by the African culture. In the same way, same-sex relationships have existed in Lesotho for decades, but were highly discreet and subjugated by social norms (Epprecht, 2002; Kendall, 1999). Although Lesotho is culturally homogenous, it is undeniable that homosexuality existed in the past, but it was not as prevalent as it is today. Anthropologists Stephen Murray and Will Roscoe report that homosexuality was present in native African societies in different forms (Tamale, 2011).

For instance, when Kendall arrived in Lesotho in the 1990s, she was expecting to find lesbian women. Instead, she encountered Basotho women who engaged in erotic woman-to-woman relationships known as '*motsoalle*' which are not the same as lesbianism or homosexuality as it is known in North America or Western Europe (Tamale, 2011). According to Murray and Roscoe (1998), '*motsoalle*' relationships were once common in Lesotho, but they were not seen as a viable alternative to heterosexual relationships. They were built solely on love, not sex, because sex in

Lesotho is between a female and a male (Kendall, 1999). Therefore, whatever women did in their relationships was not considered sex. Apart from '*motsoalle*' relationships, women also engaged in '*mummy-baby*' relationships when their husbands were away (Logie et al., 2019; Poteat et al., 2016). Khau (2016, p.98) adds that "the mummy and baby would kiss and cuddle, or sometimes fondle each other in a manner leading to arousal or even orgasm." Kendall (1999) hypothesises that, as Western ideas spread, the idea that women could have sexual relations with one another began to erase the '*motsoalle*' and '*mummy-baby*' relationships.

As mentioned earlier, same-sex relationships existed in Lesotho among both women and men. According to one study, Basotho men who migrated from Lesotho to work in South African mines engaged in same-sex sexual relationships at the mines, known as 'mine marriages' or *inkotshane* (*bokonchana* in Sesotho) (Gay, 1986). The above statement implies that Basotho men were not free to 'come out' in their own country for fear of being stigmatised or discriminated against; yet, they were easily identified in South African mines. According to one study conducted in Lesotho, homosexuality is only a well-known phenomenon in the country's male prisons (Khobotlo et al., 2009).

## **2.4 HOMOSEXUALITY: AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE**

In most African countries, non-normative sexual and gender identities are still perceived as 'un-African' and 'a modern-day phenomenon'. According to Kuloba (2016), the view that homosexuality has existed in African society before the colonial era is difficult to accept in the African hybridity. According to a study conducted in Uganda by Nkabahona et al. (2013), most Ugandans, like those in African countries, still perceive homosexuality as unnatural. This is because homosexuality is regarded as an imported cultural norm in Uganda. Similarly, Mathopeng (2014) asserts that same-sex relationships are viewed as evil and foreign in Lesotho, and definitely un-African; 'a common misconception in many African countries.' According to Hartline (2013), leaders across Africa have used homophobia as a buffer for their populist approach to preserving 'traditional' African culture. Amoah and Gyasi (2016), for example, observe that some African leaders have openly made homophobic remarks. The main argument is that homosexuality

is “un-African, diseased, western, and un-Christian” (Hartline, 2013, p.27). Most notably, the former Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe is known for saying homosexuals are “worse than pigs and dogs” and referring to homosexuality as “a scourge planted by the white man on a pure continent” (Mwaura, 2006). According to former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, homosexuality is “unnatural and ungodly” (Msibi, 2011). Similarly, in South Africa, Jacob Zuma, when still the African National Congress deputy president, described homosexuality as “un-African” (Francis & Msibi, 2011). According to The Humanitarian (2006), Jacob Zuma also stated that same-sex marriage is a disgrace to the country and to God. Adding to the growing debate over nationalism and African identity, the former president of Gambia, Yahya Jammeh declared, “we will fight these vermin called homosexuals...the same way we are fighting malaria-causing mosquitos not aggressively” (Gattini et al., 2020, p.142). Hartline (2013, p.28) argues that these statements by African leaders foster “a culture of homophobia by repositioning it within the framework of nationalist and racial discourse around what distinguishes an African from a non-African.” The word ‘un-Christian’ is not African but foreign because Christianity itself was brought to Southern Africa by missionaries and colonizers, and the word would have never been used in Southern Africa was it not for the spread of Christianity in this manner. In addition, what is called sexual activity by us is not called sexual activity in some cultures. Thus, two women may have sex, but on their culture is not viewed as sex because sex is only what happens between a heterosexual culture, everything else is not sex or sexual.

## **2.5 PATRIARCHAL AND COMPULSIVE HETERONORMATIVITY AND HETEROSEXISM**

According to Kuloba (2016, p.7), “patriarchy among other things regulates gender roles and defines gender boundaries in a heteronormative bipolar perspective.” Children in this context are socialised and groomed along rigid gender boundaries to produce “right citizens” who exhibit “appropriate behaviours” (Kuloba, 2016). In Lesotho, non-heterosexuality is regarded as a clear violation of traditional gender roles and binaries (Stahlman et al., 2015). This emanates from the argument put forth by Khau (2016) that Basotho communities believe that homosexuality does not exist. According to Kabi (2020, p.5), “daughters are groomed for marriage; boys are

trained to be men from young age to learn how to provide, to be the head of the household.” Morojele (2013, p.39) adds that boys are expected to be tough and show both emotional and physical endurance; as they say in Sesotho: “*monna ke nku ha a lle*”, which translates as “*a man is a sheep, he does not cry*”. In other words, “traditionally, born males assume the role of men through the iteration of masculine behaviour norms; aggressive and dominant; while born females assume the role of women through the iteration of feminine behaviour norms; sensitive and passive” (Kuloba, 2016, p.11).

It is also worth noting that the patriarchal concept of family in Lesotho is a heterosexual marriage, an institution in which two parents of different genders serve as father and mother, and bear children (Currier & Migraine-George, 2017). In essence, sexual activities are believed to be between two people of the opposite sex, a male and a female. This was confirmed in a radio interview with Mr. Tlohelang Aumane, former Minister of Development and Planning, who was asked if the government of Lesotho recognises same-sex marriages between dual citizens of Lesotho who are married in another legal jurisdiction (Kabi, 2020). He responded, “Lesotho mona Lenyalo le Lumelletsoeng Ka Molao le tla lula e le pakeng tsa Monna le Mosali,” which translates to “marriage will remain between a man and a woman by law in Lesotho” Kabi (2020, p.4). This indicates that the customary and common law of Lesotho only recognises marriage in the heterosexual domain (Muzenda & Kessman, 2017, p.9), and “with this binary perception, the doors are too narrow to accommodate any other form of sexual activity as natural and dignified” (Matsúmunyane & Hlalele, 2020, p.2). This makes it clear that patriarchal ideologies idealise homophobia as true nationalism and protection of cultural values. This is consistent with previous research findings that many African cultures approve of patriarchal dominant discourses that promote heteronormativity (Khau, 2012; Matsúmunyane & Hlalele, 2020; Sivertsen, 2016). Morojele (2013) claims that these patriarchal gender ideologies are endorsed in the school system, where boys are under extreme pressure to proclaim and display their heterosexuality or risk being humiliated for failing to meet this societal expectation.

## 2.6 TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD LGBTIQ STUDENTS

Teachers' attitudes toward LGBTIQ people are important because they influence their behaviours and interactions with LGBTIQ students, which contribute to a supportive and inclusive space or a hostile school climate (Hall & Rodgers, 2019). In short, teachers' attitudes play a significant role in fostering a positive school climate. Although teachers are powerful agents in promoting respect for human rights and ensuring that all students are treated equally, like everyone, they may have negative or positive attitudes towards LGBTIQ people. According to Francis (2012) and Potgieter and Reygan (2012), teachers leave universities with traditional, conservative and discriminatory notions and attitudes that are heavily influenced by religion, culture and societal norms, and gender stereotypes. These ideas and attitudes that teachers carry with them frequently lead to them inciting homophobic behaviour and attitudes in schools (Johnson, 2014).

According to Francis and Msibi (2011), the negative attitudes toward LGBTIQ people are often the result of society's normalisation of heterosexuality, which often portrays non-normative sexualities and non-conforming gender identities as 'unnatural and un-African'. This is supported by Francis's (2018a) findings, which show that teachers promoted heterosexuality as normal while portraying counter-normative sexualities as abnormal and deviant. Such attitudes and perceptions give heterosexuality power and privilege, leaving LGBTIQ students powerless and vulnerable to discrimination (Francis & Msibi, 2011). Msibi's (2012) research on township schools reveals teachers' prejudice. One participant in his study narrated:

*I was at school, and Mrs. Nhleko called me to the staffroom. She started shouting at me and was telling me to stop acting like a boy. She said I need to stop this lesbian thing because I will start making other learners like me... (Msibi, 2012, p.524).*

Bhana (2012) also discovered that LGBTIQ students were not allowed to come out in school as coming out was considered to be a private matter. She went on to say that teachers thought homosexuality was inappropriate. To illustrate this point, one participant in her study is quoted;

*[T]hey need to be taught how to behave...Why [they can't] behave normally on the outside...They exaggerate even when they talk, they shout.... They do things that will make you notice them... (p.312).*

Research also shows that negative attitudes toward homosexuality are influenced by religious beliefs (Francis, 2012; Hall & Rodgers, 2019). Hall and Rodgers (2019) examined the prevalence of teachers' positive and negative attitudes towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer (LGBQ) students in the United States of America (USA) and discovered that the majority of teachers have negative attitudes towards such students. Their findings also revealed that teachers who held fundamentalist religious beliefs had more negative attitudes towards homosexuality. Perez-Testor et al. (2010) explored high school teachers' attitudes and prejudices toward homosexuality in Barcelona, and they found that teachers with religious beliefs scored the highest on both subtle and overt prejudice.

Similarly, studies in South Africa found that teachers' prejudices against homosexuality arose from their religious beliefs (Bhana, 2012; Francis, 2012; Msibi, 2012). This could be true because, in many African countries, religion is used as a yardstick to disregard the rights and freedoms of people who engage in non-normative sexual relationships (Amoah & Gyasi, 2016). Van Zyl, Nel and Govender (2018), argue that societal values, particularly those influenced by religion, play a significant role in the development of attitudes towards and stereotypes of homosexuality. According to Francis (2017), teachers who fail to act on homophobic bullying show complicity and give the impression that homophobia is acceptable at school.

A study conducted in South Africa to examine how teachers position themselves on educating students on sexuality and homosexuality in their classrooms discovered that teachers had prejudices against diverse sexual identities, which frequently stemmed from their religious beliefs (Francis, 2012). Furthermore, the study's findings revealed that teachers believed that no school authorities would back them in teaching students about homosexuality due to the influence of the church. Likewise, in Lesotho, religious convictions are against the inclusion of sexuality education (Khau, 2016; Matsúmunyane & Hlalele, 2020), and the influence of the moral teachings of the church is visible in the absence of teachings on homosexuality in the LSE syllabus (Khau, 2016).

According to Hebl (2000), teachers' negative attitudes toward homosexuality are displayed by their comments about homosexuality as well as how they handle the harassment of LGBTIQ students. Numerous sources add that teachers reinforce heterosexism through their instruction, lack of support for LGBTIQ students, failure to deal with homophobic or bullying incidents, and verbal or emotional abuse of LGBTIQ students (Becker et al., 2014; Bhana, 2012; Brikkels, 2015; Ngabaza & Shefer, 2019; Johnson, 2014; Keet et al., 2017).

A study conducted among high school students in the USA shows that 57% of LGBTIQ students did not report harassment to their teachers because they believed the matter would not be addressed as a result of homophobia among the majority of the teachers (Hall & Rodgers, 2018). A survey conducted by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) in the USA found that the main reason why 56.6% of LGBTIQ students who experienced harassment at school chose not to report the incident to staff was that they had doubts about whether appropriate action would be taken or that reporting the incident could make things worse. Of the students who did report harassment incidents, 60.5% claimed that teachers either took no action or told the student to disregard it (Kosciw et al., 2020). Similarly, Matsúmunyane and Hlalele (2020) discovered that LGBTIQ students did not report harassment incidents to their teachers because they feared to be mocked even more. Based on these findings, it is possible to conclude that teachers are the main perpetrators of homophobia toward LGBTIQ students. Nichols (2021) discovered that teachers knew about the homophobic bullying and violence towards LGBTIQ students but did not intervene. Similarly, in Msibi's (2012) study, a gay student was bullied by a teacher in front of other teachers, who simply laughed and did nothing to protect the student.

## **2.7 THE LIVES OF THE LGBTIQ YOUTH IN SCHOOL**

Schools have a responsibility to provide all students, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation, with safe and supportive learning environments. However, many LGBTIQ students feel unsafe and unsupported in their schools. Research conducted on the experiences of sexual and gender minority youth indicate that schools are often hostile environments for LGBTIQ students (Brown et al., 2019;

Hall & Rodgers, 2019; Russel & Fish, 2016). In fact, schools are heteronormative spaces where a compulsory heteronormative culture is perpetuated (Francis, 2018a). Research in Lesotho shows that schools are exclusively gender stereotypical and specifically heteronormative (Khau, 2016; Matsúmunyane & Hlalele, 2020), and LGBTIQ students are more likely to be socially vulnerable. Matsúmunyane and Hlalele (2020), in a qualitative study conducted among high school students in Lesotho, found that LGBTIQ students are overlooked by the school laws and regulations, and this population minority is considered non-existent. For instance, a lesbian student gave a detailed narration;

*You are told girls should wear dresses in school, and that's according to school regulations, so if you don't comply you have to go and find another school where you will do as you please (p.5).*

The above narrative echoes the findings of the study conducted by Francis (2017), where a lesbian learner was expelled from school for wearing trousers. This shows that schools enforce gender appropriateness through dress code. In Msibi's study (2012), two lesbian girls were told to stop wearing pants but wear skirts instead as pants make them look like boys. According to Msibi, the fact that a teacher claimed that pants make them look like boys demonstrates that being lesbian is interpreted as wanting to be like a boy. However being a lesbian does not imply that one, wants to, or should act masculine and also being gay does not imply that one wants to, or should express their feminine identity. Therefore, it can be argued that schools and teachers exert heteronormativity by regulating aspects of students' lives through the dress code.

There is vast research evidence indicating that LGBTIQ students are at greater risk of homophobic bullying, harassment and victimisation perpetuated by teachers, peers and school authorities (Bhana, 2014; Brown, 2018; Francis, 2017; McArthur, 2015, Msibi, 2012; Mayeza & Vincent, 2019). However, little research has been done in the Lesotho context. Brown and Diale (2017) add that verbal harassment and homophobic attitudes are pervasive in the school context.

A survey in Australia found that two thirds of LGBTIQ students experienced verbal abuse and 90% were physically abused at school (Smith et al., 2014). The results from the survey study also indicate that students who were physically abused

attempted suicide. This statement is backed by studies suggesting that LGBTIQ students are more likely to suffer from depression and have suicidal ideation (Craig et al., 2014; Jones, 2019; Russell & Fish, 2016) associated with being bullied as a result of their sexual orientation. This shows that stressful school environments can have a negative effect on the psychological well-being of students. A study conducted in Lesotho by Matsúmunyane and Hlalele (2020) found that depression, stress and loneliness were among the factors that inhibited LGBTIQ students' performance.

Moreover, hostile school environments not only affect students' psychological functioning but also can contribute to educational problems among students, more especially LGBTIQ students. More than half (59.1%) of LGBTIQ students in the USA reported feeling less safe and uncomfortable at school as a result of their sexual orientation (Kosciw et al., 2020). Kosciw et al. also found that LGBTIQ students who experience victimisation and discrimination were likely to have missed school in the previous month because they felt unsafe. Other studies demonstrate that LGBTIQ students are more likely than their heterosexual and cisgender peers to have low academic achievement, lack of educational inspirations (Kosciw, 2016) and have lower self-esteem (Seelman et al., 2017). This is because these students feel less supported in school. Smith et al. (2014) also found that LGBTIQ students who did not feel supported by their teachers were more likely to miss school than those who were supported.

## **2.8 SEXUAL AND GENDER DIVERSITY IN SCHOOLS**

UNESCO (2018) encourages nations to promote comprehensive and affirmative sex and gender education in order to foster positive attitudes toward sexual health among students. Francis (2019a) found that teaching about gender and sexuality gave LGBTIQ students a sense of belonging and also allowed teachers to fight homophobia in their classrooms. Despite these findings, South African studies show that schools continue to promote heteronormativity through formal and informal curricula (Ngabaza et al., 2016; Shefer & Macleod, 2015). Lesotho's LSE curriculum is still agnostic about gender and sexual diversity (Matsúmunyane & Hlalele, 2020). This is a cause for concern as this silence promotes the exclusion of LGBTIQ

students from the curriculum purely on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

As previously stated, negative attitudes influence what teachers teach in their classrooms. This is confirmed by a qualitative case study conducted by Khau (2012) on the factors influencing sexuality education in schools. According to the study, some teachers avoided teaching about sexual diversity issues, despite their importance, because they were afraid of being labelled as corrupting children. This could be due to the fact that sexuality is considered a taboo topic in Lesotho. It was also discovered that teachers perceive sexuality education to be contrary to their societal norms. One teacher raised her concern about addressing sexual diversity issues in class:

*We are still Basotho, and thus respect our tradition madam. I think talking about such sexualities will open the eyes for those who are still innocent about the issue, and you know at this stage these kids just like to explore and experiment everything they hear; I really don't want to shoulder the blame of spreading information about such immoral sexual practices (Matsúmunyane & Hlalele, 2020, p.5).*

Khau (2016) found that, when sexual issues are discussed, they are only in relation to heterosexuality and not any other sexual identities, compromising the subject's content. This happens because homosexuality, supposedly, does not exist in Lesotho (Epprecht, 2001). Similarly, Francis (2012) discovered that, in South Africa, teachers either avoided teaching about gender and sexuality diversity or framed these topics in terms of "compulsive heterosexuality." Therefore, this exclusion "undermines the humanity of queer learners, relegating their identities to not-fully-human which opens up opportunities for their abuse, marginalization and denigration" (Francis & Kuhl, 2020, p.2). Denying the existence of sexual diversity in schools meant that teachers saw heterosexuality as the only option, therefore neglecting and marginalising LGBTIQ students.

Teachers are major role players in creating safe spaces for vulnerable students. However, many teachers lack the confidence and knowledge to support LGBTIQ students or discuss sexual diversity issues in the classroom (Ruben, 2018). Khau (2012, p.64) notes that, "with the current scarcity of information reaching rural villages, rural communities in Lesotho do not have much knowledge regarding any other sexuality except heterosexuality, thus any mention of homosexuality positions

teachers as deviant and creates difficulties for them to address it in the classroom.” Therefore, it could be argued that, apart from a rigid curriculum and negative attitudes, heteronormativity in schools is exacerbated by teachers who lack knowledge of the concept.

Teachers have a responsibility to empower students and develop them into adults who can make informed, responsible decisions about sexual relationships, and they can only achieve this by letting go of their own perceptions and equipping themselves with skills that will allow them to teach a diverse group of students (Beyers, 2011).

## **2.9 SUPPORTING LGBTIQ STUDENTS IN SCHOOL**

Research shows that LGBTIQ students are more likely than their heterosexual peers to experience homophobic abuse, victimisation and bullying at school (Brown & Buthelezi, 2020; Francis, 2017; Rothmann & Simmonds, 2015). Therefore, schools should prioritise a safe and inclusive learning and teaching environment that meets the needs of all students. Globally, various scholars, such as Francis (2016) and Loutzenhelsler (2015), emphasise the need for schools to implement strategies to secure a safe school climate.

### **2.9.1 Safe and supportive school environment**

According to UNDP (2015), in order for students to thrive in school, they must feel supported socially, emotionally and physically. A safe school environment is one in which students are safe from harm and teachers support all students, regardless of gender and sexual orientation (Fischer, 2011; Shannon-Baker, 2020; Toomey et al., 2012). Positive school climates and safe spaces, in particular, are important in advancing sexual equality (De Wet & van Wyk, 2021), and creating safe spaces for LGBTIQ students entails preventing harassment and bullying as well as taking decisive action if homophobic bullying and harassment occurs. A supportive school environment and a decrease in homophobic bullying may help to moderate the relationship between sexual orientation and negative outcomes. It has been established that students who feel supported by their teachers are less likely to

suffer from low self-esteem or depression (Conner et al., 2014). Therefore, teachers who are supportive of LGBTIQ students can improve both students' academic experiences and their psychological well-being (Kosciw et al., 2013). This constitutes conclusive evidence that teacher support improves students' mental health. In De Wet and Van Wyk's (2021) study, the positive experiences of LGBTIQ students highlighted the importance of LGBTIQ students feeling like they belong and are accepted as members of the school community, and that they can connect with others who are going through similar problems.

### **2.9.2 LGBTIQ-inclusive curriculum**

Studies demonstrate that a LGBTIQ-inclusive curriculum is associated with higher reports of safety at the individual and school levels (Gegenfurtner & Gebhardt, 2017; Snapp et al., 2015). Francis and Kuhl (2020) add that exposing young people to an inclusive LGBTIQ curriculum in schools can contribute to challenging heterosexism, which is a good thing. However, the LSE curriculum has been silent on LGBTIQ issues. This is consistent with South African studies, which suggest that the school curriculum operates within the conditions of compulsory heterosexuality (Francis, 2018a; Nichols & Brown, 2021). According to Matsúmunyane and Hlalele (2020), the exclusive LSE curriculum in Lesotho has been identified as the primary source of discrimination against the minority population. Therefore, this study concurs with the suggestions by Clark (2010) and Francis and Msibi (2011), that LGBTIQ issues should be incorporated in the curricula during educator training.

### **2.9.3 School policies**

According to UNDP (2015), there should be clear policies in the school curriculum that are LGBTIQ inclusive because positive human interaction and development may bring about change in their education. Ngcobo (2021) states that in order to create an inclusive school where everyone feels safe and protected, the school's ethos and policies must include LGBTIQ students. According to the research, non-heteronormative and anti-heteronormative school policies and practices are critical for promoting sexual equality (Fischer, 2011; Shannon-Baker, 2020; Toomey et al.,

2012). However, Matsúmunyane and Hlalele (2020) point out that there is a lack of LGBTIQ-inclusive policies in Lesotho schools. Ryan and Rivers (2003) argue that, due to a lack of school policies that ensure adequate protection for LGBTIQ students, schools have become primary targets for the perpetuation of homophobic bullying. Schools have also become venues for the performance and modelling of normative gender and sexuality (Bhana et al., 2019; Shefer & Macleod, 2015). Fields and Wotipka (2020) studied the relationship between anti-discrimination policies and well-being of LGBTIQ students, revealing that the greater the number of policies, the less harassed students feel and the higher grades they receive, thus highlighting the importance of developing more policies that protect LGBTIQ students. However, policies that address homophobic bullying in schools remain elusive. Chesir-Teran and Hughes (2009) discovered that inclusive programmes are more closely linked to the prevalence and tolerance of harassment in schools than the mere presence of anti-harassment policies. This finding implies that policies should not only be developed, but also supported and implemented through programmes (Mostert et al., 2015).

#### **2.9.4 School-based programmes**

According to Bhana (2012), school-based programmes can help to create a culture of acceptance in schools, where LGBTIQ students can thrive and reach their full educational potential. However, according to Mostert et al (2015), despite anti-bullying programmes in the United States, classrooms are not safe or affirming environments for LGBTIQ students. This could be attributed to teachers' ignorance, biases and attitudes toward same-sex sexualities. De Wet and Van Wyk (2021) suggest that teacher training should include instruction on how to correctly interpret and implement laws and programs that protect LGBTIQ students in order to avoid unfair discrimination. Msibi (2012) argues that the Department of Education should implement intervention programmes with teachers that focus on how heterosexual dominance works and enable students and teachers to recognise the harmful ways in which gay and lesbian students experience school

Bhana (2012) added that teachers should work on sexuality issues so that students are empowered and prepared to deal with issues such as gay and lesbian rights

and homosexual violence. According to Moe et al. (2011), schools should implement service delivery programmes that enable teachers to support identity development and acceptance of all students.

## **2.10 LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

The international and regional community has shown a commitment to advocating for human rights as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on Human Rights (1948). As such, there are several conventions, treaties and resolutions that establish norms to protect the rights of people, including the LGBTIQ community. Lesotho, as a member of the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU) within the African region and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), is a signatory to treaties, conventions and resolutions established by these bodies. In this section, I will discuss the following human rights treaties: The UN Convention on the Rights of a Child (1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) with regard to the promotion of the human rights of children.

### **2.10.1 The UN Convention on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC) (1989)**

Article 2 of United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (1989) declares that:

1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

It further stipulates in article 28, section 2 that:

3. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity

and in conformity with the present Convention (United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child, 1989).

### **2.10.2 The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990)**

The African Charter makes the same stipulations as the Convention on the Rights of a Child (1989). Article 3 of the Charter stipulates that:

1. Every child shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognised and guaranteed in this Charter irrespective of the child's...ethnic group, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national and social origin, fortune, birth or other status.

The above international and regional treaties advocate for the human rights of all children, including those identifying as LGBTIQ. According to Kabi (2020, p.1), “Lesotho has shown commitment and willingness to establish vibrant Human Rights, freedoms and the rule of law.” Its commitment is shown by the ratification of the above human rights treaties and legalisation of same-sex relationships between men under the Penal Code Act of 2012. However, Bakare (2016) argues that, despite the ratification of these treaties, Lesotho seems to be hesitant in domesticating them as laws. He further adds that the government of Lesotho continues to enact laws that contradict its obligations under the human rights treaties. For instance, the Criminal Procedure Act of 2003 criminalises same-sex relationships between men, while the Sexual Offences Act of 2003 permits consensual sex between men. According to Mathopeng (2014, p.4), “this contradiction of the laws of Lesotho brings a confusion in implementation of national laws and policies.”

This means that, thus far, people in Lesotho, including the LGBTIQ community, are not fully protected by these international legal frameworks because they cannot enforce the rights set forth in the treaties in the courts of Lesotho (Bakare, 2016; Mathopeng, 2014). “The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), to which Lesotho is a signatory, speaks to the central importance of unearthing the discrimination and disparities faced by all young people in the realisation of their rights” (Francis et al., 2018b, p.22). However, evidence points out

that LGBTIQ students in Lesotho continue to face discrimination in school (Matsúmunyane & Hlalele, 2020).

### **2.10.3 The Constitution of Lesotho (1993)**

Lesotho is a democratic country and it is governed by the Constitution as the supreme law that makes provision for the protection of the citizens' rights. As such, because of the supremacy of the Constitution, all laws and policies must align their doctrines to it (Kingdom of Lesotho, 1993: Chapter 1 s.2).

Although the Constitution of Lesotho (1993) does not explicitly cite LGBTIQs in its chapters, it makes provision in the Bill of Rights for a number of human rights. Therefore, since people have equal human rights set forth by the Constitution, all stipulations that protect people's human rights also apply to the LGBTIQ community. In this regard, the Constitution (Kingdom of Lesotho, 1993: Chapter 2 s8, 18 &19) makes provisions for the right to respect of human dignity. It states in Section 8 that:

1. No person shall be subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading punishment or other treatment.
2. Nothing contained in or done under the authority of any law shall be held to be inconsistent with or in contravention of this section to the extent that the law in question authorises the infliction of any description of punishment that was unlawful in Lesotho before the operation of the Constitution.

This stipulation by the Constitution guarantees all people, including students identifying as LGBTIQ, protection from any inhuman treatment or degrading punishment inflicted by a person or the authority of the law.

Section 18 (2) of the Constitution of Lesotho (1993) makes provision to the right to equality and free from discrimination of any kind. It clearly stipulates that:

1. [N]o law shall make any provision that is discriminatory either of itself or in its effect.
2. No person shall be discriminated against on the grounds of, amongst others, sex and race by virtue of written law or in the performance of the functions of any public authority.

As such, this implies that the Constitution prohibits any form of discrimination against anyone, which would be an infringement of people's human rights. Therefore, it can be derived that Section 18 of the Constitution guarantees LGBTIQ students the right to freedom from discrimination because they have the same equal rights as the non-LGBTIQ community. However, UNDP (2015, p.3) argues that the Constitution of Lesotho does not provide the protection that explicitly prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. She points out that the Constitution does not make any reference to sexual orientation and gender identity as grounds for non-discrimination. Consequently, in the absence of these specific provisions, LGBTIQ people continue to be unfairly discriminated against (Bakare, 2016).

#### **2.10.4 Education Act 2010**

Several policy documents show that MoET has made attempts to regulate and create an inclusive learning environment in schools. The Education Act of 2010 states that MoET provides education support to LGBTIQ students in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Education for all Declaration, which Lesotho ratified (MoET, 2010). The Education Act of 2010 states in Section 3(c) that MoET seeks to "make provision for education for all in accordance with the provisions of section 28 of the Constitution". In conjunction with Section 18(2) of the Constitution, the Education Act of 2010 prohibits any form of discrimination against learners. Although it does not explicitly prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual and gender identity, "the encompassing prohibition of discrimination in general should consider oppressive acts against identities with diverse sexual orientations and gender expressions" (Nichols, 2019, p.24).

According to Section 2(c),

[t]he Minister, Principal Secretary, Teaching Service Commission, proprietors of schools, teachers and school boards shall promote the education of the people of Lesotho and in particular ensure that: a learner is free from any form of discrimination in accessing education and is availed all educational opportunities provided (MoET, 2010, p.1).

As such, the Lesotho Education Act 2010 protects the rights of students, including those identifying as LGBTIQ. Therefore, no form of discrimination on any grounds is

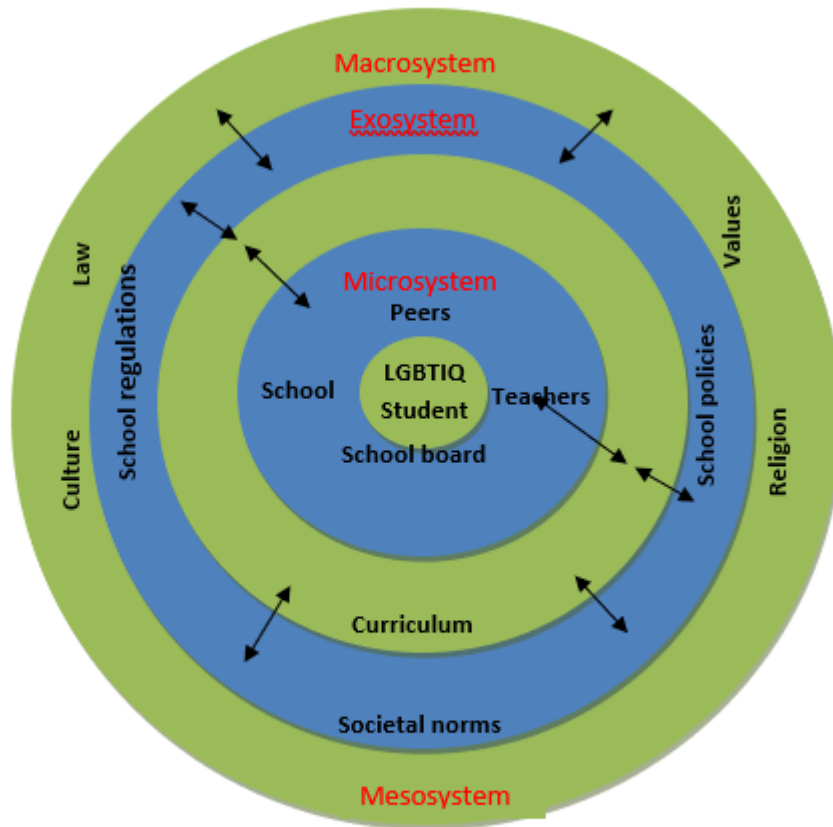
permitted in schools. Moreover, the Act also secures that LGBTIQ students are treated with dignity. With these stipulations the Lesotho Education Act lays the foundation for an education system where all students, despite their sexual orientation and gender identity, are protected and respected. In conclusion, the Lesotho education system must ensure that diverse learners receive quality education and are not negatively influenced by discrimination.

## **2.11 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING THIS STUDY**

This section provides the theoretical framework for the study. According to Adom et al. (2018), a theoretical framework is a blueprint that researchers use to build their research studies. It is very important for a researcher to decide on the relevant theory underpinning the topic of the study when conducting research because theory provides a focal point for approaching the phenomenon being studied. In this study, I have adopted the socio-ecological theory to explore teachers' attitudes toward and experiences with LGBTIQ students. Urie Bronfenbrenner introduced the socio-ecological model (SEM) as a conceptual model for understanding human development in the 1970s, and it was later formalised as a theory in the 1980s (Kilanowski, 2017). The socio-ecological theory explains how people in different social contexts are linked in dynamic, interdependent and interrelated relationships (Donald et al., 2006). It also provides a contextual map that helps in understanding the factors (social and cultural forces) that affect LGBTIQ students because it considers and incorporates factors inherent both within the student and their ecologies (school, family and community). As a result, the socio-ecological theory in this study explores teachers' attitudes in a specific context and how they affect LGBTIQ students. Donald et al. (2002, p.3) define context as "a socially constructed system of external influences mediated by people's minds". In a nutshell, "both real and perceived factors may influence human behaviour" (Sililo, 2013, p.9). According to the socio-ecological theory, teachers' attitudes towards LGBTIQ students are influenced by the environment and other factors. As a result, teachers as human beings are in constant interaction with the various systems of which they are a part, and their experiences, attitudes, interpretations, and perceptions are influenced by these systems.

### **2.11.1 Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological model**

According to the socio-ecological theory, the environment influences human development. Therefore, the socio-ecological model serves as a framework for understanding the attitudes of teachers towards LGBTIQ students because teachers' attitudes are influenced by interactions between their subsystems, namely home, community and church. According to Leonard (2011, p.6), "Bronfenbrenner's theory is an attractive one because it is expansive, yet focused; one eye is trained on the complex layers of school, family and community relationships, while the other eye is sharply focused on an individual." This implies that teachers' interactions with their surroundings influence their attitudes and create a dynamic context and culture (Allen, 2010). According to Bronfenbrenner (1986), in order to understand teachers' attitudes towards LGBTIQ students, one must examine their environment because this theory holds that there is a reciprocal relationship between the individual and his/her surrounding systems. Therefore, teachers' attitudes cannot be understood unless the contexts in which they occur are considered. Figure 2.10.3 is an illustration of the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem in relation to teachers' attitudes towards LGBTIQ students.



**Chronosystem: Time and Historic influences**



**Figure 2.1: Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological model**

### **2.11.1.1 The microsystem**

Berk (2000) defines the microsystem as structures with which an individual has direct contact, such as one's home and school. For the purpose of this study, LGBTIQ students are placed at the centre of microsystem because their development is affected by the reciprocal interactions among their immediate environments (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). LGBTIQ students spend a considerable portion of their time in school; therefore, school is identified as an immediate environment that contributes directly to the development of the child (Bronfenbrenner, 2012).

Teachers' interactions with LGBTIQ students are considered to be at the microsystem level and can directly influence students' development

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Teachers' attitudes are very important at the microsystem level. More precisely, teachers' attitudes affect their interactions with LGBTIQ students and may contribute to the type of school environment for LGBTIQ students, whether supportive or hostile.

Due to frequent interactions between students and teachers in school, teachers might unknowingly reinforce homophobic attitudes by failing to maintain positive interactions among students or creating a supportive school climate. Matsúmunyane and Hlalele (2020) remind us that Lesotho schools are unsafe grounds for LGBTIQ students as they are victimised by both their peers and teachers. Teachers play a significant role in shaping developmental contexts for students; therefore, teachers are obliged to support students, not leaving aside other structures surrounding the student, including the family and the community. However, studies show that many teachers are not supportive of LGBTIQ students (Bhana, 2014; Francis and Msibi, 2011; Matsúmunyane and Hlalele, 2020), this is due to their negative attitudes. It is worth noting that teachers do not exist in isolation, but rather as members of families and communities (teachers' microsystems) in which same-sex sexualities are denied. Therefore, teachers' attitudes towards LGBTIQ students are largely influenced by their microsystems. A qualitative case study conducted in Lesotho on the factors that affect sexuality education in rural Lesotho schools found that teachers avoided teaching homosexuality issues because it was denied in their communities (Khau, 2012). It is evident that most teachers have negative attitudes towards same-sex sexualities, which may affect their interactions with LGBTIQ students and discourage them from implementing policies and practices that protect these children. McGuire et al. (2010) discovered in a sample of 59 transgender students that they reported feeling more connected to their school and safer when teachers and administrators took proactive steps to prevent bullying. This finding seems to fit well with Statham et al. (2012), finding that homophobic bullying is less likely to happen in schools where homosexual issues are addressed.

### **2.11.1.2 *The mesosystem***

The mesosystem refers to the relationships between two or more settings that contain the developing person at a particular point in his or her life (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The mesosystem includes the interaction between the systems found in the microsystem, such as the school, family and the surrounding neighbourhood and how they influence the attitudes and perceptions of homosexuality amongst each other (Masson & Nkosi, 2017). The relationship between school and home determines the quality of the student's mesosystem. Guy-Evans (2020) argues that a positive relationship between a child's parents and teachers have a positive effect on the child's development. According to Sheridan et al. (2004), healthy child development occurs when there are congruent and consistent messages delivered across contexts (home and school). Therefore, it is important to understand factors that could contribute to a hostile environment at home and school with regard to sexuality (Nichols, 2016). Although parental attitudes are important (D'Augelli et al., 2005), the failure of schools to take an active role in supporting LGBTIQ students is a major cause of psychological problems (Toomey et al., 2010). For the purpose of this study, two significant microsystems of LGBTIQ student are considered to be home and school. Teachers are entrusted to create a positive school environment for all students. However, the findings revealed that Lesotho's classroom education is heterosexualised and homophobic, and LGBTIQ students' rights are compromised (Matsúmunyane & Hlalele, 2020).

The Constitution and education policies prohibit any form of discrimination against anyone, and schools are expected to prevent and address any discrimination based on sexual orientation (Matsúmunyane & Hlalele, 2020). However, research has discovered that school practices and teachers' beliefs about same-sex sexualities contradict progressive policies and the Constitution as schools and teachers still hold heteronormative attitudes. It is important to consider that teachers are human beings with distinctive values and religious beliefs that shape their attitudes and perceptions. Therefore, in order to understand teachers' attitudes towards LGBTIQ students, an understanding of the relationship between attitudes and environment (home, school etc.) and how the environment influences attitudes becomes crucial because the environment and climate of a school can influence students in either a positive or a negative way (Bhana, 2014). De Haas and Hutter (2019), in their study

among Ugandan teachers, discovered a conflict between the content of sexuality that teachers were expected to teach, and their own personal beliefs instilled by their family values. Letsoalo et al. (2020) argue that religious values in many cultures can lead to homophobic attitudes. In the context of Lesotho, Christianity considers homosexuality a sin, and this pervasive belief promotes violence towards LGBTIQ people (Matsúmunyane & Hlalele, 2019). Matsúmunyane and Hlalele further revealed that, although LGBTIQ students reported violence and the violation they experience to their families, parents in such cases took no legal action. This could be because "...religious teachings and the attitudes and opinions of religious community leaders provide justification for the negative reactions of families to the existence of same-sex orientations" (Newman & Fantus, 2015, p.53). Therefore, from what I have gathered, it is clear that religion influences the attitudes at home and school, thus affecting the LGBTIQ student.

### **2.11.1.3 *The exosystem***

The exosystem, according to Bronfenbrenner, is "an extension of the mesosystem embracing other specific social structures, both formal and informal, that do not themselves contain the developing person but impinge upon or encompass the immediate settings in which that person is found, and thereby influence, delimit, or even determine what goes on there" (1977, p.515). For the purpose of this study, the exosystem includes other events in which the LGBTIQ student is not actively involved but which may influence people who interact with him/her in the micro-system. Teachers do not exist in isolation; they work and live in environments that contain a variety of beliefs about same-sex sexualities.

"The exosystem provides values, resources and context to the beliefs, traditions, and culture of the developing person" (Rus et al., 2020, p.246). According to Khau (2012), same-sex sexualities are considered deviant and immoral in Lesotho. Undoubtedly, the school system and the media in Lesotho strengthen this belief. In school, students are not taught about same-sex sexualities, which allow them to challenge this stereotypical misinterpretation. Undeniably, curriculum implementation has an impact on teachers' attitudes, both directly and indirectly. Khau (2012) discovered that homosexuality and sexual orientation are not covered

in the LSE curriculum. As a result, the absence of these components in the curriculum promotes heteronormative attitudes in schools. Therefore, it is important for teachers to have support from other systems in order to successfully support LGBTIQ students.

#### **2.11.1.4 *The macrosystem***

The macrosystem consists of a society's blueprints, such as laws and regulations, as well as unwritten rules and norms (Bronfenbrenner, 1978). In short, "the macrosystem includes societal and cultural values and influences" (Kilanowski 2017, p.295). The macrosystem in this study represents societal values, beliefs and practices and how they influence teachers' attitudes toward LGBTIQ students. According to Bronfenbrenner (1993, p.47), "the macrosystem not only influences but is also influenced by the other three systems (micro-, meso- and exo-)". For instance, in order for a culture to influence teachers' attitudes, it must be experienced through his/her microsystems (family and school) (Tudge et al., 2009).

In Africa, traditional religion intertwines with culture and holds the view that traditional ways should always be upheld (Ehiemua, 2020). For example, Logie et al. (2019, p.8), in a study conducted in Lesotho, found that "lack of acceptance [of sexually and gender diverse persons] by family members was often described as being rooted in religious beliefs." Teachers' attitudes toward LGBTIQ students may be attributed to their own personal beliefs acquired from their social contexts (family, school) or to what is deemed right or wrong in their societies because families are embedded within societies that uphold unique societal norms and values, which are responsible for the process known as socialisation.

The socialisation process reflects distinctive societal norms, customs, attitudes, cultural practices and ideologies that are deemed acceptable in the social environment (Bales & Parsons, 2014), which are constantly reinforced and modified through social interactions in family, church, community, and school. Indeed, Moseitse (2006, p.47) argues that "society prescribes the content that individuals are expected to conform to in order for them to be accepted as full members of that society." According to Poteat (2007), socialisation reinforces

homophobic prejudice. Letsoalo et al. (2020, p.15247) are of the opinion that, “conservative, traditional socialisation processes account for how [teachers] form prejudicial attitudes towards homosexual individuals.” They further note that societal values are another factor that influences how people form attitudes about LGBTIQ people. For example, a teacher from a culture that discourages same-sex sexualities may have negative attitudes toward LGBTIQ students. The question arises as to whether heteronormativity is produced by society, by schools, or both. However, it is important to remember that schools are communities in themselves, and as such, they produce their own cultures that are firmly rooted in a set of moral principles (Liboro et al., 2019). In schools, the macrosystem’s values prioritise heterosexuality over homosexuality. Consequently, LGBTIQ students experience stigma and marginalisation. In the context of Lesotho, people who identify as gay or transgender are considered to be against the Basotho culture. According to Khau (2012), traditional beliefs in Lesotho influence how laws and policies are developed, and as heterosexuality is seen as the only acceptable option, this explains why the government has been reluctant to enact laws that protect the rights of LGBTIQ people.

Although teachers play an integral role in fostering a supportive school climate, it is important to recognise the importance of policies that protect LGBTIQ students. However, at the macro-level, there is a lack of policies that are LGBTIQ-inclusive (Matsúmunyane & Hlalele, 2020), and this can be a potential impediment to creating a safe school environment for LGBTIQ students. Therefore, the government, through the Ministry of Education, should enact policies that will protect LGBTIQ students.

#### **2.11.1.5 *The chronosystem***

“The chronosystem contains both internal and external elements of time and historical content; in revised models, this level includes the influence of policy” (Kilanowski, 2017, p.295). For the purpose of this study, pre-service and in-service trainings that focus on changing teachers’ attitudes and enhancing teachers’ skills and knowledge about same-sex orientation should be taken into account over time. Time is an important factor in implementing LGBTIQ-inclusive policies that

instruct teachers on how to maintain a supportive school environment for LGBTIQ students in terms of providing equal educational opportunities for all students and holding positive attitudes towards [same-sex orientation] (UNESCO, 2017).

According to UNESCO (2009), attitude shifts occur over time and necessitate constant reassessment. At the chronosystem level, attitudes towards same-sex orientation influence the development of LGBTIQ students over time. These attitudes can be found at the microsystem level and have a direct impact on LGBTIQ students. In fact, the entire system can influence LGBTIQ students' development over time, which refers to the chronosystem level (Sahamkhadam, 2020). Matsúmunyane and Hlalele (2020) write about the experiences of LGBTIQ students in Lesotho high schools. They report the following: During the dialogue meetings, attitudes towards LGBTIQ people changed, with many heterosexuals admitting that they never considered LGBTIQ people to be members of society. Francis and Msibi (2011) also note slow shifts in attitudes among South African in-service teachers who participated in heterosexism and education training. According to Francis and Msibi (2011), despite the post-apartheid rhetoric of tolerance and inclusivity, teachers frequently represent heterosexism in the classroom. Although there is insufficient literature that explored the dimension of time in relation to teachers' attitudes towards LGBTIQ students, it is my firm belief that a school climate that is LGBTIQ-inclusive can be sustained over time by maintaining positive attitudes towards same-sex identities.

## **2.12 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, local and international literature on the attitudes and experiences of teachers with LGBTIQ students was reviewed. The discussions demonstrate common challenges that LGBTIQ students face in schools as a result of teachers' attitudes towards gender and sexual diversity. The legal frameworks in relation to LGBTIQ human rights were also discussed. The latter part of this chapter discussed socio-ecological theory as the theoretical framework guiding the study. In the next chapter, a discussion on the research design and methodology will be provided.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

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#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter discussed the literature review and provided the theoretical framework of the study, i.e. the socio-ecological theory. This chapter provides a comprehensive explanation of the methodology that was used in the study. It is discussed under the following sub-headings: The research paradigm, approach, research design, data collection method, data analysis, and trustworthiness. The ethical considerations that the study adhered to are also discussed. Lastly, the limitations of the study are presented.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

This study was guided by interpretivist paradigm. Qualitative research, according to Lapan et al. (2012), is interpretive in nature because it focuses on uncovering participants' views. Cohen et al. (2011) add that the interpretivist paradigm seeks to interpret perceptions, feelings, beliefs and attitudes from participants' point of view. Dudovskiy (2018) points out that the interpretivist paradigm acknowledges that knowledge is socially constructed. The interpretivist paradigm was used in this study as it "enables the diverse ways of seeing and experiencing the world through different contexts and cultures" (Pham, 2018, p.3). Therefore, the interpretivist paradigm allowed me to capture and interpret teachers' unique feelings towards and experiences with LGBTIQ students in their interaction with the social context (Kumar, 2019).

The interpretivist paradigm seemed appropriate for answering the research questions as it seeks to uncover attitudes and understand why people behave the way they do. The interpretivist paradigm also allowed teachers to express their feelings and experiences with regard to LGBTIQ students and allowed me to obtain their subjective beliefs, perceptions and attitudes. As Khaldi (2017) contends, several subjective factors influence human behaviour.

### **3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

Within the interpretive paradigm, a qualitative research approach was chosen to respond to the research questions in this study. Qualitative research is defined as “research that produces findings without the use of any statistical procedures or quantification” (Rahman, 2017, p.103). Mason (2017, p.24) further describes qualitative research as “a type of research that is generally more explorative, versatile, data-driven and context-sensitive.” Hammarberg et al. (2016) add that, qualitative studies interpret the textual, verbal and visual data rather than numbers and statistics. The purpose of the qualitative approach is to answer questions about experiences, meanings and perceptions from the participant’s point of view (Hammarberg et al., 2016). As opposed to quantitative approach, the qualitative approach seeks “to describe and narrate feelings, perceptions and experiences” (Kumar, 2019, p.14). Therefore, in this study, the qualitative approach allowed me to gain in-depth textual data concerning teachers’ attitudes and experiences with LGBTIQ students.

Creswell (2014) adds that the qualitative approach allows researchers to make sense of participants’ meanings of their world; in that sense, it enables researchers to understand phenomena from participants’ perspective. However, the qualitative approach also has limitations. It is very difficult to generalise the findings of a qualitative study because participants in their naturalistic setting produce data, and their data may not be relevant in other contexts. Researchers cannot be able to verify the results because participants control the content of data, and it is highly possible that researchers’ biases can influence the results because they become part of the research (Creswell, 2014). These limitations therefore affect the credibility of the qualitative study. In addressing some of the qualitative limitations, various strategies were employed in this study to ensure credibility and trustworthiness. These are elaborated in par. 3.8.

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Before conducting a research study, it is important to design a path to follow throughout the research process. According to Hammarberg et al. (2016), a research design is a procedure that a researcher arranges to follow when carrying

out the study in order to obtain valid and accurate answers that will respond to the research questions. In short, a research design addresses questions that determine the path a researcher proposes to take in the research journey (Kumar, 2019). In this study, a case study design was used.

### **3.4.1 Case study**

Thomas (2021) and Robert (2014), define a case study as an exploration that aims to gain an in-depth understanding of a problem in real-life settings. Thomas further points out that a case study examines people and events, not only in the present, but also in the past, in order to better understand the events from a historical perspective. As proposed by Dudovskiy (2018), a case study can be exploratory, explanatory or descriptive. For the purpose of this study, the exploratory case study design was used. An exploratory case study design attempts to explore a topic that has no pre-determined outcome (Neiwenhuis, 2016). Therefore, a case study design was deemed suitable in this study for exploring the attitudes and experiences of the teachers being interviewed. One of the most significant benefits of a case study is that it allows a researcher to understand the complexities of life by breaking them down into manageable pieces (Thomas, 2021). Therefore, this design allowed me to closely examine the data within three high schools and gain insight into teachers' attitudes towards and experiences with LGBTIQ students in and beyond school.

### **3.5 SAMPLING**

Sampling is defined by Flynn and McDermott (2016) as the way a researcher selects participants and methods that they are going to use to collect data in order to achieve the aim of the study. There are two types of sampling, namely probability and non-probability sampling. Flynn and McDermott (2016) define probability sampling as a sampling procedure where everyone in the population stands a chance of being selected, while in non-probability sampling, only participants who fit the purpose of the study, have a chance of being selected. In

this study, I used non-probability sampling methods, namely purposive and convenience sampling.

### **3.5.1 Purposive sampling**

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) contend that many qualitative researchers employ the purposive sampling method in their studies. Purposive sampling is a technique by which a researcher selects participants who have meaningful knowledge of the subject being studied. The participants in this study were purposively selected, and they had to be Life Skills Education (LSE) teachers with at least five years of teaching experience in the subject. LSE teachers were chosen because I wanted to gain in-depth information about their attitudes and experiences towards LGBTIQ students since they are responsible for addressing sexual and gender identity issues.

### **3.5.2 Convenience sampling**

Convenience sampling is a method used to select participants who are accessible and available (Etikan et al., 2016). Convenience sampling addresses the limitations of data collection by including people who are readily available as part of the sample, which is far easier than targeting unknown individuals (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). I used convenience sampling to select three high schools in Teya-teyaneng for their convenient geographic proximity; the schools were close to one another and easily accessible to me for both time and financial reasons.

### **3.5.3 Sample size**

The study was conducted at three high schools in Teya-teyaneng (School A, B and C). The sample size included five LSE teachers (n=5). There were two teachers per school, except for school B. School A (n=2) School B (n=1) and School C (n=2). All teachers were residing in urban areas. My intended sample size was six participants, but I only managed to collect data from five of them. One participant indicated that he no longer wanted to participate and withdrew from the study after

two interview sessions. Therefore, as Cohen et al. (2011) state that there is no exact or precise sample size in qualitative research, and as Gerring (2007) indicates that the case number in case study research is often less than 12, I decided to continue with five participants.

### **3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHOD AND PROCEDURE**

Dudovskiy (2018, p.198) defines data collection as “a process of collecting information from various relevant sources in order to find answers to the research problem and to evaluate the results.” Data collection methods include interviews, observation, narratives etc. (Dudovskiy, 2018). For the purpose of this study, interviews were used as a data collection strategy.

An interview is defined by Maree (2017) as a dialogue in which the interviewer collects data by asking participants questions that enable a researcher to discover their experiences, beliefs and perceptions about the phenomenon being studied. I used semi-structured interviews as a primary data collection method in this study. Maree (2017) adds that semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to obtain in-depth and first-hand information from the respondents. Widavsky and Hammer (2018, p.57) explain that “semi-structured interviews include questions that enable the researcher to probe.” Leech (2002, p.665) notes that “probing helps when the interviewee has a limited knowledge about the topic.” I realised during the interviews that participants were not familiar with the terminology used to refer to gender identity and sexual orientation; therefore, I used probing to guide their answers. This choice of data collection was suitable, as Smith (2015) claims that semi-structured interviews help the respondents to introduce issues the researcher may not have considered, thus allowing flexibility of coverage and production of richer data.

#### **3.6.1 Data collection procedures**

I spent 15 days collecting data, and participation was completely voluntary. Prior to the interviews, I met with principals to request permission to conduct interviews with teachers under their jurisdiction. I explained to the principals the purpose of

the study, and after granting me permission to conduct the study in their schools, they gave me the phone numbers of participants that adhered to the criteria of being LSE teachers for at least 5 years. After receiving their phone numbers, I called them individually to request a face-to-face meeting where I provided every participant with details of the research and requested each to sign a consent form and return it to me if they are willing to participate. Interviews began two months later because schools had to close due to COVID-19 restrictions.

In the first phase of data collection, I explained the purpose of the research, which was to explore teachers' attitudes and experiences towards LGBTIQ students. Due to COVID-19 regulations in the country, interviews were conducted telephonically through WhatsApp voice messages, and they lasted 20 to 30 minutes. As indicated on the consent form, my responsibility as a researcher was to maintain the confidentiality of participants' information; therefore, I assured them that their answers would be kept safe. Although all participants could converse in English, they were more comfortable with their native language; therefore, interviews were conducted in both English and Sesotho to evoke the most frank responses from participants, and some parts of the interviews were translated. As a Sesotho native speaker, I had the best opportunity to gain first-hand information at all stages of data generation, from recording to reporting. Interviews took place during a time that was convenient for participants. I used open-ended questions to obtain valuable information. As Creswell (2014) notes, open-ended questions are used to elicit views and opinions from the participants. During the interviews, I asked probing questions to guide teachers' answers to the desired direction. The questions were guided by an interview schedule in keeping with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) principles. Smith (2005) explained that the aim of IPA is to explore in depth how participants make sense of their personal and social worlds.

Interview questions focused on eliciting information about the realities of LGBTIQ students, their knowledge of sexuality and gender diversity and their attitudes and experiences regarding LGBTIQ people in and beyond the school setting. The interviews allowed me to explore 'what' they said and 'how' they said it. At the end of every interview, I translated and transcribed the answers into English. All

interview transcripts and audio files were stored in a flash drive as back-up storage.

### **3.7 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS**

According to Bernard (2017), the process of data analysis examines patterns in the data and determines ideas that help clarify the existence of such patterns. The purpose of data analysis in a qualitative study is to bring meaning and some type of order to the data (Archer, 2018). In this study, participants' interview transcriptions were analysed using thematic analysis.

#### **3.7.1 Thematic analysis**

Thematic analysis (TA) is “a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning across a data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p.57). TA helps a researcher to identify, interpret and make sense of emerging themes (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). My focus during data analysis was to uncover teachers' attitudes and experiences with regard to LGBTIQ students. The purpose was to identify and extract common themes within teachers' interview transcripts (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). A theme contains important information about the data that relates to the research questions (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Therefore, I coded the themes in a way to answer my research questions. My analysis was guided by six phases of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006), which are: to become familiar with the data, to generate initial codes, to search for themes, to review themes, to define and name the themes and to write the report.

In Phase one, I familiarised myself with collected data by translating the interview audios into English and transcribing them verbatim. I replayed the recordings for clarification. I read the data (transcriptions) carefully and thoroughly and used a highlighter to note initial ideas for coding. After reading and re-reading the data to reflect on its overall meaning, the coding process followed.

In Phase two, I organised data, looked for patterns, and then assigned initial codes to my data. According to Rossman and Rallis (2012, p.34) “coding is the process of organising the data by bracketing chunks (text or image segments) and writing a

word representing a category in the margins.” I did not use specific software to code; I coded themes manually using a highlighting pen to highlight participants’ phrases with similar patterns.

In Phase three, I searched for repeated patterns or themes in the codes and gathered all data relevant to each potential theme. I repeated this process until I had 12 preliminary themes that addressed the research questions. In Phase four, I modified and reviewed 12 themes that emerged to see if they were relevant, and if the data supported the themes. I also had to make sure that the identified themes were coherent, if not I separated them by creating subthemes. I also removed themes that I felt would be irrelevant in answering the research questions. In Phase five, I generated definitions and names for each theme. Lastly, in the final phase, I analysed data according to each participant to highlight categories extracted from participants’ semi-structured interviews.

### **3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Trustworthiness and credibility are central to credible qualitative research. Trustworthiness is obtained through presenting data collection, analysis and findings in a thorough and verifiable manner (Lochmiller & Lester, 2015). I ensured trustworthiness by building trust with the participants by reaching out to them and engaging with them before conducting the interviews. This gave them the opportunity to express any concerns they had about the study. According to Golafshani (2003), in qualitative research, credibility and trustworthiness encompass reliability and validity. Reliability is the extent to which the results would be very similar if the study were repeated by someone else using the same methods, and validity is concerned with whether the required procedures were followed by a researcher in obtaining the results (Dudovskiy, 2018). The following strategies should be considered to ensure a trustworthy study: Credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability (Dudovskiy, 2018).

### **3.8.1 Credibility**

Credibility, according to Dudovskiy (2018, p.88), is “the extent to which research findings represent a trustworthy interpretation of the data drawn from the original data.” There are several strategies to ensure credibility; these include member checking, engaged time in field, audit trails, triangulation and peer debriefing” (Dudovskiy, 2018). Credibility was ensured by using secondary data (interview transcriptions). According to Dudovskiy (2018), secondary data increases the levels of credibility in qualitative research because it avoids typical problems known as reactivity, which are the consequences of a researcher’s biases shaping all forms of researcher-generated data. Therefore, there is no reactivity in this study because I used interview transcriptions.

### **3.8.2 Dependability**

Dependability is the ability to obtain the same results more than once using the same research instruments on the same population (Creswell et al., 2016). The concept of dependability emphasises the need for the researcher to account for the constantly changing context in which research takes place. Dependability is synonymous with reliability. I used peer debriefing to ensure the dependability of the findings. Peer debriefing allows a colleague who is not part of the research study to ask critical questions about the researcher’s process and biases (Flynn & McDermott, 2016). Hendricks (2006) points out that peer debriefing is important because it ensures that the research results are interpreted correctly and accurately by preventing the researcher’s biases.

### **3.8.3 Transferability**

Transferability is the degree to which the results can be generalised or applied to different contexts. The research context must be clearly described in order for the results to be transferable (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). According to Tsomo (2012), clear details of data collection and analysis must be provided so that the researcher can evaluate the study’s applicability to other settings. Transferability in this study was ensured by providing a detailed description of the context of the study as well as

clear details on data collection and analysis. For the study to be applicable to other contexts, I also included verbatim quotes from specific interviews.

#### **3.8.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability is associated with the accurate reflection of participant responses as well as the correct interpretation of data and findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In this study, confirmability was ensured by sending the final reports back to the participants to check for accuracy; this technique is known as member-checking (Dudovskiy, 2018). My supervisor ensured confirmability once again by interrogating the data and findings.

### **3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

“Research ethics are the manner in which the researcher treats people involved in the research relating to informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and courtesy” (Walliman, 2017, p.43). Research involving non-conforming gender identity and same-sex orientation is fraught with ethical issues because of the sensitive nature of the subject matter. Alderson and Morrow (2021) posit that being ethical in research means that participants are protected. Therefore, I protected the research participants by adhering to certain ethical considerations endorsed by the General/Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of the Free State. The following ethical issues were taken into account.

#### **3.9.1 Ethical clearance**

Prior to conducting the study, I sought approval through the General/Human Research Committee (GHREC) of the University of the Free State. The study obtained the approval and the ethical clearance registration number is **UFS-HSD2020/1904/21**. Schools were closed due to COVID-19, and I was unable to obtain approval letters from principals to continue with data collection, so I had to apply for an extension, and my ethical clearance certificate was extended.

### **3.9.2 Permission to conduct the study**

Permission to conduct the study in schools was requested in writing from the Berea District Education Office. Approval was granted by the District Education Manager. I also sought permission from the school principals.

### **3.9.3 Right to informed consent**

Prior to the collection of data, I issued informed consent forms to the participants. According to Babbie (2016), participants need to sign informed consent forms before providing data. Lee (2018, p.222) explains that “informed consent ensures the welfare of the participants by protecting them from any harm and informing them about the risks they are exposed to by taking part in a study.” Informed consent informs participants about their voluntary participation and also gives them the right to withdraw from the study at any time (Goodwin et al., 2020; Pietila et al., 2020). I explained to participants why they were chosen to participate in the study and that they would not be asked sensitive questions. Furthermore, I provided them with information leaflets containing information that acknowledged the protection of their rights. The information included the identification of the researcher, purpose of the study, duration, the nature of participation in the study, the potential benefits of taking part in the study, anticipated inconvenience of taking part in the study, guarantee of confidentiality and privacy, assurance that the participant could withdraw at any time, provision of names and contact details of the supervisor to contact if questions arose. Participants were not coerced into signing the consent forms but were given time to examine the information leaflets alone and sign consent forms in their own time. Signed consent forms were obtained from the participants before conducting the interviews.

### **3.9.4 Right to anonymity and confidentiality**

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative researchers make use of aliases or pseudonyms in order to protect the identities of participants and places. In this study, anonymity was ensured by using pseudonyms for participants and schools to ensure that their identities were not compromised. Confidentiality was ensured by

informing participants that their answers would not be shared in any context outside of the study. During the transcription of the data, I omitted descriptors such as the name of the school to ensure anonymity. As Kumar (2011) asserts, the researcher must ensure that his participants are not identified.

### **3.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Limitations are common in research. The following factors constrained this study:

- The sixth participant withdrew from the study because of personal reasons. While this limited the data, the remaining participants provided the information I intended to obtain.
- The study used a small sample of the population, limited to five Life Skills Education teachers; therefore, the findings should be treated as illustrative but not representative. In spite of this, the results of this study provide a clear picture of the attitudes and experiences of teachers with LGBTQ students.
- Another limitation that significantly impacted this study is time. I had a very limited time to collect and analyse data because of my unstable health condition.
- The study focused only on three high schools located in the urban region in Teya-teyaneng (Berea District). Although the aim of this study was not to generalise the results, it is possible that different results might have been obtained from schools located in diverse regions of Lesotho.
- Language was another limitation in this study. Although all teachers could converse in English, they found it difficult to fully express themselves in English so they used their native language (Sesotho); therefore, translation was required.
- There are few studies in Lesotho addressing LGBTIQ issues at school level; therefore, I relied mostly on international studies.
- Due to COVID-19 restrictions, face-to-face interviews were not allowed. Interviews were conducted through WhatsApp voice messages; therefore, non-verbal communication and contextual data were not collected.

### **3.11 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I discussed the methods and methodology applied in this study. Qualitative research was discussed as an approach, along with the interpretive paradigm, sampling techniques, data collection procedure, ethical considerations. In the next chapter, I shall present the findings of the study pertaining to the teachers' attitudes towards and experiences with LGBTIQ students.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS, AND DISCUSSIONS**

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#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter discussed the methodologies used in this study. This chapter presents the data analysis, findings and discussions of findings. Data is presented in the form of themes and subthemes gathered from the responses collected from the semi-structured interviews. Participants' responses are quoted verbatim throughout the presentation. The purpose of this study was to explore the attitudes and experiences of high school teachers towards LGBTIQ students in Lesotho schools.

#### **4.2 PARTICIPANTS' PROFILES**

There were five participants from three high schools in Teya-teyaneng in this study. I used the following pseudonyms for the participating schools; School A, School B and School C. Participants chose their own pseudonyms. Participants' profiles are indicated in Table 4.1. None of the participants had Life Skills Education (LSE) qualifications and were teaching LSE alongside their major subjects, such as Accounting, Maths, Physics, English, Geography, etc. Only two teachers mentioned receiving in-service training related to LSE.

**Table 4.1: Participants' Profiles**

School	Pseudo nym	Gender	Age	Highest qualification	Years Teaching LSE	Received LSE training	Major subjects
A	Thabo	Male	38	B.Ed.	12	Yes	Development studies & Religious studies
A	Mary	Female	38	B.Ed.	9	Yes	English & Geography
B	Palesa	Female	29	BSc.Ed.	5	No	Physics & Maths
C	Mpho	Female	33	B.Ed.	7	No	Sesotho & Eng. Lit.
C	Thandi	Female	48	Dip.Ed.	10	No	Accounting

#### **4.2.1 School A**

The school is situated outside Teya-teyaneng town in a village called Ha-Ntjabane. The school is under the auspice of the foundation of the A.M.E. Church. The school's education at present is offered from grade 8 to 12. All students in this school are day scholars as there are no residences for students. Students coming from other districts or distant villages stay in hostels. The school combines education for boys and girls. The school operates in line with the laws and principles of the government and in consultation with MoET. The majority of students admitted to this school are from disadvantaged backgrounds, which includes low achievers that are expelled from other schools because they were not showing any progress. The LSE subject is offered for grade 8 to 12; however, LSE in grade 12 is a non-examination subject.

#### 4.2.2 School B

This is a government school located in Teya-teyaneng town. The school caters for orphans and vulnerable students. The majority of students in this school are sponsored by the government. Students in this school are from the villages in Teya-teyaneng. The grades range from grade 8 to 12 and the LSE subject is taught in all grades, but it is a non-examination subject in grade 12. The school is registered with MoET. All students are day scholars because the school does not offer a boarding facility. The school accommodates both boys and girls.

#### 4.2.3 School C

This school is a church school situated outside Teya-teyaneng town. The school operates from grades 8 to 12. The school was one of the best performing schools in Teya-teyaneng. Students in this school come from the neighbouring villages and from other districts in Lesotho. The LSE subject is taught from grade 8 to 12, but it is a non-examination subject in grade 12. The school accommodates both boys and girls, and it has a boarding facility.

### 4.3 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 4.2 below shows themes and subthemes emerging from the study. A discussion of each theme will follow.

**Table 4.2: Emerging themes and subthemes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Subthemes</b>
<b>1. <i>Normalising heterosexual and cisgender sexualities through implicit language use</i></b>	<i>1.1 Lack of knowledge</i>
<b>2. <i>“These boys that walk like girls”</i></b>	<i>2.1 Compulsive masculinity and femininity as gender descriptors</i>
<b>3. <i>“Is this thing a habit, natural or something they just choose?”</i></b>	<i>3.1 Intolerance of LGBTIQ students in schools</i>

	3.2 <i>Silencing sexual and gender diversity in schools</i>
4. <b><i>Creating an LGBTIQ-inclusive school climate</i></b>	4.1 <i>The need for school policies</i>

### 4.3.1 Normalising heterosexual and cisgender sexualities through implicit language use

#### 4.3.1.1 *Lack of knowledge*

According to Cameron and Kulick (2003, p.12), “sexuality and sexual identity are represented linguistically in a variety of discourse genres.” This, in short, means that sexuality and language are interrelated. This study found that participants normalised heterosexual and cisgender sexualities due to lack of knowledge of gender and sexual diversity. As mentioned above, the majority of participants were not qualified to teach LSE; therefore, it could only be assumed that their lack of knowledge on gender and sexual diversity came as a result of a lack of training. This emerging theme provided a better understanding of teachers’ attitudes toward LGBTIQ students, as well as how those attitudes manifest in and out of the classroom. The participants’ responses revealed that they lacked knowledge of commonly used gender and sexuality terms and concepts such as LGBTIQ, gender and sexual diversity. In this study, only one teacher knew what ‘LGBTIQ’ stands for. I also soon realised during the interviews that most participants were struggling to pronounce the term LGBTIQ and used the word ‘*litabane*’ instead (Sesotho derogatory term for non-heterosexuals). The participants’ use of a derogatory word to refer to LGBTIQ individuals perpetuates a homophobic attitude. According to Van Han (2014), language contributes to the reproduction and perpetuation of heteronormativity and homophobia, which is heavily influenced by societal ideology and stereotypes. The study also revealed that the use of derogatory terms came as a result of a lack of appropriate Sesotho terms for gender and sexual orientation. When participants were asked what they understand by the term ‘LGBTIQ’, they stated:

*Thandi (Female): ...I think LGBTIQ refers to these things we call gays and lesbians...bisexual people, I don’t know much about them but I have heard that there are people with both sex organs, where one sex organ is more active than*

*another. A boy can have both male and female sex organs. I think that is what LGBTIQ entails.*

Mary's narrative supported this by responding:

**Mary (Female):** *...this word LGBTIQ I understand lesbian, gay, bisexual. I don't understand what TIQ stands for.*

**Mpho (Female):** *LGBTIQ is a community of people who are abnormal to us normal people....who do normal things.*

The use of the word 'abnormal' in Mpho's narrative when referring to LGBTIQ people is normalising heterosexuality and cisgender people. Thandi also referred to LGBTIQ people as "these things", which dehumanises and undermines LGBTIQ people. The use of the pronouns 'us' and 'them' reflects the marginalisation between heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals, and, in schooling, it causes segregation and a non-inclusive classroom. It is critical to break the binary of 'them' and 'us' and try to maintain the centrality and normalcy of the self in order to enable non-normative and heterosexual and cisgender people to move beyond compulsive heteronormativity (Francis, 2017).

The majority of participants in this study expressed negative attitudes towards LGBTIQ people. For instance, when Thandi was asked whether she shows LGBTIQ people that she dislikes them, she answered:

**Thandi (Female):** *I do, even if I don't directly say I don't like them I make sure to avoid any contact with them. If it happens that I am with that type of a person I don't talk to them at all. I don't openly say I don't like you but he/she will notice my bad attitude towards them that I dislike them.*

The above narrative does not only marginalise LGBTIQ people but also stigmatises same-sex identities. "Stigma refers to a strong feeling of disapproval that most people in society have about something (in this case being non-heterosexual and being gender non-conforming)" (Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2017, p.209). This statement is confirmed by a study conducted among women who have sex with women in Lesotho, which found that homosexuals experience more stigma compared to heterosexuals (Poteat et al., 2016).

Mary, on the other hand, indicated that, although she does not understand LGBTIQ people, she accepts them, especially if they are close to her.

***Mary (Female):** I don't understand them (LGBTIQ people), but if a person is close to me, I accept him and their situation, like I have accepted my colleague.*

The above narrative concurs with the findings of previous studies that have shown that being around or close to LGBTIQ people is associated with positive attitudes (Hall & Rodgers, 2019; Perez-Testor et al., 2010). This shows that being around LGBTIQ people influences positive attitudes towards non-normative sexualities. Moreover, when participants were asked whether students should be treated the same despite their sexuality, the majority responded:

***Mary (Female):** Yes, Ma'am, students should be treated equally at school no matter their sexuality because everyone has a right to education despite their sexuality.*

***Thandi (Female):** Yes, I think children should be treated equally despite their sexuality because if they are not treated equally that will be discrimination.*

Thandi made use of religious discourse to justify the need to treat people equally despite their sexuality. She said:

***Thandi (Female):** Again, according to my beliefs, a person is created in the image of God so people should be treated equally because everyone is different. If we look at different sexualities that would be discrimination, besides everyone has their own way of doing things.*

Based on her statement, Thandi appears to be a devout Christian who lives her life in accordance with religious teachings. However, there is a misalignment between what she said about LGBTIQ people and stating that she is for equality. Even though she supported her answer with equality clauses; she lacked knowledge of its principles because, in her statement, she voiced opinions that marginalise LGBTIQ people, thus supporting inequality.

The results indicate that participants promote and enforce compulsive heteronormativity in schools due to a lack of knowledge of gender and sexual diversity. Matsúmunyane and Hlalele (2020) argue that participants' lack of knowledge about gender and sexual diversity should not be taken lightly because

participants are trusted to redress the state of homophobia in schools. Indeed, participants cannot promote equality if they are not fully equipped with knowledge concerning sexuality and fundamental human rights (De Wet et al., 2016; Francis, 2017; Pieterse, 2019). Francis and Msibi (2011) emphasise the need for providing participants with fundamental pedagogic knowledge that will allow them to address difficult school cultures like heterosexism. As such, it is important to equip participants with skills that will enable them to teach diverse sexualities and challenge the marginalisation of gender and sexual minorities enforced by heteronormative biases, policies and practices (De Wet & Van Wyk, 2021).

### **4.3.2 “These boys that walk like girls”**

#### **4.3.2.1 *Compulsive masculinity and femininity as gender descriptors***

The data collected shows that many participants have preconceived notions about LGBTIQ students. According to Fasoli et al. (2017), non-verbal behaviour, such as mannerisms and gestures, is used to determine whether a person is homosexual or heterosexual. This theme provides an understanding of participants’ attitudes toward LGBTIQ students and determines the identifying factors for them to perceive students to be LGBTIQ. Participants were asked if they identified LGBTIQ students in their classrooms or at school and how they felt about them.

*Interviewer: Do you have any LGBTIQ students in your classroom/school?*

*Palesa (Female): Yes, ma’am I do have such students.*

*Interviewer: How do you feel about LGBTIQ people?*

*Palesa: I don’t have a problem with such people. I believe their hormones do not allow them to be what God created them to be and we can’t change that. If a person shows some changes in their sexuality then they should not be criticised.*

Palesa believes that non-normative sexual and gender identities are against the will of God; however, she indicates that she has no problem with LGBTIQ people. Swanepoel and Beyers (2015) expressed the opinion that the belief that homosexuality is against the will of God not only marginalises non-normative sexualities but also normalises heterosexuality. Bhana (2014) pointed out that religious belief is the most powerful predictor of negative attitudes toward

homosexuality. However, in this study, religion was not found to be the main factor that influenced participants' negative attitudes towards sexual and gender diverse students.

Another participant had a similar attitude towards LGBTIQ students:

**Interviewer:** *Do you have student/s who identify as LGBTIQ in your classroom/school?*

**Mpho (Female):** *Yes, I have them in my class...*

**Interviewer:** *How do you feel about LGBTIQ people?*

**Mpho:** *I have accepted them because they are human beings with human rights and I owe it to them to respect and treat them well. I consider myself lucky because I am a member of YALI (Young African Leaders Initiative) network and therefore know a lot about them. I also try to educate others about LGBTIQ people and how they can support them. In my class, I support these students by providing them with magazines and newspapers with information about same-sex sexualities, and I also advise them to use celebrities from the LGBTIQ community as role models so that they can reach their full potential...*

The narratives above show that both participants have identified and accepted LGBTIQ students in their classrooms. Palesa indicated that LGBTIQ people should not be criticised based on their sexuality. This shows that she acknowledges and understands that they have constitutional rights and they should be treated equally. Mpho, on the other hand, stated that she educates people about LGBTIQ, indicating that she has accepted and supported same-sex identities. It is also clear from her responses that she has a good relationship with LGBTIQ students as she also provides them with information about same-sex identities outside of the curriculum. Both Palesa and Mpho expressed positive attitudes toward same-sex identities in their responses.

Thandi was asked the same question, and her response is shown in the narrative below:

**Interviewer:** *Do you have student/s who identify as LGBTIQ in your classroom/school and how did you identify them?*

**Thandi (Female):** *I haven't identified them, especially in my class, but I have seen them in school the one called 'litabane' (derogatory word for LGBTIQ people), more especially in boys. These boys that walk like girls but I haven't identified them in class.*

The narrative above shows that Thandi's method of identifying gay students is based on the way they walk, as she indicated that gay students walk like girls. I further asked her how she feels about LGBTIQ people, and she responded:

**Thandi:** *I don't understand those people who are called litabane, I don't really like them.*

**Interviewer:** *Why do you feel this way about LGBTIQ people?*

**Thandi:** *The reason I don't like them is because I have realised that they exaggerate everything... when they do something for example when they walk, you will notice that they move their waist too much, like there are women who walk like that. Even when they apply make-up they apply it too much, when they draw eyebrows or paint their nails, they overdo everything. They are forward and they speak loudly, 'Litabane' are attention seekers. I really don't like them.*

The above narrative demonstrates unequivocally that Thandi believes that heterosexual behaviour is socially acceptable while homosexuality is considered deviant. The way heterosexual and cisgender women walk and speak is considered normal, whereas gay behaviour is considered exaggerated; it does not conform to the societal norms. As a result, ignorance and gender binary are evident. It is also evident from her response that she thinks gender and sexuality are the same, therefore assumes that heterosexual is natural for men and women.

One other significant finding of this study was the use of masculinity and femininity as gender and sexuality descriptors. When participants were asked how they identify LGBTIQ students, the responses were as follows:

**Palesa (Female):** *I identify them by their behaviour. If she is a girl she behaves like boys....and if he is a boy he behaves like girls.*

**Mary (Female):** *Lesbian are girls who behave like boys and gays they are boys or male people who behave like they are females. Bisexual is this person who mixes the two he acts like a female and also like a male person.*

**Mpho (Female):** ...their behaviour is strange and their inbuilt and physique are different from ours. Gays like make-up and nail polish. While lesbians like acting like men and when they speak they deepen their voices.

Participants` responses indicate that there is a specific expectation and gendered belief about how a boy and a girl child should behave. All three participants stated that they identify LGBTIQ students by their behaviour. For example, a gay person is defined as a boy who behaves like girls (feminine) and a lesbian as a girl who behaves like boys (masculine). Mpho believes that a boy or man that uses make-up and nail polish is gay. This means that feminine men, regardless of their true sexual and gender identity, are considered gay. That is, femininity is equivalent to gay, and such beliefs perpetuate rigid gender roles and gender stereotypes. For example, in Brown and Diale's (2017) study, a lesbian student was chased out of the bathroom due to her masculine appearance. Huysmans et al. (2021) state that gender stereotypes contribute to gender-based discrimination and inequality and can have a long-term impact on children's beliefs, attitudes and behaviours.

Some of the participants in this study also stated that they identify gays and lesbians based on their clothing. This is evident in the following response:

**Mpho (Female):** Gays like bright colours like pink and orange and lesbians like to dress like men.

Palesa also shared a more common way of identifying lesbian students at school:

**Palesa (Female):** If she is a girl she dresses in boyish ways and if he is a boy he dresses like girls.

Although everyone is free to choose the clothes that they feel comfortable in, Mpho and Palesa's responses indicate that clothes are closely associated with gender identification and serve as a means of determining whether a student is gay or lesbian. Brown and Diale (2017) add that clothes can serve as markers for sexual and gender identity. For instance, in Msibi's study (2014), students refused to be taught by a male teacher because he was wearing tight pants that were associated with being gay. In the same way, Brown and Diale (2017) describe an incident in which a principal was introducing student participants, and when he was supposed to introduce one lady he asked her to introduce herself because he claimed that he was not sure of her gender because she wore male clothing. This shows that

gender identification is directly related to appropriate clothing for females and males.

### **4.3.3 “... Is this thing a habit, natural or something they just choose?”**

#### **4.3.3.1 Intolerance of sexual and gender diversity in schools**

Despite increased awareness of the existence of LGBTIQ people in some Lesotho communities (Muzenda & Kessman, 2017); denial as a result of a lack of understanding and ignorance is also evident. Participants in this study reported a lack of understanding of gender and sexual diversity. This is evidenced in the responses below:

*Mary (Female): I don't understand those people; I don't really understand them...*

*Thandi (Female): ...I don't understand those people who are called 'Litabane', I don't like them at all. I don't really understand them, I don't really like them.*

On the other hand, Thabo and Mary spoke of their confusion regarding the origins of homosexuality:

*Thabo (male): ... I am still asking myself is this thing a habit, natural or something they just choose....*

*Mary (Female): ...is it something real because it is growing. Back then only few people were like that, unless they were hiding it...*

Thabo perceives homosexuality as a habit, meaning that students are choosing to be homosexuals. Mary, on the other hand, questions the existence of homosexuality, and perceives it as a new phenomenon. These perceptions encourage teachers to express negative attitudes towards students with diverse gender and sexual orientations (Brown & Diale, 2017; Msibi, 2012). Mathopeng (2014) found that same-sex relationships are considered foreign in Lesotho. Similarly, this study revealed that the originality and nature of gender and sexual diversity is still not well understood in some urban communities in Lesotho. The results, however, contradict previous findings, showing that Basotho people living in urban areas are more accepting of LGBTIQ people (Khau, 2012). Then again, the use of the word 'real' in

Mary's response indicates that heterosexuality is considered a norm, which further invisibilises diverse gender and sexual orientations.

#### **4.3.3.2 Silencing sexual and gender diversity in schools**

Teaching about sexual and gender diversity is important in creating a safe schooling environment (Francis et al., 2018b). However, all participants stated that they have never formally taught about gender and sexual diversity in their classrooms. The non-inclusive curriculum added to participants avoiding to teach about sexual and gender diversity. Thandi, for example, put the blame on the LSE curriculum:

**Interviewer:** *Do you teach about gender and sexual diversity in your class?*

**Thandi (Female):** *...I don't teach about such topics because most of the times these topics appear towards the end of the school year in the syllabus, so we end up not teaching about them. I never taught about these topics.*

Placing sexual and gender diversity topics towards the end of the school year in the syllabus only encourages participants to avoid these topics. As a result, these topics are either ignored or poorly addressed. It also becomes apparent that the silence in the LSE curriculum about gender and sexual diversity content gives participants an opportunity to not adequately teach it in their classrooms. This is evident in the response below:

**Interviewer:** *Do you teach about gender and sexual diversity in your class?*

**Thabo (Male):** *Sexuality diversity in the Life skills Education curriculum is not discussed in depth; therefore, I teach it in passing.*

The above narrative is in alignment with Khau's (2012) and Matsúmunyane and Hlalele's (2020) findings that the LSE curriculum has been silent about gender and sexuality issues. The absence of non-heterosexuality in curriculum policies is against inclusive and equality principles (Francis, 2017). Therefore, Francis (2016) proposes that the curriculum should fully cover gender and sexual diversity content to enable teachers to teach about these topics.

One teacher, when asked whether she teaches about gender and sexual diversity in her class, responded:

**Palesa (Female):** *No I have not taught about them....the reason for not engaging in such topics is because the nature of my subjects does not involve such topics.*

Similarly, Mary stated:

**Mary (Female):** *I never taught about those things...the thing is, Life Skills Education is not one of my major subjects so I don't focus more on it.*

This study revealed that, one of the reasons participants avoided teaching about gender and sexual diversity was because LSE was not their major subject. Although the majority of participants stated that they never taught or discussed gender and sexual diversity in their classrooms, Palesa indicated that she once discussed those topics in her class. She explained that the reason she discussed gender and sexual diversity was because she was responding to students' homophobic behaviour towards another student. She stated:

**Palesa (Female):** *No I have not taught about that topic but there was a time when we discussed about those topics....students were calling a certain boy 'stabane'.... I was using my general knowledge while having that conversation in my class.*

While it is common for participants to use their general knowledge in their teaching, I am inclined to believe that it might not be the best option when it comes to LGBTIQ content because participants' beliefs and perceptions are influenced by social factors such as culture, religion and gender. For instance, Francis (2013) found that participants compromise sexuality content by promoting certain morals and values. Therefore, the use of general knowledge when discussing sexuality topics may allow participants to enforce their own personal beliefs in the classroom.

Studies in South Africa found that gender and sexual diversity are largely ignored in schools (DePalma & Francis, 2014; Francis et al. 2018b; Nichols & Brown, 2021). Similarly, the findings of this study point to the silence and ignorance of gender and sexual diversity in schools. The majority of participants in this study stated that they do not teach or discuss gender and sexual diversity in their classroom. One shocking discovery was that all participants in this study had speciality subjects other than LSE, which is an extra subject. This means that they did not receive any training on LSE. This confirms the findings of Kolosoa and Makhakhane's study (2010), which revealed that most participants assigned to teach LSE lack training. Researchers indicate that participants who are not fully equipped with skills that

promote gender and sexual diversity fail to respond or to address LGBTIQ issues (Bhana, 2012; DePalma & Francis, 2014).

Moreover, the LSE curriculum was found to be the main force influencing the silence over gender and sexual diversity. The silence on gender and sexual diversity content in the LSE curriculum renders the teaching of LGBTIQ content a 'choice' of individual participants (Ferfolja & Ullman, 2017). Francis et al. (2018b) argue that silencing gender and sexuality diversity issues promotes patriarchy and heteronormativity. Similarly, Nichols and Brown (2021) point out that schools promote a culture of heteronormativity and heterosexism by silencing issues of sexuality and gender diversity. Teaching and learning of sexuality and gender diversity would change both teachers' and students' attitudes, and they would look at non-heterosexuality in a positive way.

#### **4.3.4 Creating an LGBTIQ-inclusive school environment**

##### **4.3.4.1 *The need for school policies***

Participants' are of the opinion that Lesotho schools are not safe spaces for LGBTIQ students because of the lack of LGBTIQ-inclusive policies. This theme seeks to determine whether schools are safe spaces for LGBTIQ students, as well as to gain an understanding of the strategies schools use to embrace and promote respect, particularly among LGBTIQ students. Participants were asked whether their schools are safe spaces for LGBTIQ students and the follow-up question was whether or not there are policies and practices that protect LGBTIQ students. The first participant, Mpho, considered her school an unsafe space for LGBTIQ students:

**Interviewer:** *Is your school a safe space for LGBTIQ students?*

**Mpho (Female):** *I can say our school is not safe for those students (LGBTIQ) because there are no policies that explicitly protect these students. Also the Constitution doesn't say anything about them and educational gazettes are not yet amended to include them.*

Mpho's response shows that she knows the importance of policy and she is aware that without any policy that protects LGBTIQ students, her school is an unsafe

environment for these students. However, she lacks knowledge about the Constitution as she indicated that it does not say anything about LGBTIQ students. The bill of rights in the constitution offers protection for LGBTIQ students, however not directly as the South African constitution does.

Another participant responded:

**Interviewer:** *Is your school a safe space for LGBTIQ students?*

**Mary:** *I think it is a safe environment for them, and I believe that if they are identified, they can be accepted because we have realised that they exist.*

**Interviewer:** *Are there policies and practices that affirm and support LGBTIQ students in your school?*

**Mary (Female):** *For now we don't have policies or practices that support those students (LGBTIQ) because we do not have those kinds of people, but I think having LGBTIQ teacher who is accepted by other participants and with LSE subject that can help once those students are identified.*

Contrary to other participants' responses, Thandi believed that her school is a safe space for LGBTIQ students because there is a policy that offers protection to all students. However, it is not clear whether this policy is effective and works to the benefit of the LGBTIQ students.

**Interviewer:** *Is your school a safe space for LGBTIQ students?*

**Thandi (Female):** *Yes ma'am, our school is a safe space for LGBTIQ because we have a policy that emphasises that every student despite his/her status or sexuality has a right to learn and to be in a school campus and anyone who is found harassing students either by words or actions will be punished.*

Furthermore, participants were asked what strategies they think schools should adopt in order to protect LGBTIQ students, and most respondents argued that schools should develop and implement policies that will protect the rights of LGBTIQ students. According to their responses, policies must include strategies for participants to intervene in order to protect LGBTIQ students from discrimination and harassment. This is evident in the narratives below:

**Mpho** (Female): *I think schools should develop policies that include these students and make it clear to everyone how to support them and avoid discriminating against them.*

**Thabo** (Male): *Schools should make policies that protect these students and also include measures in which participants can prevent discrimination against these students.*

**Thandi** (Female): *Like I said earlier, our school has a policy that protects these students so I will suggest that schools should develop policies that support these students and clearly stipulate ways to prevent harassment and abuse of LGBTIQ students.*

Participants' views illustrate the need for a policy that explicitly prohibits discrimination based on students' sexual orientation. Shannon-Baker (2020) states that school policies that prohibit anti-heteronormative practices play a pivotal role in promoting sexual equality. Therefore, policies should be LGBTIQ-inclusive in order to ensure a safe schooling space for LGBTIQ students.

It appears that three participants, Mpho, Thabo and Thandi support the idea of developing LGBTIQ-inclusive school policies; however, two participants, Mary and Palesa, have different opinions. They indicated:

**Mary** (Female): *I can say schools should make their own policies that affirm and support LGBTIQ students, but I doubt it would change anything so I think participants should start respecting and treating these students like others.*

**Palesa** (Female): *To be honest, I don't think they need a special policy; they should be treated equally like other students.*

Mary and Palesa believe that all students are equal and should be treated equally, and that no student should be given preferential treatment. Palesa indicates that LGBTIQ students do not need a special policy. It is clear that she is ignorant of the challenges that these students face in schools, and she sees no need for the school to develop a policy that protects LGBTIQ students in particular. School policies do not exist merely to give LGBTIQ students special treatment, but they are there to compel schools to offer protection to all students, including those who face discrimination on a regular basis (Bhana, 2014). LGBTIQ students do not need special rights, but equal rights.

According to evidence from a study conducted by Matsúmunyane and Hlalele (2020), Lesotho schools are generally homophobic, and participants and the school curriculum make LGBTIQ students invisible. Furthermore, Section 18(2) of the Lesotho Constitution (1993) states that no law should make any provision that is discriminatory either to itself or in its effect (Constitution of Lesotho, 1993). Therefore, school policies and regulations should conform to the Lesotho Constitution because it is a supreme law.

On the other hand, the opinion that LGBTIQ students should be treated the same way as heterosexual students is debatable. De Wet and Van Wyk (2021, p.27) point out that, “equality emphasises equal opportunities for all individuals without regarding the characteristics which define them or which they use to define themselves.” Thus, on face value, this opinion makes sense, since all students will receive equal treatment. However, when harassment and discrimination are not acknowledged or addressed in the policy, it is highly possible for students to continue facing these challenges. Therefore, it is important to address and make participants and students aware of the impact of these issues on LGBTIQ students in the school context.

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has presented qualitative research findings addressing the four research questions of this study. The focus was on participants’ attitudes towards LGBTIQ students and how these attitudes manifest in and beyond classrooms. Chapter 5 presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations for future studies.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter focused on data findings, analysis and discussion of findings. In this chapter, I shall provide a summary of the preceding chapters, discussion of research findings and answers to research questions, implications for policy, practice and recommendations for future research. The aim of this study was to explore the attitudes and experiences of high school teachers towards LGBTIQ students in Lesotho schools. The study was guided by four critical questions:

1. How do teachers' attitudes towards and experiences with LGBTIQ students manifest in and beyond the classrooms?
2. What are the identifying factors for teachers to perceive students to be LGBTIQ?
3. How do teachers address issues of gender and sexual diversity in their classrooms?
4. What strategies do schools use to support and protect learners who identify as LGBTIQ?

#### **5.2 SUMMARY OF THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS**

Chapter 1 outlined the research topic for this study, which was "Exploring the attitudes and experiences of high school teachers towards LGBTIQ students in Lesotho schools." It further provided an introduction and background to the study using literature to support it and the rationale behind conducting the study. This chapter also discussed the research questions, objectives, and the problem statement. The theoretical framework, research design and methodology for the study were briefly discussed.

Chapter 2 presented a literature review in terms of the study's aim and objectives and research questions. The socio-ecological theory was discussed as a theoretical framework that provided an analytical lens to explore teachers' attitudes and

experiences with LGBTIQ students. The literature used in this study revealed that teachers have negative attitudes towards homosexuality. Teachers who were intolerant of homosexuality cited religious beliefs as justification for their attitude. According to Msibi (2011), religion is used to condemn homosexuality and to deny and question the morality and existence of various sexual relationships. Teachers' attitudes toward LGBTIQ students are important because teachers are in charge of creating a safe environment for LGBTIQ students. However, teachers appear to be complicit in perpetuating issues of discrimination and homophobia as they are found to be the ones promoting homophobia in schools by making homophobic remarks and creating unsafe learning environments for LGBTIQ students.

The literature also revealed that schools are unsafe spaces for LGBTIQ students because this is where compulsive heteronormativity is enforced and promoted. As a result, LGBTIQ students feel unsafe in schools as they experience homophobic bullying, harassment and victimisation at the hands of teachers and peers (Bhana, 2014; Brown, 2018; Francis, 2017). Lastly, strategies to support LGBTIQ students and legal frameworks were reviewed and discussed.

Chapter 3 described the research methodology used to carry out the study. This chapter provided a detailed account of how the research was conducted. It includes a comprehensive account of the research design, sampling techniques, data collection strategy, data analysis, ethical considerations and limitations of the study. The study employed qualitative research to explore the experiences of teachers and their attitudes towards LGBTIQ students in detail. The study was situated within the interpretivist paradigm, allowing me to gain a better understanding of teachers' attitudes and experiences with LGBTIQ students.

Chapter 4 presented the study's findings as well as a discussion of the research findings. The thematic analysis was used to analyse the data gathered during the research. The summary of research findings presents the main research findings.

## **5.3 DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANSWERING RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study's findings, as outlined in Chapter four, addressed four research questions, which are summarised below:

### **5.3.1 How do teachers' attitudes towards and experiences with LGBTIQ students manifest in and beyond the classroom?**

It is apparent from the literature review that teachers normalise heterosexuality and portray homosexuality as abnormal (Francis, 2019a). The findings of this study revealed that participants promote compulsive heteronormativity in schools due to lack of knowledge of sexual diversity issues. The findings further revealed that participants were not familiar with correct terms used to refer to LGBTIQ people, and they used derogatory terms and pronouns that dehumanised LGBTIQ students, such as '*stabane*'. The silencing and the incorrect use of sexuality terms demonstrate an underlying disregard for LGBTIQ students, displaying homophobic attitudes towards LGBTIQ people. Similarly, Francis (2012) also noted that most educators struggle to articulate terms like 'gay', 'lesbian' and 'bisexual' and that their failure to do so renders homosexuality invisible in the classroom, legitimising homophobia and compulsive heteronormativity.

### **5.3.2 What are the identifying factors for teachers to perceive students to be LGBTIQ?**

The participants' responses revealed that there was a specific expectation of how girls and boys should behave. These expectations have compulsory demands that normalise heteronormativity, and it challenges those who deviate from the norm (Msibi, 2012). Participants mentioned that they identify gay and lesbian students by their clothes, how they speak and walk. The majority of participants' responses revealed that the social construction of gender has heavily influenced their attitudes toward the difference between males and females as well as a rejection of people who do not conform to societal norms. Gender identification was strongly associated with appropriate clothing. For example, a man should dress in male

clothing and a woman in female clothing. A man who dresses in women's clothing is considered gay regardless of his true sexuality. This shows that social beliefs and values play a role in the formation of attitudes toward LGBTIQ students.

### **5.3.3 How do teachers address issues of gender and sexual diversity in their classrooms?**

Teachers play a critical role in bringing about change and challenging heterosexual dominance in schools to embrace diversity (Francis, 2017). They should play an important role in confronting oppression in schools (Kumashiro, 2000). However, participants in this study demonstrated that they do not teach or discuss sexual diversity issues in their classrooms. The majority of participants cited a lack of inclusive curriculum as one of the reasons they avoided teaching about sexual diversity.

### **5.3.4 What strategies do schools use to support and protect learners who identify as LGBTIQ?**

The literature review reveals that schools are mandated to create a safe and inclusive environment that meets the needs of all students (Francis, 2017; Loutzenhelsler, 2015). However, the participants' responses revealed that Lesotho schools are not safe spaces for LGBTIQ students because of the lack of LGBTIQ-inclusive policies. The majority of participants indicated that such policies do not exist in their schools; only one participant indicated that her school has a policy that protects all students, including LGBTIQ students. Other participants acknowledged the importance of having an LGBTIQ-inclusive policy in school; however, other participants argued that an LGBTIQ-inclusive policy is not necessary. LGBTIQ students should be treated like other students; they do not need a specific policy.

It can be inferred that teachers are ignorant of the challenges faced by LGBTIQ students in schools. As such, they fail to ensure that their classrooms are safe and inclusive for all students, especially for LGBTIQ students. Therefore, it is necessary for teacher-training institutions to ensure that teachers gain a thorough understanding of non-normative sexualities and the challenges that LGBTIQ

students face in order to challenge those societal norms in a way that is inclusive of LGBTIQ students.

#### **5.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY**

The findings point to the unavailability of LGBTIQ-inclusive policies in Lesotho schools; therefore, I would propose that the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) immediately engage in a process of adopting and implementing school policies that incorporate school ethos and prohibit discrimination based on gender and sexual diversity. Fields and Wotipka (2020) note that anti-discriminatory policies that are implemented in schools make students feel less harassed. Therefore, this highlights the urgency of producing policies that will ensure that schools are safe spaces for LGBTIQ students by emphasising equity and social justice.

#### **5.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE**

According to the findings, teachers had a poor understanding of commonly used sexuality concepts, indicating a lack of or no knowledge of gender and sexual diversity. Therefore, it is recommended that pre-service and in-service training be provided to teachers so they can become confident in providing educational programmes aimed at promoting acceptance of gender and sexual diversity among students. These programmes should incorporate content related to gender and sexual diversity, a policy that protects LGBTIQ students, and how to implement such a policy in order to avoid unfair discrimination because of sexual orientation or gender. Furthermore, these programmes must consider the various social characteristics of young people in school, as well as how these characteristics influence young people's understanding and experience of their sexualities (Francis, 2022). Based on the challenges faced by teachers in the teaching of gender and sexuality content, it is recommended that gender and sexual diversity content be integrated in other subjects. Moreover, it is also important to challenge cisheteronormativity within and beyond schools in order to make schools more inclusive for sexual and gender diverse youth (Francis, 2022).

## **5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

- The study focused only on three high schools located in the urban region of Teya-teyaneng (Berea District). Although the aim of this study was not to generalise the results, it is possible that different results might have been obtained from schools located in diverse regions of Lesotho. Therefore, I would propose that more studies be conducted among teachers that involve schools from a rural context in order to obtain a clear perspective of Lesotho high school teachers' attitudes towards LGBTIQ students.
- The study involved teachers' attitudes and experiences only; it would be interesting to conduct a study with students using child-friendly methodologies such as collage or photo voice in order to explore students' attitudes regarding LGBTIQ students.

## **5.7 CONCLUSION**

This thesis answered four critical questions that guided the study. The purpose of this research was to explore high school teachers' attitudes and experiences with LGBTIQ students. The research findings revealed that teachers considered heterosexuality as normal, while LGBTIQ people are perceived as abnormal, enforcing compulsive heteronormativity. For the most part, the majority of teachers struggled to pronounce or explain the abbreviation 'LGBTIQ,' revealing the disregard of gay and lesbian people in everyday life. The findings also revealed that teachers identify LGBTIQ people by behaviour, looks, clothing and how they speak, indicating that gender stereotypes are prevalent in many societies and that such views rigidly define the characteristics of each sex as well as the social roles that are acceptable for men and women. The responses of the teachers further revealed that heterosexual masculinities and femininities are normalised and glorified. The results suggest the need to provide in-service training for teachers who are allocated LSE classes.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Certificate



#### GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

12-Apr-2022

Dear Ms Mahlape Mota

#### Continuation/Report Approved

Research Project Title:

**Exploring the attitudes and experiences of high school teachers towards LGBTIQ students in Lesotho schools.**

Ethical Clearance number:

**UFS-HSD2020/1904/21**

We are pleased to inform you that the application to extend your ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

**Dr Adri Du Plessis**

**Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee**

Dr Adri  
du  
Plessis

Digitally  
signed by Dr  
Adri du Plessis  
Date:  
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[www.ufs.ac.za](http://www.ufs.ac.za)



## Appendix B: Approval letter from Berea Education office



LESOTHO MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & TRAINING

P.O.BOX 561, Teyateyaneng 200 Berea

04/03/2010

Tel: 22500235

Dear Principal

\_\_\_\_\_

Berea

The communique serves to confirm that Ms Mahlape Sylvia Mota has been granted permission by the Ministry of Education and Training to undertake research in the selected schools in the Berea District. The understanding is that her findings will inform the Ministry on model of ensuring school safety.

**PROJECT TITLE: Exploring the attitudes and experiences of high school teachers towards LGBTIQ students in Lesotho schools.**

Please accord her the necessary support

Thanking you

Mopei Selikane



District Education Manager

DEM-BEREA - 58855708



## **Appendix C: Request letter to Berea Education Office**

P. O. Box 962

Ha-Molemane

04-03-2021

The Ministry of Education

Teya-teyaneng 200

Berea, Lesotho

Dear Sir/Madam

### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

I would like to request permission to conduct my research in three high schools in Teya-teyaneng. The reason why I am conducting this study is to explore how teachers' attitudes and experiences towards LGBTIQ students manifest in, and beyond the classrooms and discover the identifying factors for teachers to perceive learners to be LGBTIQ.

Teachers who adhere to the criteria of being Life skills Education teachers for at least five years will be invited to participate in the study and participation is voluntary. The research will cause no harm to participants or their schools and information will be made available to participants before publication. Participants' answers will remain anonymous and may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly but nothing will be attributed to them by name. Teachers will have a chance to share their views on how LGBTIQ students can be supported in schools. The study will also result in a proposed action to encourage schools to establish policies that will protect LGBTIQ students. Again, it

will contribute to establishing a knowledge base of how the Ministry of Education and Training should design Life Skills Education curriculum. This can be done in a way that informs both teachers and students about sexual diversity and orientation, which can help in eliminating discrimination against LGBTIQ students.

Yours Faithfully,

Mahlape Sylvia Mota

## **Appendix D: Request letter to principal**

P.O. Box 962  
Ha-Molemane

20-07-2021

High school  
Teya-teyaneng 200

Dear Sir/Madam

### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

I would like to request permission to conduct my research at your respective school. The reason why I am conducting this study is to explore how teachers' attitudes and experiences towards LGBTIQ students manifest in, and beyond the classrooms and discover the identifying factors for teachers to perceive learners to be LGBTIQ.

Teachers who adhere to the criteria of being Life skills Education teachers for at least five years will be invited to participate in the study and participation is voluntary. The research will cause no harm to participants or their schools and information will be made available to participants before publication. Participants' answers will remain anonymous and may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly but nothing will be attributed to them by name.

Yours Faithfully,

Mahlape Sylvia Mota

## Appendix E: Consent form for participants

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable). I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Full Name of Participant:

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s):

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F: Interview schedule

### Interview questions for teachers

1. Could you please tell me more about yourself (except your name)?
2. In your own words, what do you understand by the term 'LGBTIQ'? Please elaborate.
3. Do you have student/s who identify as LGBTIQ in your class or in your school?
4. If you answered the previous question with yes, how did you identify them?
5. How do you feel about LGBTIQ people? Why do you feel this way and do you show these feelings? If so, how?
6. Drawing from your current understanding, how would you define gender, sexuality, sexual orientation and diversity? Where did you obtain these definitions?
7. Do you teach about sexual diversity and orientation in your classroom? If yes, where do you get the information from? If not, why are you not teaching about them?
8. What has your experience been regarding the teaching of sexual orientation, specifically homosexuality, within the classroom?
9. Do you think all students should be treated the same despite their sexuality? Why?
10. As a Life Skills Education teacher, what is your opinion regarding the following scenarios?
  - A student asks during a lesson on traditional gender roles, whether 'Mpho' (a lesbian student) can herd cows.

- A student comes out as gay at school; his classmates (boys) ask that he not use the same toilet with them.
- A student is being called gay because he plays with girls.

11. What do you understand by these terms 'homophobic' and 'homophobia'?

12. Have you experienced any difficulties regarding cultural difference, specifically homophobia in your class?

13. Is your school a safe space for LGBTIQ students? Please provide a reason if possible.

14. Are there policies and practices that affirm and support LGBTIQ students in your school?

Thank you for your time.

## Appendix G: Letter from Language Editor

# C Bitzer

89 Raymond Mhlaba

Bloemfontein

9301

Phone: 0820838339

Email: cathiiqq@gmail.com

14 November 2022

**Author: Mahlape Sylvia Mota**

**Student Number: 2018289336**

I declare that I edited the dissertation by Mahlape Sylvia Mota with the title

*EXPLORING THE ATTITUDES AND EXPERIENCES OF HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS TOWARDS LGBTIQ STUDENTS IN LESOTHO SCHOOLS*

During the editing process, I looked for and corrected spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence, and paragraph errors. I also looked for consistency in the references, both within the text and at the end of the work.

Yours sincerely,



Catherine Bitzer

## Appendix H: Turnitin Report

### EXPLORING THE ATTITUDES AND EXPERIENCES OF HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS TOWARDS LGBTIQ STUDENTS IN LESOTHO SCHOOLS

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