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Unsuccessful Xhosa Male Customary Initiation: The Perceptions of Traditionally Circumcised Xhosa Men

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DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. I declare that the study "*Unsuccessful Xhosa Male Customary Initiation: The Perceptions of Traditionally Circumcised Xhosa Men*" is my own work, and that I followed the referencing and editorial style as prescribed by the Publication Manual (7th edition) of the American Psychological Association (APA) to indicate and acknowledge all sources used in this dissertation.

Signed by candidate

02 April 2023

Signature **Date**

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"Your support network is the solid ground from which you can propel upwards."

- Anna Barne

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ABSTRACT

Customary male initiation is a significant rite of passage among the Xhosa people of Southern Africa. It comprises of the surgical removal of the prepuce and other customary practices intended to transition boys into manhood. Though a valued practice among AmaXhosa, various negligent practices in contemporary initiation schools have resulted in high initiate mortality rates and botched circumcisions, resulting in negative perceptions regarding the practice of ulwaluko. Although little research has been conducted on how people perceive this ordeal, botched circumcision processes are viewed taboo and punishable by Xhosa people, and carry with it negative consequences for the young men whose lives are affected. This study investigated the perceptions and stigmas associated with Xhosa men who failed to complete the initiation process as a result of health concerns or botched processes, from the perspective of men who successfully completed the process. Furthermore, it explored the perceived implications and dangers of the stigmas perpetuated.

A qualitative research methodology, employing a phenomenology research design, was used in the study. Twelve Xhosa men who completed customary male initiation in accordance with traditional prescripts were recruited using a purposive sampling method. Semi-structured interviews were conducted telephonically and in-person with the participants, and the data was analysed using an inductive thematic approach.

The findings suggest that Xhosa men who fail to successfully complete initiation do not uphold hegemonic cultural standards of Xhosa masculinity. These men are subjected to several demeaning practices, such as being called derogatory names and being barred from significant sociocultural spaces. Given this, it is perceived that these men are challenged with a variety of psychological issues including suicidal ideation, low life satisfaction, low self-esteem, trauma, and weakened sense of pride and dignity.

The study shed light on the negative perceptions and poor treatment that Xhosa men who fail to complete initiation are subjected to. Although it was acknowledged by the participants that there are several factors that lead to the failure of initiation, including those that were deemed acceptable, failing initiation was frowned upon and was thought to bring shame to a man's family and generations to come. These men were perceived as inferior, incapable of overcoming adversities in their lives, and lacking confidence and leadership skills. The findings of this study have provided insight in an understudied area of Xhosa male initiation which pertains to the social and psychological implications of failing the custom.

Keywords: *ulwaluko*, masculinity, stigma, perception, Xhosa men, customary male initiation

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

Customary male initiation, or *ulwaluko* among the Xhosa people of Southern Africa (Magodyo, 2013; Siswana, 2015), is a sacred cultural ritual intended to socialise boys into manhood (Sibiya, 2014; Siswana, 2015). A significant procedure within the ritual is the surgical removal of an initiate's foreskin (Wicklen et al., 2010) in a non-medical setting by a traditional practitioner often with no formal clinical training (Mavundla et al., 2010; Wicklen et al., 2010). The procedure, alongside the sacred environment it is performed in, is accompanied by excessive pain and agony that is symbolic of a man's ability to overcome adversities (Mandela, 1994), and his status of masculinity among other men (Ncaca, 2014; Mavundla et al., 2010). The successful completion of initiation is followed by a big traditional celebration, social privileges in one's community, and most importantly a declaration and recognition as a 'true' Xhosa man. Contrarily, Douglas et al. (2018) stress that failure to successfully complete the rite, which is characterised by the use of Western medicine, being hospitalised, and engaging with women is met with great scrutiny, contempt, and discrimination by other Xhosa men. Several scholars have attributed failed initiation to various negligent practices that occur in initiation schools including coerced substance use, physical abuse, and health complications (Douglas et al., 2018; Govender et al., 2018; Mavundla et al., 2010; Magodyo, 2013; Meissner and Buso, 2007; Wicklen et al., 2010; Ngumbela, 2021).

1.2. Aim and objectives

The primary aim of this study was to explore the perceptions that Xhosa men who have successfully completed traditional initiation hold of those who failed to complete the rite. Secondly, the study investigated whether these men (who successfully completed the rite) understand the implications and dangers of such stigmas on the affected men. This was guided by the following objectives of the study: (1) exploring the perceptions related to men who failed to successfully complete Xhosa traditional initiation, and (2) identifying stigmas associated with men who failed to successfully complete the process.

Research Questions

- What are the perceptions regarding Xhosa men who failed to complete initiation?
- What kind of stigmas are associated with Xhosa men that failed to complete initiation?

Understanding these perceptions, stigmas, and their impact was of importance because each year a significant number of failed initiations are documented on media outlets, yet there are limited studies that explore the outcomes and implications associated with failing the rite. As a result of this, there are few (if any) psychological and social services that are targeted at helping these young men to be constructively reintegrated into their communities following their adverse realities.

1.3. Rationale

According to existing literature, several studies have been conducted in various areas of the custom of *ulwaluko* (Douglas et al., 2018; Govender et al., 2013; Gwata, 2009; Siswana, 2015; Magodyo, 2013; Mavundla et al., 2010; Meissner & Buso, 2007; Mhlahlo, 2009; Ngumbela, 2021; Palmer & Engelbrecht, 2020; Peltzer et al., 2008; Vincent, 2008; Wilcken et al., 2010). These research areas include among many, the significance of this practice in the construction of heterosexual Xhosa masculinity, health-related complications of the custom, interventions aimed at mitigating circumcision complications, and perceptions related to medical circumcision. However, most of these studies account for a period which dates back to over a decade ago, leaving a serious gap in the most recent and relevant studies regarding the ritual. In addition, there are even fewer studies that probe the discrimination and punishments related to the non-completion of the ritual. Therefore, this study was necessary as it provided a recent account of perceptions related to *ulwaluko*, specifically the consequences associated with failing the rite.

This study primarily aimed to provide a recent understanding of various perceptions associated with these men once reintegrated back into society. Furthermore, it aimed to explore how these men who completed the process understand the implications and dangers of the stigmas they perpetuate to those men who failed to complete the rite. Particularly, the views of men who successfully completed the process is of significance in the study. Numerous studies have highlighted that Xhosa men who completed the process are among the central social agents that perpetuate negative perceptions and stigmas associated with men who failed to complete the process (Bottoman, 2006; Gwata, 2009; Mavundla et al., 2010; Vincent, 2008).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The practice of circumcision among men is recognised as the world's oldest and most popular surgical procedure (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS [UNAIDS],

2007). Predominately known as *ulwaluko* among the Xhosa people of Southern Africa, male circumcision is a sacred ancient customary surgical procedure characterized by the surgical removal of the foreskin of the penis (UNAIDS, 2007). It garners various significance in African communities including its religious relevance among the Muslims and Jews in the North Eastern region of Africa, its primary purpose as a rite of passage across certain cultural groups, and its medical pertinence as a procedure to prevent various Sexual Transmitted Diseases (STDs) such as the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) (Palmer & Engelbrecht, 2020; UNAIDS, 2007).

Globally, approximately thirty-seven to forty percent of males have undergone circumcision (Waskett, 2012). Among these, sixty-nine percent are situated in the Northern and Middle East of Africa, while a prevalence of fifteen percent are situated in the Southern region of the continent (UNAIDS, 2007). In South Africa, Palmer and Engelbrecht (2020) noted that in 2019 fifty-seven percent of men aged fifteen to forty-nine years were circumcised. Of these, thirty percent were circumcised by health practitioners, whereas twenty-seven percent reported to have gone to traditional doctors (Palmer & Engelbrecht, 2020). Notably, in 2003 the Xhosa ethnic group had the largest populace with traditionally circumcised men, with a total of eighty-six percent (Wilcken et al., 2010).

According to the Xhosa people of Southern Africa, the removal of the foreskin of the penis is a procedure that falls part of a sacred traditional ritual referred to as *ulwaluko*. It is seen as a significant rite of passage, which has been practiced for over a thousand years to primarily groom boys into being men (Magodyo, 2013). This ritual is aimed at facilitating and promoting various accepted values and practices that involve among other things, socially approved norms of heterosexual masculinity, high moral virtue, and to endorse appropriate social values (Magodyo, 2013). However, various negligent practices in contemporary initiation schools have led to catastrophic mutilations and a high mortality rate which has caused the custom to be of public health concern. Magodyo (2013), and Meissner and Buso (2007) have identified untrained traditional surgeons, forced substance use (i.e. tobacco and liquor), and negligent guardians as factors predisposing initiates to botched surgery, non-completion of the custom, and high mortality rates. Considering the negative practices in some initiation schools and their outcomes, this study was specifically interested in the views of Xhosa men who successfully completed the process, and their perceptions and stigmas towards those Xhosa men whose process in initiation was unsuccessful. Furthermore, it explored whether these men that completed the process understand the impact of such stigmas on the affected men.

The following sections will focus on how masculinity is constructed and understood in the South African context, and how AmaXhosa have come to construct, portray, and understand their sense of manhood.

2.2. Construction of Masculinity in the South African Context

Broadly defined, Mfecane (2016) refers to the concept of masculinity as behaviours related to being a "*true*" man. According to masculinity theories, which embrace a social constructivist perspective (Connell, 2005; Herek, 1986), Mfecane (2016) notes that manliness is not merely physiological and relating to one's masculine genital, genetics, and hormones, it is rather something humans acquire by performing "manly" behaviours that signifies what is understood as true manliness in a given context.

From a traditional lens, Maw's (2007) study that is centred on understanding how South African men describe their own sense of manhood, found expressions of hegemonic masculinity among its participants that perpetuates traditional patriarchal constructions of masculinity. According to Siswana (2015), hegemonic masculinity refers to a form of masculinity in a given context which outlines the widely approved societal norm that legitimizes patriarchy and encourages male supremacy. In relation to this, various aspects of hegemonic masculinity were expressed by the participants in Maw's (2007) study to describe the construction of masculinity among themselves including their emotional inexpression, participation in physically demanding activities, their external appearance, and embracing heterosexuality. The findings suggested that masculinity in the South African context can be expressed through, among other things (Maw, 2007):

- A man suppressing their emotions, or expressing negative affectivity,
- Engaging in socially accepted interests associated with physical strength, and,
- Maintaining a standard position of sexuality known as heterosexuality.

Hadebe's (2010) study among men in KwaZulu-Natal concur that South African men possess a hegemonic masculinity that promotes cultural ideologies and a religion of patriarchy. The findings suggest that the construction of masculinity in the country is centred on creating authoritative men in homes, condemning homosexuality, being a provider, and performing cultural rituals that separate men from women (Hadebe, 2010). Siswana (2015) recognises that much of the traditional construction of masculinity within this context forms part of the hegemonic masculinity expression of an "*African Man*", which denotes to the patriarchal principles identified above. However, it is with noting that hegemonic masculinity in itself is not homogenous, as such what is perceived as hegemony in one part of KwaZulu-Natal, may be marginalised in another part of the province and country.

Contrary to the traditional lens of masculinity in South Africa, a thematic analysis on the construction of South African masculinity relates South African manhood as a crisis largely defined by destabilization and ambiguity about societal roles, identities, gender, employment, etc. (Maw, 2007). Part of this is attributed to the recent shift from traditional masculinity beliefs that embrace patriarchal ideologies to a contemporary society that advocates for gender equality strongly enshrined in the country's constitutional rights post-Apartheid (Maw, 2007). Hadebe (2010) contends that the advent of a democratic political landscape in South Africa has propelled a discord in the construction of masculinity in certain contexts of the country. Specifically, Hadebe (2010) postulates that the recent democratic system has embraced new beliefs and constructions of masculinity that relate to being peaceful, compassionate, mutual, and equal in relationships. Similarly, Elliott (2003) characterises this modern construction of manliness as sensitive, domestically accountable, vocal on human rights, and caring. These masculine ideologies are in contestation with the historical traditional principles of masculinity centred on dominance, violence, and being strong and emotionally restraint (Hadebe, 2010). However, it is important to note that this gradual emergence of contemporary ideologies of masculinity, as a result of changes in the political system, are not applicable across all contexts in the country. The construction of masculinity in South Africa remains largely embedded in traditional patriarchal principles.

In light of this backdrop, it is evident that despite how South Africa maintains a widely traditional construction of masculinity, it also consists of components of a new form of modern manliness that is advanced by the recent democratic constitutional state. According to Connell's popular masculinity theory these constructions of masculinity in the country can be divided into two categories – *hegemonic* and *subordinate* masculinity (Connell, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity refers to a specific form of masculinity that is superior and which prescribes the standard norm of male dominance in society (Siswana, 2015). Subordinate masculinity on the other hand, refers to a type of masculinity that displays characteristics that oppose hegemonic traits (Siswana, 2015). It entails behaving femininely, being highly emotional, or being homosexual (Hadebe, 2010; Magadyo, 2013; Siswana, 2015). In relation to the South African constructions of masculinity, the traditional construction of masculinity relates to hegemonic masculinity, while the modern and new form of masculinity relates more with subordinate masculinity. However, these characteristics of masculinity are not equally accepted. In the following section, there will be a discussion of how the Xhosa ethnic group in South Africa endorse a traditional construction

of masculinity. This will be presented in relation to their sacred practice of *Ulwaluko* (customary initiation).

2.3. Understanding Xhosa Customary Male Initiation

2.3.1. Defining Concepts

Due to the sacred nature of traditional male initiation in the general public, this research uses concepts that are not common in everyday interaction outside of the communities where it is practiced. This section defines these concepts and provides pertinent examples where required. The following terms were included *ingcibi*, *ikhankatha,* traditional male circumcision, customary male initiation, and initiation school.

Ingcibi (traditional surgeon)

Ingcibi is a traditional surgeon that is responsible for performing the surgical removal of the foreskin of a penis (Siswana, 2015; Ncaca, 2014; Ntombana, 2011). These surgeons are often elders with no clinical training but have extensive experience performing customary circumcisions. Furthermore, they have a good reputation in their communities and among other men (Siswana, 2015; Ncaca, 2014; Ntombana, 2011).

Ikhankatha (traditional nurse)

Working alongside the surgeon is a traditional nurse known as *ikhankatha* (Douglas et al., 2018; Mavundla et al., 2010). Similar to the surgeons, traditional nurses have to be honourable and well-respected members of the community (Ntombana, 2011). They are responsible for nursing the initiates in the bush and are expected to inform elders on the progress of the initiates (Ntombana, 2011).

Traditional male circumcision

The practice of traditional male circumcision among the Xhosa ethnic group is recorded in reports from Westerners that escaped shipwrecks dating back to the 1700s (Douglas et al., 2018). It is a surgical process called ***ukudlanga*** (cutting process) by AmaXhosa that involves the removal of the foreskin of the penis (Siswana, 2015; Wilcken et al., 2010). A distinct feature of traditional circumcision from other forms of circumcision is that it is performed in a non-medical environment by a traditional surgeon (Mavundla et al., 2010; Wilcken et al., 2010). Siswana (2015) notes that the removal of the foreskin marks the beginning of the initiation ritual.

Customary male initiation

Customary male initiation, also called *ulwaluko,* is defined as the broader ritual that involves more than just removing the prepuce (Magadyo, 2013; Siswana, 2015). It is a symbolic process that is seen as a transitional phase from boyhood to manhood (Sibiya, 2014;

Siswana, 2015). Apart from the removal of the prepuce, customary male initiation in the Xhosa culture constitute various practices and teachings that prepare a boy for manhood including respect, responsibility, cultural values, and how to overcome adversities faced by men (Siswana, 2015).

Initiation school

Initiation school is the location where customary initiation takes place (Douglas et al., 2018). It is an informal circumcision school (Douglas et al., 2018), that is situated in the mountains – a sacred and remote area from society (Siswana, 2015).

2.3.2. Three Stages of *ulwaluko*

As indicated, customary male initiation is not just centred on the removal of the foreskin, it is rather a broader ritual that signifies the transition from being a boy to a man (Siswana, 2015). A number of studies dating back as early as 1960, note that initiation constitute three stages – separation, transition, and reintegration (Mhlahlo, 2009; Turner & Abrahams, 1969; van Gennep, 1960), that last from three weeks to a month (Mavundla et al., 2010).

The Separation Stage

The separation stage is the first stage of the ritual. It is characterised by the boy initiate being taken away from his community (Mavundla et al., 2009; Mhlahlo, 2009). The initiate is relocated to an "initiation school", a remote and secluded place in the bush, where he will live in a short-term shelter made from grass (Douglas et al., 2018). This process has a symbolic meaning as the separation of the boy from his old life in the community and from his mother signifies the start of a transition from his "boy life" to a new life as a "man" (Mhlahlo, 2009).

In addition, Magodyo (2013) notes that a number of activities besides being removed from the community transpire in this stage in preparation for the initiate's rite of passage into manhood. These activities include a farewell customary ceremony known as *umgeno,* and the initiate getting circumcised. The healing of the wound also starts at this stage (Magodyo, 2013).

The Transition Stage

This stage occurs after the previous "boyhood" identity is discarded but before the new "manhood" one is officially and publicly conferred following the last stage (Mavundla et al., 2009). During this phase, the initiate is not identified as a boy, but is also not seen as a man yet (Mhlahlo, 2009). Specifically, the initiate is not identified as a boy because he has

managed to get circumcised, however, he is still not seen as a man because he has not completed all the crucial activities towards manhood (Mhlahlo, 2009).

Magodyo (2013) explains that this stage of the initiation involves an initiate being educated about manhood. Different tasks are integrated to make the path to manhood harder and challenging (Magodyo, 2013). Furthermore, regulated physical skills are taught to the initiates to help them bypass the obstacles and suffering, as well as gain braveness, tenacity, and discipline (Ntombana, 2009). These hardships are implemented to strengthen the boy as he transitions into his new roles as a man (Ntombana, 2009).

The Re-integration Stage

The last stage of the initiation involves the initiate leaving initiation school and returning back to society (Magodyo, 2013; Mhlahlo, 2009; Mvundla et al., 2009). A big traditional celebration known as *umgidi* is arranged to welcome him back and to formally reintroduce him with his new identity as a man. Ntombana (2009) explains that the celebration is a significant milestone in this custom as it represents the successful completion of a lengthy and painful journey towards manhood.

To solidify his new status as a man, the initiate is provided with new clothing, a new place to live in (commonly a different private room at home), new roles and responsibilities, and a new name (Mhlahlo, 2009). In addition, Magodyo (2013) notes that from this stage, these initiates start dining, drinking, and smoking with other men that successfully completed the initiation (Van Gennep, 1960).

2.3.3. Influence of modernisation on *ulwaluko*

A number of studies have reported on factors that are increasingly shifting the practice of Xhosa male initiation (Kepe, 2010; Mabena, 1999; Ntombana, 2011; Mhlahlo, 2009; Sibiya, 2014; Siswana, 2015). These factors were identified as modernisation, urbanisation, and industrialisation. The constraints created by these factors have diluted the significance of *ulwaluko* (Siswana, 2015).

Modernisation is incorporated into initiation as a way to reduce reports of initiate health issues and fatalities throughout initiation seasons (Mabena, 1999; Mhlahlo, 2009; Sibiya, 2014). Several governmental bodies have developed modern alternative options in attempts to eradicate advent outcomes related to the rite. These options include medical circumcision, the enforcement of legislative frameworks, and pre-medical examination checks on prospective initiates to ensure their safety (Meissner & Buso, 2007; Mdhluli et al., 2020; Mhlahlo, 2009; Sibiya, 2014). Despite the benefits associated with the integration of

these practices, Mhlahlo (2009) noted that they are met with resistance by some traditional custodians as it is viewed as permitting modernisation to infiltrate traditional spaces.

Subsequently, various scholars observed that urbanisation has contributed to the shift in the practice of *ulwaluko* (Chen et al., 2010; Kepe, 2010; Sibiya, 2014). According to Chen et al. (2010) and Kepe (2010), the migration of Xhosa people from rural areas to urbanised settings has resulted in more initiation practices being undertaken in urbanised township areas than the historically recognised sacred rural land. Siswana (2015) notes that this change contests the significance and sacredness of the rite. Furthermore, Sibiya (2014), Mdhluli et al. (2020), and Kepe (2010) contend that the impact of urbanisation, particularly the westernised educational and employment systems, has shortened the duration of the custom from three months to a month because of parent-work leave and school breaks.

Lastly, modernisation has exposed the custom to the negative outcome of commercialisation (Kepe, 2010; Mdhluli et al., 2020 Ntombana, 2011). Untrained customary surgeons and nurses conduct unlawful initiation sites and circumcision procedures to profit from the practice (Kepe, 2010; Mdhluli et al., 2020 Ntombana, 2011). Consequently, there are records of young boys being abducted and taken for *ulwaluko* (Mdhluli et al., 2020). This subjects the custom to severe public scrutiny.

In light of this, it appears that the integration of modernisation and urbanisation serves to counter the significance of the custom. The following section will discuss the importance of *ulwaluko* in relation to Xhosa masculinity, circumcision-related challenges, and the meanings associated with failing the custom.

2.4. Xhosa Construction of Masculinity

2.4.1. Significance of *ulwaluko* in constructing Xhosa Masculinity

Customary male circumcision tasks young males with the obligation of advancing their fathers' estates and homesteads (Magodyo et al., 2017). It instils traditional systems of plutocracy and patriarchal dictatorship. In other words, initiation provides Xhosa circumcised males authority associated with more rights, obligations, social position, and the ability to appease ancestors because this is a task only men are allowed to perform (Mavundla et al., 2009).

Magodyo (2013) expresses that *ulwaluko* among young boys is practised to attain manly qualities such as the ones indicated above (Magodyo et al., 2017; Mavundla et al., 2009), and it forms the basis of the construction of masculinity among this ethnic group. Douglas et al. (2018) notes that in order for one to achieve these qualities, they need to successfully complete the rite. Furthermore, Douglas et al. (2018) explain that the rite is

deemed a “success” once it has been performed in accordance to traditional prescriptions. This implies that the initiates’ healing process should not violate any taboos such as interacting with women or seeking medical help from a professional doctor (Douglas et al., 2018). These incidents in initiation school are seen as defying the process and purpose of initiation to the point that it would be considered unsuccessful. Gwata (2009) concurs that Xhosa masculinity is constructed mainly by an initiate’s successful journey through the rite rather than their physiological growth or age. Specifically, this entails completing all traditional aspects of the rite as noted by Douglas et al. (2018).

In light of the studies above (Douglas et al., 2018; Gwata, 2009; Magodyo et al., 2017; Mavundla et al., 2009), it is evident that *ulwaluko* is central to the construction of what a “true Xhosa man” is. Though it has a socio-cultural significance and it integrates men into Xhosa religious and tribal practices (Gwata, 2009), it has not been without risks or complications.

2.4.2. Customary Male Initiation Complications

In a recent study, it was reported that the Department of Health in the Eastern Cape recorded, in a period of thirteen years, that eight thousand initiates had been rushed from initiation school to hospital for medical assistance, three hundred had undergone amputation, and just over eight hundred initiates had died (Ngumbela, 2021). In addition, a 2019 newspaper article reported that over five hundred initiates passed away due to poor treatment during initiation seasons in a duration of five years (Zuzile, 2019).

There is a broad range of factors contributing to circumcision-related challenges. Of these, Douglas et al (2018) and Mavundla et al. (2010) found infections, lung inflammation, extreme thirst, violence in initiation school, heart problems, unsanitary surroundings and surgical tools, and thrombosis to be some of the major causes leading to complications during circumcision. Furthermore, Magodyo (2013), and Meissner and Buso (2007) identified untrained traditional surgeons, forced substance use, and negligent guardians as factors predisposing initiates to botched surgery, non-completion of the rite, and high mortality.

Against this backdrop, Wicklen (2010) identified the severe removal of the penis, excessive pain, and poor healing as further complications faced by initiates in initiation school. Similarly, Ngumbela (2021) documented extreme bleeding, tuberculosis, gangrene, penis amputation, and death as serious circumcision complications experienced by initiates. Moreover, a study on the complications of male initiation, concur that infections, genital removal, and severe dehydration are common challenges during the initiation season (Govender et al., 2013).

In light of these ordeals, the state, media, and society have been advocating for laws and measures to address initiate morbidity and mortality rates (Palmer et al., 2020). One such policy is recorded by Mhlahlo (2009) as the Traditional Circumcision Act of 2001 which aims to monitor customary circumcision by establishing medical standards that initiates should adhere to. The next section will look at how these complications that arise in initiation are socially and traditionally perceived by the Xhosa people of Southern Africa.

2.4.3. Meaning of non-completion of *ulwaluko* for constructions of masculinity

A huge emphasis is placed on successfully completing male initiation in the Xhosa ethnic group. It is seen as the only medium that is traditionally recognized as the process through which a boy transitions into manhood (Mvundla et al., 2010). Douglas et al. (2018) reiterates that in order for a male to be recognized as a man the rite must be conducted parallel with traditional prescriptions. These prescriptions include, among many, that an initiate must not interact with women and should abstain from using modern medical interventions to help him heal (Douglas et al., 2018). Once an initiate engages in behaviours that oppose traditional standards it is believed they have failed to successfully complete the rite and are not regarded as a "real man" (Douglas et al., 2018).

There are various meanings associated with the non-completion of *ulwaluko* that influence constructions of masculinity in this ethnic group. Mhlahlo (2009) found that men who do not complete the process are referred to as women who are predominately seen as weak (*abafazi*) or they are perceived as boys (*amakhwenkwe*). This suggests that women are perceived as weak by Xhosa men. In addition to this, these men are subjected to numerous derogative behaviours. For instance, Mhlahlo (2009) notes that these men are segregated from what are considered manly activities during traditional ceremonies, and they are forced to sit with boys during traditional rituals or assist women in the kitchen instead. Similarly, Mavundla et al. (2010) found that men who failed to complete *ulwaluko* were believed to be deserving of social rejection from their communities as they are seen as a disgrace to their people. This study focused on perceptions and stigmas that are associated with men that failed to successfully complete the test of manhood, and the perceived implications thereof.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter reviewed how masculinity is constructed and understood in South Africa and among the Xhosa ethnic group. A combination of various theories was integrated in understanding the construction and conceptualisation of masculinity in South Africa. Furthermore, *ulwaluko* was analaysed as a fundamental rite of passage in understanding the construction of masculinity within the Xhosa ethnic group. Lastly, a discussion of

complications in the initiation process today and the meaning of failed initiation as a result of the complications was presented.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

3.1. Introduction

The research methods used to conduct the study are discussed in this section. The section includes the research design, participant sampling, data collection, and data analysis.

3.2. Theoretical framework

In line with the aim and objectives of the study, Connell's (2005) amended theory of masculinity was used to frame the study. According to Connell's (2005) theory, there is no singular form of masculinity, instead there are numerous masculinities which vary depending on a man's status in a gender hierarchy of power. These forms of masculinity include hegemony, marginalisation, complicity, and subordination.

Hegemonic masculinity lays out the standard arrangement of gender practices that are acknowledged as norms, that permit patriarchy and advances men's superiority over women (Siswana, 2015). It clarifies the criterion and norms laid out for what comprises masculinity and a "real man" within a specific culture (Siswana, 2015). Furthermore, Jewkes et al. (2015) suggest that hegemonic masculinity can be viewed as a scientific tool to recognize perspectives and practices amongst men that enhance gender disparities, such as men's superiority not only over women but also over other men (i.e. subordinate and marginalized men). In simple terms, hegemonic masculinity decides on the measures which other men are characterized and subordinated (Magadyo, 2013). As such, this led to Connell's (2005) category of *subordinate masculinity.* As discussed in the previous chapter, subordinate masculinity is a form of manliness that contradicts the conventional qualities of hegemonic manliness (Siswana, 2015) as it entails men that act femininely, emotionally expressive, or those who are homosexual (Hadebe, 2010; Magadyo, 2013; Siswana, 2015). Connell (2005) notes that due to the oppression experienced by homosexual men, these men are positioned at the bottom of the masculinity hierarchy.

Subsequently, Connell used the term *complicit masculinity* to describe men who benefit from patriarchy but do not actively practice strong masculine domination (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Connell (2005) notes that it may be rare to find men who adhere to the complete hegemonic pattern with rigor. As a result, most men benefit from hegemony due to the advantage men generally obtain from the submission of women. Finally, *marginalized masculinity*, also known as protest masculinity (Siswana, 2015), refers to a type of manliness

that cannot adjust to or gain merits from hegemonic masculinity. These men do not possess the essential characteristics of a domineering "real" man, they profit from certain features of hegemonic masculinity merely because of their sex (Connell, 2005). Siswana (2015) associates marginalized masculinity with young men that do not have the ability and resources (social capital) to have the full acceptability and access to hegemonic masculinities.

Against this theoretical backdrop, Connell's (2005) theory served as a useful theoretical instrument for a number of reasons. Firstly, the theory provided basis for understanding the conflicts and controversies embedded in the construction of Xhosa manhood. Following this, Connell's (2005) categories of masculinity were pertinent in the study because they provided a framework to understand the characteristics of the domineering form of manhood among Xhosa speaking people versus the marginalized form of manhood. Moreover, the epistemological stance of social constructionism that underpins the theory enabled the researcher to understand several realities which are socially and contextually embedded in the Xhosa ethnic group. Finally, Connell's theory of masculinity was integrated in the study because some of the local studies tend to centre the circumcision part of the process in thinking about masculinity in a way that limits our understanding of all the other aspects that make up the broader initiation process and their significance in the process (Mfecane, 2016; Magadyo, 2013: Siswana, 2015). Connell's theory enabled the researcher to view masculinity as part of large social and cultural contexts that shape and define masculinity.

3.3. Research design

The study explored the views of Xhosa men who successfully completed the process of *ulwaluko,* as well as their perceptions and stigmas towards those Xhosa men whose procedure was unsuccessful. Furthermore, it looked at whether these men that completed the process understood the impact of such stigmas on the affected men. Therefore, a qualitative exploratory approach was used, and a social constructionist perspective served as its guiding principle. Kielmann et al. (2012) explains that qualitative studies, unlike quantitative studies, are dependent on a primary notion that "reality" is subjective, and that humans develop their own personal perspectives regarding the world that is based on their encounters in the external world. Furthermore, Neuman (2015) characterises an exploratory research design as an approach that either investigates an entirely new research area or topic, or it provides a different perspective of understanding an existing phenomenon. Similarly, the proposed study provided a recent and contextually relevant perspective to the phenomenon of Xhosa customary initiation. Moreover, it explored an area of *ulwaluko* that has limited research,

namely the social issues surrounding the punishments imposed when a man fails to complete the ritual.

According to the aforementioned literature, it is evident that the failure to complete initiation is a major determinant in the construction of manhood. Furthermore, it is clear that *ulwaluko* is a culturally significant phenomenon among Xhosa speaking people in South Africa. This implies that the construction of manhood among *amaXhosa* is largely socially understood and constructed. Therefore, the use of qualitative research methods in this study was justified by the literature review and the primary goals of the investigation.

Subsequently, as indicated above, a social constructionist perspective was employed to guide the study. Social constructionism, has its underlying principles rooted on the notion that there are many realities in society that are socially created (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). The truth and reality, according to this framework, is not found or uncovered, but created in society. Furthermore, the epistemology within this framework is subjective and dependent on participants who act as experts or sources of knowledge (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). As such, Rehman and Alharthi (2016) state that in the event of various interpretations of a phenomenon by participants, there is no single "accurate" interpretation, but all of them are embraced as providing multiple perspectives to the same phenomena or problem. With respect to the research project, this paradigm best fits the nature of the study because it was particularly interested in incorporating various interpretations and perceptions associated with Xhosa men who failed to complete traditional initiation. Lastly, a social constructionist perspective, assisted the researcher to understand that hegemonic masculinity is socially constructed by Xhosa people as the successful completion of traditional initiation. Particularly, Xhosa men who have successfully completed *ulwaluko* possess the social power to determine '*true*' Xhosa men from those that are not.

3.4. Sampling and participants

A call for at least twenty Xhosa males who had successfully completed *ulwaluko* in the Eastern Cape or Western Cape was made using a purposive sampling method. However, a total of twelve participants responded. Of these, eight participants underwent initiation in the Eastern Cape and four participants underwent initiation in the Western Cape.

This recruitment strategy enabled the researcher to assess how geographical contexts (rural or urban) influence meanings and practices that shape Xhosa men's views and perceptions. Invitations to recruit participants were posted on popular social media platforms to reach participants who underwent customary initiation in the Eastern Cape and Western Cape. These platforms included Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp.

According to Neuman (2014), purposive sampling, also known as judgemental sampling, is an important method for special cases. In this sampling technique, the judgement of the researcher or their previous knowledge is used to identify participants particularly knowledgeable about a topic and can share views or experiences in relation to the phenomenon or topic under study (Neuman, 2014). The chosen participants were Xhosa speaking men who have undergone customary initiation in accordance to the Xhosa traditional prescriptions (Douglas et al., 2018). This population possessed an in-depth understanding and information required to achieve the main aim and objectives of the study. As mentioned earlier, Xhosa men (who completed the rite) are central in the proliferation of stigmas associated with men that failed to complete the rite (Bottoman, 2006; Gwata, 2009; Mavundla et al., 2010; Vincent, 2008). Therefore, a purposive sampling method was suitable for this study because Xhosa men who successfully completed traditional initiation can speak directly to the study topic.

A purposive sampling method was used to recruit the participants based on the following criteria:

- Xhosa men that successfully undergone traditional initiation that adheres to traditional Xhosa prescriptions (Douglas et al., 2018);
- Xhosa speaking men, not of mixed ethnic groups;
- Should be 18 years or older (Traditional Circumcision Act No.6 of 2001 indicates that the legal age for customary male initiation in South Africa is eighteen years and above).

In addition to a purposive sampling method, snowball sampling was used as a supplementary approach. The participants recruited through purposive sampling were asked to refer the researcher to other men they knew who completed customary initiation.

3.5. Data Collection

To obtain in-depth information for the study, data was gathered by means of individual semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted in-person and telephonically, with the inclusion of telephonic interviews for participants the researcher could not reach in-person. Some of the interviews were conducted in IsiXhosa to accommodate participants who were not fluent in English since the study focused on a traditional practice among isiXhosa-speaking participants. The translation of the interviews were conducted by the researcher but were also verified by a first language IsiXhosa speaking

man. This man was not involved in the study, but because he went through the procedure, he had a thorough awareness of the cultural meanings that would be reflected in it.

According to Harrell and Bradley (2009), interviews are a conversation between two people (interviewer and interviewee), or a dynamic group of people to collect data on a particular subject. This form of interview is reliant on a list of questions known as an "interview guide" that may be open-ended and followed by probing questions which help the interviewer to not go astray from the main subject (Blandford, 2013).

Therefore, in-person semi-structured interviews were appropriate for this study as they assisted the researcher to get both spoken- and unspoken information (i.e. gestures) which together gave the study insightful data. Additionally, telephonic interviews were incorporated due to financial constraints, the researcher did not have sufficient resources to reach participants located in other provinces to conduct the interviews in-person.

3.6. Research Procedure

The researcher obtained ethical clearance from the research ethics committee in the Department of Psychology at the University of Cape Town. The initial recruitment process of the participants entailed the researcher disseminating the invitation for participation on social media platforms that had a large following including Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp. Following this, the researcher sent consent forms to interested participants (via email or WhatsApp), for them to read before the interviews. An English and/or Xhosa translated version of the consent form was sent to participants. In the same email or WhatsApp text, where the consent form was sent, the researcher scheduled convenient dates for the participants to have the interviews.

The researcher went over the consent form once more with each participant before the interviews were conducted. This was to ensure they understood the purpose of the study, risk and benefits associated with it, and gave them a platform to ask questions if they needed clarity on anything regarding the study. They were then asked to sign the consent form, noting that they are taking part in this research study voluntarily and that they could decline to further partake if they so wish.

Following the completion of the data collection, it was transcribed by the researcher, analysed using Thematic Analysis, and the findings were shared with the participants for member-checking purposes. In the case where the interviews were conducted in IsiXhosa, the data was translated to English by the researcher and verified by a first language isiXhosa speaking person that understood the cultural meanings that were reflected in the study. This was employed to minimise the loss of meaning in translation.

3.7. Data Analysis

The data collected from the participants was analysed using Thematic Analysis. Thematic analysis is defined as a technique for recognising, analysing, and documenting themes from collected information (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). It organises and explains rich data in a simple way, and frequently interprets different parts and aspects of the study topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, Caulfield (2020) suggests that thematic analysis is ideal to use when the aim of the study is to identify people's perceptions, beliefs, understandings, and experiences about a situation. This method of analysis presents two approaches including an inductive and deductive approach (Caulfield, 2020). The former approach entails the data generating the themes for the study, while the latter approach entails the researcher approaching their study with a set of predetermined themes that are expected to emerge from the data.

In light of this, an inductive thematic analysis was suitable for this study because the data generated themes that speak to the aims and objectives of the study. That is the participants' perceptions regarding men who failed customary initiation, stigmas associated with Xhosa men that failed to complete initiation, and the participants' awareness of the implications of stigmas they associate with Xhosa men that failed. To achieve a systematic analysis of the data, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis were used, which included familiarisation, coding, gathering themes, naming and defining themes, and writing-up.

In the *familiarisation stage*, the researcher transcribed the gathered data from the interviews word for word (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). The purpose for doing this was to become familiar with the data set and develop a basic understanding of the participants' responses. The *coding stage* of the analysis entailed observing initial codes from the transcribed data set. This was accomplished by organising the data in the transcripts in a systematic and concise manner by endorsing codes in the data which are relevant to the research topic. Following this, in the phase of *determining themes*, the researcher decided on dominant themes that emerged from the codes. They were mostly descriptive and explain common trends from the codes initially selected (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After determining the themes, the *naming and defining of themes* began. This phase initially entailed reviewing the relevance of the selected themes for the research topic, followed by an accurate and precise definition of each theme, and finally the researcher explained how the themes are related to the proposed research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The last phase of the data analysis

focused on *writing-up* the researcher's analysis of the themes to address the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.8. Reflexivity

A researcher's positionality – that is, their race, gender, social status, ethnicity, and environment – play a critical part in the research process (Palaganas et al., 2017). Through reflexivity, researchers can explore how their positionalities inform the studies they conduct (Palaganas et al., 2017). As a young Xhosa female, who is barred from knowing the intricacies of *ulwaluko* and Xhosa masculinity, I was constantly cognizant of my sex, and how it influenced the participants. Furthermore, my extensive exposure to a Western way of life and dialectic (English) required me to learn and accept traditional normalities of the custom which contrasted my moral standing. Considering these positionalities, I engaged in the study with a degree of awareness that I was conducting the research as an 'outsider', despite identifying as *umXhosa.*

When I conceptualised the study, I understood there were going to be disadvantages of investigating this study as a '*female* outsider'. As anticipated, few participants expressed resistance in answering some questions posed to them and explained that they could not reveal sacred information to a female. However, interestingly, majority of the participants were eager to participate in the study. They indicated that the study provided them a platform to express their thoughts on an area of *ulwaluko* that is shunned upon – failing to successfully complete the rite. Moreover, a space for open conversation was also provided by my ongoing reassurance of their anonymity and confidentiality during the interviews. These had a positive influence on data collection and the quality of the data.

Subsequently, the Western educational system which encourages the use of English for scientific studies, could have restricted some participants from providing quality data. However, the alternative option of conducting some interviews in isiXhosa enabled more participants to converse openly. During these interviews, I became conscious of my personal bias as I thought isiXhosa encapsulated the essence and value of the cultural rite. Nonetheless, I was grateful to each one of the participants for participating in the study as I was aware they are forbidden from discussing *ulwaluko* with females.

3.9. Trustworthiness

Nowell et al. (2017) assert that qualitative research should be carried out rigorously and systematically to yield meaningful outcomes. This study applied a four quality criteria – credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability – to ensure trustworthiness.

Credibility ensures that the results of the study are accurate and consistent with the initial data presented by the participants (Korstjiens & Moser, 2018). To establish credibility in the study, the researcher continuously observed and examined major concepts, codes, and categories presented in the data by participants (Korstjiens & Moser, 2018). This entailed constant reading and familiarization with the data set until the final codes and categories directly spoke to the research objectives (Korstjiens & Moser, 2018). Furthermore, member checking, through summarising and reiterating the participants' responses was used to promote credibility.

Transferability is the extent to which the findings of a study can be transferred to different settings and participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Korstjiens & Moser, 2018). Lincoln and Guba (1985) note that although a researcher cannot predict the sites and participants that the results will be shared with, the researcher has the responsibility to provide detailed descriptions for others. Transferability in this study was ensured through a detailed description of the sampling technique, sample size, inclusion criteria, data collection technique, and texts from the data.

Dependability involves consistency in the study by ensuring that the analysis of the study adheres to the approved guidelines of a specific design (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher ensured dependability through systematically applying Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis, and by utilising an interview guide that ensured pertinent themes related to the research objectives were covered.

Finally, ***confirmability*** focuses on ensuring that researchers' results are clearly drawn from the participants' responses, and not the researchers' inter-subjectivity (Korstjiens & Moser, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017). To minimise distortion and/or researcher bias, confirmability was applied by frequently reading and checking the participants' interview scripts to detect and mistakes or bias. The researcher in this case served as an auditor in the research. Furthermore, the researcher was reflexive and cognizant of her positionality throughout the study in attempts to remain to ensure accuracy in the research process.

3.10. Ethical Consideration

This section will be informed by guidelines indicated by the University of Cape Town. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee (REC) in the Department of Psychology. Before conducting the study, all interested participants received a consent form that outlines the ethical aspects of the research including the primary aim and objectives of the study, possible risks and benefits associated with the

study, and the duration allocated for interviews. They first had to read the consent form on their own, then at a later point, before the interviews commenced, the researcher had a discussion with each participant regarding the consent form. The consent form was made available in both English and IsiXhosa to ensure that all participants were fully aware and informed of the nature of the study. Following this, each participant had to sign the consent form, noting their voluntary participation in the study and their right to withdraw from the study at any point.

In terms of the benefits and risks of the study, the study did not have direct benefits to the participants, but it contributed to the existing body of knowledge regarding the broader phenomenon of *ulwaluko*. However, the participants were offered small vouchers as a token of appreciation for taking time to participate in the study. These were food vouchers to the value of thirty-five rand. The researcher settled on food vouchers so that the participants could get themselves refreshments at a retail store after the interview, as the interviews were lengthy. Furthermore, risks associated with participation were minimal, but it was anticipated that some interview questions posed to the participants may cause discomfort due to the sacredness of the custom. Strategies to minimise this risk included the following. Firstly, the participants were able to choose to not answer the discomforting questions or withdraw from the study. Furthermore, the researcher was willing to organise professional psychological assistance had participants expressed discomfort.

Due to the sensitivity of this study, participants were assured confidentiality and anonymity in the following ways. Information was captured and stored in a confidential manner – personal information during data analysis was removed, and the recordings and transcriptions were stored on the researchers USB stick that was encrypted with a password and locked in a safe drawer. Only the researcher had access to this identifying information. Anonymity was ensured through assigning pseudonyms to the participants and the information they revealed.

Lastly, the researcher drew from Korstjiens and Moser's (2018) work on the factors that need to be considered to ensure rigor in a qualitative study. These factors included dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability. The researcher maintains transparency regarding the procedures and processes of the study when reporting as a way to ensure rigor and the quality of the study.

3.11. Conclusion

This chapter focused on the research methods and techniques that were used to conduct the study. It presented a discussion of the theoretical framework that guided the

study, the research design applied, interviews used to collect data, and the data analysis process employed. Ethical issues and measures used to enhance trustworthiness were also covered. The findings of the study will be covered in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Figure 1

Outline of Research Themes

4.3. Perceptions of failed customary initiation			
4.3.1. Meaning of failed customary initiation	4.3.2. Perceived factors attributed to failing initiation	4.3.3. Factors shaping participants' perceptions of men that failed initiation	4.3.4. Participants' perceptions of the '*successful*' men vs the '*failed*' men in relation to the completion of *ulwaluko*
4.4. Demeaning views (associated with men who failed customary initiation)			
4.4.1. Derogatory names			
4.5. Perceived consequences of failing customary initiation			
4.5.1. Sociocultural rejection	4.5.2. Psychological implications		
4.6. Integration, preservation, phasing out?			
4.6.1. Integration of western practices	4.6.2. Preservation of *ulwaluko*	4.6.3. Phasing out of *ulwaluko*	

4.1. Introduction

In exploring the perceptions and stigmas Xhosa men who have successfully completed traditional initiation hold of those who failed to complete the rite, four main

themes were identified that speak to the research questions of the study. These themes included, (1) perceptions of failed customary initiation, (2) demeaning views (associated with men who failed customary initiation), (3) perceived consequences of failing customary initiation, and (4) integration, preservation, and phasing out? In support of these themes, the researcher identified various subthemes. Furthermore, integral demographic characteristics of the participants were identified and presented in Table 1.

In the following sections, the researcher will begin by reporting on the demographic characteristics of the participants followed by the main themes. The demographic discussion reflects diverse information of Xhosa men who successfully completed initiation in the Eastern Cape and Western Cape provinces. The demographical variations were intended to provide varying contextual perceptions regarding men who failed to complete the process of *ulwaluko*.

4.2. Demographic Information of the participants

Table 1

Demographic characteristics of the participants (N=12)

Characteristics of participants	N	%
Age		
Adolescence (10 – 19 years)	1	8,3
Young adult (20 -39 years)	9	75,0
Middle age adult (40 – 59 years)	2	16,6
Age of Initiation		
Adolescence (10 – 19 years)	8	66,6
Young adult (20 -39 years)	4	33,3
Current Location		
Suburb	9	75,0
Township	3	25,0
Place of Initiation		
Township	6	50,0
Rural area	6	50,0
Marital status		
Married	1	8,3

Single	11	91,6
Employment status		
Employed	6	50,0
Unemployed	0	0,0
Student	6	50,0
Education		
Pre-matric	1	8,3
Matric	6	50,0
Undergraduate	3	25,0
Postgraduate	2	16,6

Table 1 shows the demographic information of twelve participants selected in the study, 8,3% of the participants were classified as adolescents, 75% as young adults, and 16,6% as middle aged adults. The majority of the participants (66,6%) underwent initiation during adolescence (with the youngest age being sixteen years), and the remaining few (33,3%) underwent the process during young adulthood. The age range of initiation reported by the participants is in adherence with the legal minimum age for circumcision. In terms of the Traditional Circumcision Act No. 6 of 2001, an individual should be eighteen years (18) or older to participate in initiation (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2008). However, it also permits individuals from sixteen years to undergo the custom granted that the parents or guardians apply for the individual to undergo traditional initiation with the Department of Health (WHO, 2008). Accordingly, the youngest age of initiation shared by the participants was sixteen years.

Among these participants, six of them underwent initiation in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province, and six of them underwent initiation in township areas. In addition, three quarters (9) of the participants have since migrated from their origins of initiation to suburban areas, and one quarter (3) of them are situated in townships. Chen et al. (2010) postulates that the increase in township initiation schools in modern society is due to Xhosa people migrating from rural to industrial areas in pursuit of work.

Subsequently, most of the participants (91,6%) were single, and only one was married. It is worth noting that most of the single men who participated in the study were young adults, while the only married man was middle aged (54). In my experience, the older

married man was more conservative in sharing his perceptions of *ulwaluko* than the younger single men.

Finally, half of the participants were employed and another half were students. Of these participants, 50% had at least a matric, while others had either a pre-matric qualification (8,3%), an undergraduate degree qualification (25%), or a postgraduate degree qualification (16,6%). Malisha (2005) notes that educated participants are beneficial in providing views and perceptions that are independent, accountable, and engaged. Similar to this, the researcher found that participants with at least a matric qualification generally offered better insight into the study issue than the individual with only a pre-matric qualification.

4.3. Perceptions of failed customary initiation

Failed customary initiation refers to events in initiation school that defy the traditional prescripts of performing traditional male initiation. These events include interacting with women and seeking Western medical help from professional practitioners during the process of initation (Bottoman, 2006). All participants expressed their views on how they understood the failure of initiation in their respective contexts. These views were organised into four subthemes. The initial subtheme which is '*meaning of failed customary initiation*', included various interpretations the participants related to the failure of completing traditional initiation. The following subtheme, '*perceived factors attributed to failing initiation'*, covered several reasons which the participants attributed to men failing to complete *ulwaluko*. The third subtheme, '*factors shaping participants' perceptions of men that failed initiation'*, comprised of structures that influence the participants' views of men that failed to complete the custom. The last subtheme, '*Participants' perceptions of the 'successful' men vs the 'failed' men in relation to the completion of ulwaluko',* focused on how participants distinguished between men that successfully completed the rite, and those who failed.

4.3.1. Meaning of failed customary initiation

The participants elucidated several meanings they associated with failing the process of *ulwaluko* and/or men that failed the process. They indicated that failing the rite is a reflection of inadequate manhood. Explaining their understanding of what it means when an initiate fails *ulwaluko*, Themba (41) said, "*if you fail to complete the process there, there are certain things you will not be able to adequately do as a man in your life*", and Khaya (21) who recently began his degree in university explained, "*if you do not complete the process, you will not have the degree to be deemed competent as a Xhosa man cause you failed to pass*

your degree into manhood." Following this, participants described failing the rite as a disappointment and shame. In their own words Sthe (26) and Mcebisi (33) stated,

"*I feel like just the act of not completing the initiation it would be like frowned upon*",

And men that failed the process,

"*are not only disappointing us, you are also disappointing your children and the generation coming after you.*"

Subsequently, participants indicated that failing to complete initiation may cause challenges in a man's life and it symbolises a man's inability to overcome challenges in his life. For instances, Fezile (24) said that,

"*There are a lot of challenges that's going to come about like if you don't complete the process… For instance, during traditional ceremonies you will never be treated the same as us that completed the process. You will be treated as lesser of a man. So these are the challenges I am talking about if you do not complete the process."*

Nkhanyiso (30) further stated a challenge of failing initiation is that,

"*The man will not be able to withstand cultural activities of manhood in their home, you know*",

And Themba stated,

"*So if you fail there are a lot of things and challenges you will not be able to endure in life.*"

Lastly, while Khaya noted that the meanings associated with failing initiation are contextually based ("*this failure is viewed differently from one community to the next*"), Mcebisi emphasised that the negative meanings related to failing the custom should be more severe ("*it should be worse*"). Expanding on his view of men that failed initiation, Mcebisi added,

"I think the way they viewed should be worse because I do not understand why you would fail to complete the process. So yeah, I feel like it should be worse because you are a coward. You are giving the whole process a negative image if you do not complete it. It should be ten times worse."

The participants' expressed meanings regarding failed customary initiation verify Gwata's (2009) suggestion that the successful completion of *ulwaluko* is integral in the development of manhood among Xhosa people. The participants position men that failed initiation as '*inadequate, incompetent, and disappointing*'. This stance emasculates men who failed initiation from hegemonic Xhosa masculinity that is advanced by *ulwaluko*. Douglas et al. (2018), Magodyo et al. (2017), and Mavundla et al. (2010) associate hegemonic Xhosa masculinity with men that are capable of expanding their homesteads, possess authority and high social status, and have power to connect with their ancestors. Therefore, this places men that failed customary initiation into Connell's (2005) 'subordinate masculinity' category as they do not possess essential features for hegemonic masculinity. Siswana (2015) explains that these men can never adjust to or gain merits from the standard hegemonic Xhosa masculinity.

4.3.2. Perceived factors attributed to failing initiation

In pursuit of understanding the perceptions associated with men that failed initiation, the researcher identified several factors that the participants attributed to men failing initiation. The factors were categorised into rejected-, accepted-, and other factors. The rejected factors constitute various reasons that were condemned and viewed as shameful for failing initiation. The accepted factors included factors that were perceived as understandable and valid for failing the rite. The 'other' factors are a combination of additional general factors that were identified in the data.

Rejected factors

The participants expressed a shared condemnation of fleeing the initiation process. Fleeing initiation school due to a man's inability to endure pain was responded to with backlash and derogatory views. Narrating their perceptions regarding men that flee initiation, participants had the following to say,

> "*If you ran away, you a coward straightforward!*" (Fezile),
>
> "*So if some decided to leave because of the pain or just decided to runaway I will not view them as men because their actions say otherwise*" (Vuyo, 23)
>
> And,

"*However, for those whose family have done everything necessary to ensure successful passage but fail to endure, such Initiates do not deserve the respect of society and family too*" (Sizwe, 54).

In addition, Mcebisi emphasised that the rejected reasons for failing initiation should not be limited to pain and running away from the process, rather all factors attributed to failing the rite should be rejected, '*So whatever reason that causes a man to fail to complete their initiation will never be valid.*'

The above participants associate masculinity with the endurance of pain. Particularly, Vuyo and Sizwe highlighted that fleeing initiation due to a man's inability to endure pain is a sign of not being fit to be a man. This view derives from a fundamental principle acquired in initiation that a man should conceal and endure pain during the entire initiation process (Siswana, 2015). In similar vein, Barker and Ricardo (2005), and Meintjies (1998) observed that the importance of undergoing *ulwaluko* is frequently linked to agony and pain that an initiate is subjected to in the bush. According to Mandela (1994), the significance of pain in constructing masculinity is symbolic of a man's ability to overcome adversities in his life. Ncaca (2014) stresses that the climax of linking pain with masculinity among Xhosa people is expressed through the saying "*Ndiyindoda*" (I am a man) which is uttered immediately after an initiate's foreskin is removed by *ingcibi* (traditional surgeon). Specifically, an initiate proclaims his position into manhood by not flinching following the pain of having the prepuce removed and his voice remaining firm when uttering the word "*Ndiyindoda*" (Ncaca, 2014). Given this, it is clear that the participants' condemnation of a man fleeing initiation due to his inability to endure pain is deeply enshrined in an overriding principle instilled in the bush, which is a man should be able to conceal pain as it symbolises his ability to triumph against challenges in his life.

Accepted factors

A common accepted factor for failing the initiation rite among the participants was medical-related reasons. The participants were more sympathetic and understanding towards men that failed their initiation process due to medical conditions that occurred at the time of initiation. As Fezile puts it,

"*let's say you don't complete or you complete at the hospital because you got critically ill, then I feel like that is understandable, because you had to go to hospital.*"

Similarly, Vuyo explained that,

> "*And then if you know you are an ill person like generally in terms of medically, you are sick and all those stuff, and like something happens where now it is out control for things to be handled the way they're handled there. I understand like if there are certain measures that need to be done which make it difficult for you to complete your process.*"

Moreover, Khaya stated that,

> "*If it is due to medical reasons that is something you cannot anticipate, so it will be understandable unlike the man that just ran away because they cannot bear the pain of being in initiation school*."

These findings present an intriguing stance regarding *ulwaluko.* The participants identified medical complications as an appropriate cause for failing the rite. However, Douglas et al. (2018) notes that the intervention of western medicine including emergency medical assistance, medication, and/or hospital admissions which may effectively remedy medical adversities that occur during initiation, are deemed taboo transgressions by other tribesmen. Venter (2011) notes that Xhosa initiates and traditional practitioners often reject medical interventions during the rite even when their health and livelihood are at risk as this defies traditional prescripts of the custom. As such, the researcher found it interesting that the participants in my study viewed medical interventions in response to medically-related complications a valid justification for failing *ulwaluko* even though the use of medical emergency alternatives or hospitalisation are traditionally forbidden.

In my view this inconsistency highlights a discrepancy between traditional prescripts adhered to in the bush and the moral autonomy of the participants. In a study of gay Xhosa men that underwent *ulwaluko*, it was explained that initiation is about cultural conformity (Ntozini & Ngqangweni, 2016). Comparably, the researcher believes the participants' expressed acceptance of medical complications during the initiation process stems from having to conform to a cultural custom that deviates from their moral autonomy.

Other factors

In addition to the rejected and accepted factors, various other factors were attributed to the failure of *ulwaluko*. These factors ranged from the use of witchcraft to administrative errors. For instance, Jola (25) indicated that one of the reasons for failing initiation is due to

"*administration errors*", and Sizwe stated "*negligence by family by choosing a traditional nurse that is not qualified to look after the initiate*". 'Administrative errors' in initiation schools include a variety of issues, such as an inexperienced *ingcibi* who perform botched operations in initiation schools, reuse of unsterilised surgical equipment, hazardous conditions in the schools, and the integration of poor diets for initiates that lead to excessive dehydration (Mdhluli et al., 2020). Similar to how Lumkile, the main character in Thando Mgqolozana's (2018) pseudo-autobiographical book, attributes his failed initiation to his grandfather's poor supervision during his initiation process.

Furthermore, Zenzele (28) alluded that,

"*there's a lot of factors that come into play when you are an initiate. Like, witchcraft first and foremost, and there is a lifestyle changes where you are prohibited to do stuff*"

Table 2

How relationships are viewed and maintained in the bush

Quadrant 1: **Relationships (including land) that are regarded as sacred** because of special rituals done dedicating their duties to the ancestors: • Ingcibi • Amakhankatha • the kraal • land where initiation school is held	Quadrant 2: **Relationships that are esteemed** as a result of going to initiation school: • Elders • Older men • Abafana (younger initiated men)
Quadrant 4: **Relationships that are viewed with suspicion** as a result of fearing witchcraft: • Women • Girls • some animals (owl,snake, and baboon)	Quadrant 3: **Relationships that are disregarded** as a result of NOT going to initiation school: • Oosondoda • Amakwenkwe

Note. The table is adapted from a Masters thesis by Ncaca (2014).

Table 2 presents various relationships that are present in the mountain during *ulwaluko*. Particularly, it indicates how relationships are perceived and maintained during the process. In the table, Ncaca (2014) demonstrated that witchcraft during the initiation process

is associated with girls, women, and animals such as snakes, birds, and baboons. According to him, these social agents are associated with bad luck and evil that is believed to cause initiates to fail their initiation processes (Ncaca, 2014). As a young Xhosa female, the researcher can strongly relate to this point. The researcher grew up fully aware that girls and women were prohibited from visiting their brothers or cousins in initiation school. It was not until late adolescence, when the researcher learnt that the reason girls and women are prohibited from the mountains is because they are thought to practice witchcraft. This perspective is supported by Soga (1931) who explained that women are believed to perform witchcraft to spread illness and death among initiates. Women being portrayed as evil encourages disrespect and mistreatment of women. The extent of the disrespect and mistreatment is also presented by Ncaca (2014), who noted that women are referred to as *"isiqwathi"* (snot in the nose) in the mountain. As such, it is clear that the denigration of women plays a significant role in how Amaxhosa construct their masculinity. In particular, the interplay between women and witchcraft plays a crucial role in the construction of marginalized masculinity because a relationship between an initiate and a woman during the initiation process is associated with witchcraft and, ultimately, to a failed initiation process.

4.3.3. Factors shaping participants' perceptions of men that failed initiation

Subsequent to the factors attributed to failing initiation, the researcher identified various factors shaping the participants' perceptions of men that failed to successfully complete traditional initiation. A prevalent factor shaping the participants' views regarding men that failed the rite was identified as the environment of socialisation they were exposed to (i.e. home and initiation school). The following texts epitomise socialisation at home and in initiation schools as significant factors shaping the participants' perceptions:

> "*It's something that I came across like at the bush and when I saw how people were treated. When there were men that would come to us to give us words of wisdom. In such a setting a man that did not complete the process will not be listened to. I would say it is something I learnt during my time spent there.*" (Fezile),
>
> "*I think just growing up, like, like I said, like, it was instilled in me to, like, always complete, like, what, what, like, what I started… I was taught at home, which would be like family.*" (Sthe [26]),
>
> *"You see when you are a boy neh, you are not allowed to know much about these things and the processes involved. So basically you won't know much about these*

things until you go to the bush and you learn about them there and the ways of manhood. That is how I know." (Siphiwe),

And,

"*It's, it's my environment… it's a matter of upbringing, getting to understand that people are different, and getting to understand that there are certain things that are out of control and you can't really hold someone against that*." (Vuyo)

Following this, over one-third of the participants expressed that the views they have about men that failed their process are influenced by their own personal opinions, their friends, or the neighborhoods they grew up in. In support of these factors, Lukhanyo (19) stated that, "*like it is my opinion because we are not the same as people*." Furthermore, Sthe concluded that, "*like your surroundings growing up, which is the people you grew up with, like, your peers and stuff*."

The perceived factors shaping the participants' perceptions regarding men that failed initiation coincide with studies that have reported on several social pressures that influence Xhosa men to undergo *ulwaluko* (Magodyo, 2013; Mavundla, 2010; Ncaca, 2014; Siswana, 2015). For example, Mavundla (2010) reported that fourteen young Xhosa men from the Eastern Cape expressed that their desire to undergo initiation stems from pressure from their families and a desire to maintain their family status (Mavundla, 2010). Furthermore, Magodyo (2013) suggested that Xhosa men are pressured to undergo initiation due to their fear of being ridiculed by their counterparts. Moreover, findings by Mavundla (2010) revealed that an individual's community, the way they treat men that have not partaken in initiation, is among the key factors that shape Xhosa men's views regarding *ulwaluko* and participating in the rite. Similarly, the participants in my study reported that their '*homes, friends, and neighbourhoods*' are factors that have influenced how they perceive men that failed to complete initiation. In light of this, the researcher believes that systems which influence young men to undergo traditional initiation concurrently inform the participants' views regarding men that failed the process of initiation.

4.3.4. Participants' perceptions of the 'successful' men vs the 'failed' men in relation to the completion of *ulwaluko*

This subtheme focused on distinguishing various traits that separate men that successfully completed the process of initiation from men that failed to successfully complete the process. The data was organised into two categories including the participants' perceived

characteristics of men who successfully completed initiation and their perceived characteristics of men who failed to complete initiation.

Perceived characteristics of men who successfully completed initiation

The participants were of the opinion that a distinct feature of men that completed *ulwaluko* successfully is their good character traits. When asked if there is a difference between the two groups of men (i.e. successful and failed), participants explained that successfully initiated men,

"*Personify Ubuntu, the characters of Ubuntu*" (Jola),

"*Commands dignity and respect among society, is brave, resilient and has perseverance*" (Sizwe),

And,

"*Able to stand up for what you believe in, being able to communicate*" (Zenzele).

Furthermore, there is a difference in the way successfully initiated men do things. For instance, Mcebisi stated that:

> *"The way they talk, as well as during sexual intercourse with females…the things we say, the way we speak, the lingo and stuff, and the terminology, and what you know. How you do things, things in ceremonies. The way you walk, when you are newly initiated you walk a certain way. The way you dress, yeah. So that is what separates us, the way we speak, the way we walk, the way we do things, even the way you think"*

Moreover, the way successful men are received following initiation differs, Siphiwe (21) expressed that, "*when you successfully completed you are welcomed back and put inside the house with words of wisdom and advice from the elderly"*. Lastly, successful men reportedly differ from men who failed to complete the rite because they adhere to the traditional prescripts of undergoing initiation and they can endure pain. In their own words, Vuyo and Lukhanyo said that, "*We differ in the way we can withstand pain that is how we differ*", and that, "*It's the fact that you did all the steps that were done by the elderly Xhosa people, by the people that went before you*", respectively.

Perceived characteristics of men who failed initiation

While some participants in the study reported on the negative characteristics of men who failed to complete the initiation process, others maintained positive views regarding these men. Of those participants that reported on the negative characteristics, it was indicated that men who do not complete *ulwaluko* have an inferiority complex, lack confidence and leadership skills, and are incapable of overcoming adversities. The following were excerpts presented in the data,

> "*And once you haven't completed that within yourself, there's sort of an inferiority complex when you are with men that have completed the process. So it's confidence. I think that's what separates – inferiority complex that they can't, no matter how much they try to fight it*" (Jola),
>
> "*Their character signifies inability to stand the test of time, of which, no one would trust that such a failed initiate would provide leadership or proper counsel when days are dark*" (Sizwe),
>
> And,
>
> "*it's like the one that didn't complete is because they didn't do all the steps that were necessary to be done to become, like, completely circumcised in the Xhosa tradition.*" (Vuyo)

In contrast, those participants that shared positive views of men that failed initiation reported that they do not undermine men that failed, they do not judge them, and they generally respect them. For instance, Sthe, Fezile, and Siphiwe shared similar sentiments, which was better explained by Siphiwe as,

> "*I do not look down on them, yes we will not be the same because I was exposed to different processes than them, but I do not look down on them.*"

Furthermore, Zenzele, Vuyo, and Lukhanyo concurred that they were not judgmental towards men that failed *ulwaluko*.

> *"So I'm not really judgmental. I mean, if you went and you know, you did, you know, the important parts, I will not judge you for you know, for not seeing it through"* (Zenzele),
>
> *"Like you can't you can't judge a person for not wanting to go to the initiation and or completing the process"* (Vuyo),

And,

"But then it is up to you if you decided to run away from the process, I will not judge you, or your reasons for choosing to run away." (Lukhanyo)

Moreover, Zenzele explained that he respected these men, and Khaya stated that he generally holds a positive view of men that failed to complete the rite.

"I am not gonna have less respect for that person, just because they did not complete the process" (Zenzele),

And,

"I think I have a positive outlook of these men and also I think it all boils down to the reason why they failed initiation. If it is due to medical reasons that is understandable, but I think even if it is not medically related, still I will treat them in a positive light." (Khaya)

The views depicted by the participants regarding men that successfully completed initiation and those who failed the process resemble ideas presented in the works of Mfecane (2016) and Connell (2005). According to Mfecane (2016), masculinity is not solely rooted in the biological attributes of men, rather it stems from 'manly' activities they perform. Comparably, the participants distinguished the 'successful' and 'failed' men in relation to their 'manly' behaviours. For instance, participants described men that successfully completed initiation as individuals that can stand up for what they believe in, are able to communicate, personify Ubuntu, are brave, resilient, and persevere. Whereas, men that failed the rite were described as lacking confidence, maintain an inferiority complex, and are unable to endure the test of time. These findings allude that *ulwaluko*, as previously described in section 2.3.1, is not merely about the removal of the prepuce but also about the values and beliefs that men acquire through the rite which inform how they behave.

Connell (2005), on the other hand, classifies masculinity into four categories including, hegemonic, marginalised, complicit, and subordinate manhood. As noted previously in the theoretical framework, hegemonic masculinity is associated with authority, high social status, and power (Douglas et al., 2018; Magodyo, 2013; Mavundla, 2010), marginalised masculinity is related to men that do not possess the resources, merits, and norms to access hegemonic masculinity (Siswana, 2015), complicit masculinity refers to men who benefit from patriarchy but do not actively practice strong masculine domination

(Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005); and subordinate masculinity is a form of manliness that contradicts the conventional qualities of hegemonic manliness (Siswana, 2015) as it entails men that act femininely, emotionally expressive, or those who are homosexual (Hadebe, 2010; Magadyo, 2013; Siswana, 2015). Similarly, the participants associated men who successfully completed the process of ulwaluko with traits associated with hegemonic masculinity. Lukhanyo explained that successfully initiated men complete all steps of traditional initiation, and the other participants staged 'successful' men as having the ability to command respect and dignity, are brave, resilient, and are socially recognised in the way they are welcomed back into society following initiation. In contrast, the participants organised men that failed initiation into the marginalised category of manhood. The participants mentioned that men that failed *ulwaluko* lack confidence, have an inferiority complex, and are recognised as uncircumcised men.

Be this as it may, it is important to note that some of the participants also shared positive views of men that failed the rite. These views oppose the typically reported negative views of men that failed the custom (Douglas et al., 2018; Magodyo, 2013; Mavundla et al., 2010; Ncaca, 2014; Siswana, 2015). Mabena (1999) posits that modernisation and recent accounts of adversities in initiation schools are gradually shifting the attitudes and views of *ulwaluko* in society. As a result of this, the significance and relevance of *ulwaluko* is at risk (Mabena, 1999). This suggests that the participants' views of men that failed *ulwaluko* may possibly stem from modernisation, and the recent rates of initiate morbidities and mortalities.

Overall, this theme has presented several perceptions the participants held in relation to the failure of *ulwaluko* and men that failed to successfully complete the rite. The participants revealed how Xhosa masculinity was arranged into dominant and subordinate groups. Furthermore, the endurance of pain during initiation was an integral component of Xhosa masculinity. Moreover, social pressures driving Xhosa men to undergo initiation shape the participants' views regarding men that fail the process. Lastly, despite the participants' negative views regarding men that fail initiation, some of the participants maintained various positive perspectives including that they respected men that failed initiation, they are non-judgmental, and they generally have positive views of these men. A factor that possibly influences the positive views of the participants is the western spaces that they occupy such as their educational institutions, workplaces, and areas they live in. Cultural barriers in westernized spaces provide psychological security upon the failure of *ulwaluko* (Mgqolozana,

2018). Four of the participants are students, one is an employee, and all of them live in suburb areas.

4.4. Demeaning views (associated with men who failed customary initiation)

In accordance with Schroeder and Epley's (2020) systematic review, demeaning others is indicative of a broader propensity to dehumanise people. 'Dehumanisation' is a process of portraying people as possessing diminished human qualities, more in common with animals or objects (Schroeder & Epley, 2020). In this theme, the researcher analysed how the participants dehumanised men that have failed *ulwaluko* through the terminology they use to refer to these men. The subtheme, *'derogatory names'* was used to present the participants' demeaning views. This subtheme included various dehumanising terms the participants use to refer to men that fail to complete the custom.

4.4.1. Derogatory names

The majority of the participants disclosed several terms they either use or are aware of being used to refer to men who failed to complete *ulwaluko*. Mcebisi, a resident of KwaLanga in the Western Cape Province who underwent initiation there, claims that the terminology used to refer to males who have failed to complete initiation differs between individuals initiated in the Western Cape and those initiated in the Eastern Cape. However, he argues that although the terms are different, they are somewhat similar and they can converse regardless of which province they got initiated at. When asked if the terms used to refer to men that failed initiation are the same in the Western Cape and Eastern Cape, Mcebisi responded that, "*It's different*." He further elaborated that,

> *"To a certain degree he will not be excluded from conversation, which is different from the one that did not complete the process. So even though the terms are different for the man from the Eastern Cape, it is basically the same thing."*

In light of this, the terminology reported by the participants coincide with the perspective postulated by Mcebisi. For instances, terms presented by the participants initiated in the Eastern Cape differed from the terms indicated by the participants who underwent the rite in the Western Cape. The predominant terms that were used by the participants who had been initiated in the Eastern Cape to describe men that failed *ulwaluko* included, *inkwenkwe* (boy), *intaka mpuku/ilulwana* (bat), and *inja* (dog). In their own words, the participants shared that,

> *"So, it's simple. It's 'inkwenkwe', which is a boy… Yinkwenkwe, yinkwenkwe"* (Jola),

"The most precise word, others are just slang that we use, is uyintaka mpuku… Other slangs, um… How can I put this… it is quite vulgar because we refer to you as inja" (Themba),

"Normally they are called Amalulwane (bat)" (Sizwe),

"Yes, it's, it's terms like you being called inkwenkwe which means being like, direct translation like, boy" (Sthe),

"There are, number one, they are called ilulwana which is a bat, number two, they are called intaka which is a bird that flew away… and number three they called dogs" (Zenzele),

And,

"The most prominent one is 'ilulwana' and a boy" (Nkhanyiso),

In contrast, the predominant terms that were used by the participants who had been initiated in the Western Cape to refer to Xhosa men that failed *ulwaluko* were, *nofotyela* (untranslatable), *mawawa* (untranslatable), and *change.* Lukhanyo and Siphiwe stated that,

"*Eish… What can I say… Nofotyela that is the only one I will say*" (Lukhanyo),

"*We usually call them 'change', they are change. Um… there is 'mawawa', which is someone that ran away. Then there is nofotyela. Those are the three terms we use*" (Siphiwe),

And,

"Mostly we use change and nofotyela, but we do not use mawawa as often because in some places mawawa is a family's surname." (Siphiwe)

Nofotyela, according to Myeko (2021), is a humiliating label applied to Xhosa men who did not follow the traditional route of *ulwaluko*. Similarly, *mawawa* is also used to refer to Xhosa men who failed to complete the initiation process, but it is less common because it is a surname in some areas.

In addition to the reported derogatory names, the participants further explained what some of the names meant. Themba highlighted that '*ntaka mpuku'* and '*ilulwana*' both refer to a bat. Themba further narrated that, *"Another term for a bat is 'ilulwana' and we also use it to refer to these men."*

Additionally, Themba, Zenzele, and Fezile mentioned that Xhosa men who did not successfully complete initiation are referred to as "bats" since this animal represents a hybrid of a man and a boy, just as a bat is viewed as a hybrid of a rat and a bird. Narrating the meaning of a bat in relation to traditional initiation, the three men stated,

> *"A bat can walk on the ground, yet at the same time, it can also fly in the air. So this word is symbolic of what these men are, they are half men and half boys. The same way a bat can be viewed as a half rat and half bird. Also, when you start your process at the mountain and then finish it off at hospital it is still symbolic of the bat because at first a bat crawls on the ground then later it flies – the same way these men fled initiation school to hospital",* (Themba)

> *"Now if you fail to complete your initiation we say you are flying, so anything that flies means you fled the process and never completed it. It is like when you went there and an ambulance came to fetch you that is flying away from the scene… But basically you are called a bat or a bird because they fly",* (Zenzele)

> And,

> *"That is the term we use to call a man that went to the hospital. We call them fly by nights, people that ran away from the bush. That is the name for a person that went to hospital but the term is also closely used for a person that went to the mountains but had to be rushed to hospital."* (Fezile)

Similarly, Lukhanyo, who underwent initiation in Western Cape, indicated that the term '*nofotyela*' has a similar meaning as a 'bat'. In his words, Lukhanyo said that, "*It basically means someone that is half, the person that did the process half way through."* Lastly, Zenzele further added that, *"and you are called a dog because a dog is a dog and it does anything, anywhere, and anytime, which it is something we as Xhosa men can't do."* What this illustrates is that through the process of initiation, young men are taught ways to carry themselves as Xhosa men. This is corroborated by Mhlahlo (2009), who highlighted that initiation schools are utilized as a platform to educate initiates on masculine issues such as how to communicate with people during traditional rites, and defining parameters for the expected behaviour of Xhosa men.

Significance of using derogatory terms

Along with the reported derogatory terms and their corresponding definitions, some of the men in the study discussed the importance of using derogatory names to refer to men that failed to complete the process of *ulwaluko*. The participants contend that the purpose of using these terms is to distinguish men that have successfully completed the custom from those who failed, to mock men that have failed the rite, and to advance preexistent derogatory terms. Excerpts presented in the data included,

> *"So there has to be a difference. Us and them, kwekwe which is them and ndoda that is us. It's a separation, you know… It's a distinction in how we relate to each other. And there is sort of a hierarchy within that distinction"* (Jola),
>
> *"You have to understand, we got circumcised in a period where these terms were already existing, and these are terms that are being used. It's not terms that we chose, you know, by ourselves by the time that we've got to the stage of initiation these terms were there"* (Zenzele),
>
> *"But basically it is just mockery of some sort. Just to differentiate them"* (Nkhanyiso),
>
> *"I would not know why they are used, but when I came about these terms were already in existence. It is terms that are used to label these men"* (Lukhanyo),
>
> And,
>
> *"We use them to refer to people that did not complete the process, you see."* (Siphiwe)

According to Mavundla et al. (2010), the process of stigmatisation among Xhosa men begins with the assignment of labels. These labels are essential to distinguish individuals from the broader society. This subtheme elicited numerous derogative labels presented by the participants in the dataset. The derogative labels shared by the participants in the study correspond with the stereotypical terms presented by Douglas et al. (2014), who cited that '*amalulwana, intaka, inkwenkwe, or inja*' relates to Xhosa men who fail to complete the rite. Furthermore, Siswana (2015) stressed that the derogative terms, *inkwenkwe* or *inja*, were not only used to refer to Xhosa men that failed the custom, but also those who were uninitiated. This component of stigmatisation advances the notion that Xhosa men who have failed to complete *ulwaluko* share a similar marginalised masculinity status as those that are uninitiated. Mavundla et al. (2010) concurs that both these categories of manhood –

uninitiated men and men that failed initiation – are subjected to equal discrimination, disrespect, and ostracisation in their communities of initiation as found in the present study.

Additionally, Ncaca (2014), and Schroeder and Epley (2020) contend that the use of animals and objects to refer to men that failed *ulwaluko* reduces these men to non-human status. Similarly, Mavundla et al. (2010) noted that the identification of men that failed the custom with objects and animals is intended to strip these men of their sense of humanity, dignity, and manhood. This demonstrates that the use of stereotypical labels is the premise for understanding that stereotyped Xhosa men are fundamentally different from other Xhosa men. Furthermore, the use of these labels is to create hierarchy among Xhosa men. Jola stresses this by stating that labels are used to establish '*hierarchy*' and '*distinction*' between the men who successfully finished the process and those who did not. Given the theoretical framework for the study, it is clear that the participants in this case were advancing gender hierarchy between themselves and those who failed initiation by demonstrating their superiority over these men by using dehumanising and inferior labels to refer to them. In essence, the use of derogatory labels is a measure to subordinate Xhosa men that failed to complete the custom.

In brief, this theme illustrated that Xhosa men who fail to complete traditional initiation are indeed stigmatised by men that have successfully completed the custom. In particular, the stigmatisation is in the form of stereotypical and derogative labels that distinguish these men from other men in the Xhosa culture. Furthermore, it can be deduced that the reported terms that are used to refer to men that failed the test of manhood are marginalising and dehumanising. The following section will discuss various reported implications of failing to complete the rite.

4.5. Perceived consequences of failing customary initiation

The participants' discussed several implications related to failing initiation. the researcher arranged the implications into two subthemes: psychological and sociocultural implications. The psychological implications focused on the mental and emotional effects the participants believed men that failed *ulwaluko* are subjected to. The sociocultural implications included the social and cultural realities that men who have failed the rite are reportedly faced with.

It was noted that the severity of the implications of failing the test of manhood are contextually based. Jola, who went through the initiation process in the Eastern Cape, and Vuyo, who went through the custom process in the Western Cape, both indicated that,

"So I went when I was 20, so for 4 years, I felt this sort of, um, isolation or ostracization from that community. But I guess it gets better from high school to varsity, because you're sort of in a predominantly white space" (Jola),

And,

"So in some cases it's very bad. Like especially in areas where they really like don't take it. Especially in the rural areas, I know it's bad in terms of that, but in urbanized areas I'm not sure it's that hectic." (Vuyo)

This finding provides credence to Ncaca's (2014) observation of the construction of Xhosa masculinity. Ncaca (2014) observed that even within a single culture, the status of manhood is formed uniquely in each context. Similarly, Jola and Vuyo explained that failing to attain the status of hegemonic manhood and the implications thereof are contextually based. Perhaps cultural variations in the western spaces (i.e. varsity and urbanized areas) proposed by Jola and Vuyo reduce the intensity of the implications of failing *ulwaluko*. Comparable to this, Mgqolozana's (2018) main character, Lumkile, affirmed that cultural barriers in white spaces act as a source of psychological security upon failing initiation.

4.5.1. Sociocultural rejection

The participants expressed that men who fail *ulwaluko* face significant social and cultural contempt and exclusion. It was reported that much of the discrimination and exclusion is reflected as normative in traditional spaces and/or events. Particularly, they explained that failing the test of manhood prohibits a man from accessing traditional spaces such as *ubuhlanti* (the kraal), an enclosed sacred shrine for men, and *indlu yesibane* (the lighthouse), a shared and an exclusive house for men.

"No, I do not treat them any different. But for example, where there's a cultural significance, like in the kraal, I do not have a choice, they cannot interfere in certain spaces because that's a currency, ubudoda is a currency in certain spaces. So I do not actively discriminate against them, but culturally I have a currency that they don't have" (Jola),

"But then also when there are traditional workings like ceremonies that, once they are like just ceremonies taking place, then it's a no-go zone. Like you can't associate yourself in those kind of situations if you did not finish. You will definitely get mocked, you will definitely be excluded and it's going to be shown like that you are being excluded" (Vuyo),

"Also, you will not have full access to the lighthouse like other men that successfully completed initiation" (Siphiwe),

And,

"There, like, there are certain things let's say the guy, like the Xhosa guy who didn't complete the initiation would be restricted from doing you know, like, such things being like, going into the kraal and the lighthouse during the celebration phase" (Sthe).

These findings coincide with studies that have reported that traditional spaces, such as *indlu yesibane* and *ubuhlanti* serve as significant and sacred land for Xhosa men (Mgqolozana, 2018; Ncaca, 2014; Ntombana, 2011). *Indlu yesibane* is recognised as both the rightful house of men (Mgqolozana, 2018) and a ceremony to celebrate the successful return of a 'new man' (*ikrwala*) (Ntombana, 2011). In this setting, Ntombana (2011) noted that an initiate is reintroduced in his community as a 'man' and is concurrently taught about manhood by other men. As such, Mdedetyana (2019), Mgqolozana (2018), Mhlahlo (2009), and Ntombana (2011) emphasise that uninitiated men, boys, or men who have failed to successfully complete the rite are prohibited from entering the lighthouse. Lumkile explained that, "*It is only after he has gone through this rite that an initiate earns his rightful place in the house of men (indlu yesibane)"* (Mgqolozana, 2018, p. 188).

Moreover, *ubuhlanti* is the first traditional setting that is utilized during the initiation ritual (Ncaca, 2014). It is regarded sacred as this is a place an initiate connects with his forefathers and is prepared for *ulwaluko* (Douglas et al., 2018; Mdedetyana, 2019; Ncaca, 2014). As a result, Ncaca (2014) and Ntombana (2011) explained that uninitiated men or boys do not have the social merits to enter *ubuhlanti*.

Subsequent to the above findings, the participants mentioned that men who fail the rite are further excluded from pivotal Xhosa masculine activities, such as the sitting arrangements of men in sacred 'manly' spaces, the distribution and arranging of food and liquor among men, the slaughtering of animals, and the use of the 'manhood' language and handshake that is taught in initiation school.

"So in the kraal there are various sitting arrangements, there are also various arrangements of how food should be divided in the kraal. So, if you didn't complete the process, it is gonna affect you negatively because you will not be part of any of

these arrangements. Also, you won't be able to speak in there, you won't be able to share alcohol with the rest of the men, and basically you will not have access to certain privileges in the kraal" (Zenzele),

"If I invite a Xhosa man that was unsuccessful at completing the process to a traditional ceremony, that person will be excluded from a lot of activities in the ceremony that require men. When we eat at that event, and have traditional drinks, you will not be allowed to consume those drinks because they set aside for amadoda (men)" (Themba),

"So we could be in one place, but culturally you should be sitting outside while I am inside when we eat because we do not eat with boys. In a traditional event, these men are placed in the same space as boys" (Nkhanyiso),

"So it's, it's very, it gets seen during those moments, during those very traditional moments, traditional ceremonies, the slaughtering of live animals, they can't even slaughter the animals, they can't even sit inside the kraal, they can't even sit among men" (Vuyo)

"They cannot speak isidoda. They cannot speak the language, the language that's used, and they are prohibited." (Jola),

And,

"They do not get included in the newly manly language which we call udodisana. They do not get the handshake which we give to men that completed the process, there is a particular handshake for newly deemed Xhosa men (amakrwala) which they do not get, and they also not allowed to go to the mountain." (Siphiwe)

These results suggest that men who failed *ulwaluko* are subjected to various negative treatment in social settings. According to Mavundla et al. (2010), the poor treatment, alienation, and ostracisation men who failed the custom are subjected to serves as means of asserting them to low masculinity status on the social hierarchy of Xhosa manhood. Mavundla et al. (2010) observed that men who fail the 'test of manhood' are often barred from sitting with other men, and are given leftover edibles to consume on the floor. Comparably, the poor treatment and ostracisation presented by the participants in the above excerpts are consistent with observations presented by Mavundla et al. (2010). Therefore, it

can be deduced that the participants' reported poor treatment of men who fail to complete *ulwaluko* is designed to marginalize men who fail the custom to a lower hierarchy of masculinity.

In addition, a notable finding presented in the above data is the 'language of manhood'. Similar to Froneman and Kapp (2017), Mdedetyana (2019), and Mfecane (2016), the participants made reference to a language of manhood known as *isidoda*, in which men who fail *ulwaluko* are excluded from. This language is primarily taught in initiation school, and it is used by Xhosa men to affirm their status of manhood among other men (Mavundla et al. (2010); Mdedetyana (2019), Mfecane, 2019; Mgqolozana, 2018). Once a Xhosa man fails to prove his masculinity using *isidoda*, he may be ridiculed by removing his clothes and having his genitalia examined to validate his status (Mfecane, 2016). As such, Mavundla et al. (2010) and Mfecane (2016) note that *isidoda* is intended to prevent *amakhwenkwe* (boys), Xhosa men circumcised in medical facilities, and those with questionable manhood status from passing as 'legitimate' Xhosa men.

4.5.2. Psychological implications

Most of the participants mentioned that men who fail to adhere to the traditional prescripts of initiation experience severe psychological challenges. According to the participants, the psychological effects of those who fail to complete initiation include suicide, low life satisfaction, low self-esteem, trauma, and a weakened sense of pride and dignity. The psychological effects were better narrated as follows,

> *"Mm, it causes harm because in my time of initiation process, there were some men that ended up taking their own lives. That's the harm because they do not live a happy life"* (Themba),
>
> *"Like you will always be reminded by this failure and it will definitely affect your self-esteem and confidence"* (Lukhanyo),
>
> *"It's not nice being outcast or even discriminated anyway. Just to think about it, it is not nice. Especially when these men want to mix with the rest of us. Like I said earlier, it has a lot of psychological effects and traumas"* (Nkhanyiso),
>
> And,

"I think it definitely does affect them like adversely because I mean, it attacks their pride as men, you know. So the minute you are told you are not man enough, it definitely attacks like your pride and dignity" (Zenzele).

Fezile further expanded that men who fail to complete the test of manhood tend to adopt maladaptive coping strategies to deal with the psychological implications of failing the rite, *"So if maybe mentally you are not strong, you will divert to other things to deal with this like drugs, alcohol, anger, and some people even kill themselves because of this."*

The psychological implications indicated by the participants are similar to those noted by Mavundla et al. (2010). According to Mavundla et al. (2010), psychological issues experienced by men who fail initiation are a result of the social stigmas associated with failing the rite. These psychological issues were highlighted by Mavundla et al. (2010) as, loss of confidence, change in character, low self-esteem, and anxiety. In light of this, it can be understood that the psychological implications reported by the participants stem from stigmas related to failing the custom, some of these stigmas being those reported in sections 4.4 and 4.5.1.

In summary, while it is known that *ulwaluko* carries positive social and cultural significance in transitioning Xhosa boys into manhood (Gwata, 2009; Peltzer et al., 2008; Sibiya, 2014), it can be argued from the above discussion that the practice concurrently advances social stigmas by ostracizing and alienating men who have failed to successfully undergo traditional initiation. This is presented in the way the participants reported that failing initiation subjects a man to discrimination and exclusion from traditional masculine settings, and from various Xhosa masculine activities. A result of these social stigmas associated with failing initiation is presented through the psychological factors indicated by the participants, such as low self-esteem, lack of confidence, and a weakened sense of pride and dignity, etc. In light of the presented consequences, the next section will report on the participants' views on the relevance of *ulwaluko* for Xhosa people and the importance of incorporating western practices during the rite.

4.6. Integration, preservation, phasing out?

Following the perceived implications and stigmas reported above, the participants further provided views regarding the longevity and relevance of traditional initiation among AmaXhosa. These views were organised as follows – integration of western practices, preservation of *ulwaluko*, and phasing out of *ulwaluko*. The first subtheme, 'integration of western practices', was centered on data that suggested that western medical interventions are

pertinent to curb initiate fatalities in initiation schools. The following subtheme presented findings that advocate for the preservation of the rite in current society. Lastly, 'phasing out of *ulwaluko*', elicited information from the dataset that suggests the relevance of initiation is waning.

4.6.1. Integration of western practices

Almost one-third of the men in the study were in support of the integration of western medical practices during initiation. The participants were of the impression that these practices had various benefits for traditional initiation, such as preventing initiate deaths and to support initiates in the schools. Themba, Sizwe, and Sthe, who had their initiation in the Eastern Cape, stated in their own words that,

> *"I am not entirely against this new principle of going to get medically examined before the process because I think that is good and it prevents any potential harm and death of these initiates"* (Themba),
>
> *"The medical condition of a boy must be determined and proper medical care be administered as recommended by medical practitioners, so that, during circumcision the initiate's medical status is taken cognisance of in relation to the support one requires at the initiation school"* (Sizwe),
>
> And,
>
> *"So like medical professionals should like check in once in a while, I feel like that is not a bad thing. That would reduce the deaths that occur there drastically."* (Sthe)

In addition, Themba highlighted that the use of western medical interventions should be limited to pre-medical examinations, *"A boy first has to go to hospital, get examined, and then issued a certificate before they embark in their initiation process."* The consideration of western medical interventions strictly before initiation stems from the initiation principle that the use of western medicine in initiation school is a taboo transgression that defies traditional prescripts of undergoing the custom (Bottoman, 2006).

Recent accounts of initiate deaths and complications in Eastern Cape initiation schools have become a major public and health concern (Ngumbela, 2021; Ntombana, 2011). Consequently, participants that were supportive of western medical interventions to prevent initiate mortalities were themselves initiated in the Eastern Cape. Similarly, studies have indicated that the use of western medicine pre-initiation are regulated and implemented by

legal frameworks such as the Traditional Circumcision Act of 2001, to prevent the persistent increase of initiate fatalities in the Eastern Cape and other parts of South Africa (Mdhuli et al., 2020; Meissner & Buso, 2007; Mhlahlo, 2009; Sibiya, 2014). In light of this, it is clear why the participants who underwent initiation in the Eastern Cape advocate for pre-initiation medical interventions.

4.6.2. Preservation of *ulwaluko*

There is a strong view among the participants that Xhosa men should continue to undergo traditional initiation. Most of the men (3) initiated in the Western Cape insisted that the custom should remain practiced in society. The fact that most of the men who underwent initiation in the Western Cape were satisfied with the rite with the rigid monitoring of medical interventions, as opposed to the men (discussed in section 4.6.1) who underwent initiation in the Eastern Cape, who advocated for the integration of medical intervention to prevent fatalities, supports the notion that *ulwaluko* in Eastern Cape is indeed a significant public health matter (Ngumbela, 2021; Ntombana, 2011).

When asked if they would allow their sons or younger male relatives to undergo traditional initiation, Vuyo, Mcebisi, and Siphiwe, who got initiated in the Western Cape stated that,

> *"Because, like, I know what happens, I know what happens there, and, you know, like, I know the process that I went through. And on the outside it seems very risky and all that stuff. But I mean, I know that there are certain steps that need to be taken and those steps kind of ensure that things go smoothly. So I would like, and I will encourage my nephews, my, my, my son's, I will encourage them"* (Vuyo),
>
> *"100%, 100%. No one dies there. So 100%"* (Mcebisi),
>
> And,
>
> *"But then, at the end of the day tradition is important, if I have boy children one day, of course I would allow them to go through it"* (Siphiwe)

Furthermore, when asked if anything should change about the rite, Mcebisi, who previously indicated that he was happy with the rite as is in Cape Town, further maintained that the custom should remain as it is. In his own words, Mcebisi stated,

> *"I do not want things to be too luxurious that you end up forgetting why you decided to go to initiation school. I feel like nothing should change, it should stay the same. "*

In addition, some of the men initiated in the Eastern Cape shared similar sentiments. When asked if anything should change about the rite, the following was mentioned,

> *"I really do not see the need for the custom to be changed, I love my culture, I love the Xhosa culture. I know it is not perfect, but me, I wouldn't change it"* (Zenzele),
>
> And,
>
> *"No, it's perfect. It's perfect from A to Z"* (Fezile).

Furthermore, Sizwe expanded on the significance of preserving the custom, *"The custom must remain for it separates boys from men, and that its purpose must be restored to preserve its dignity and respect."*

4.6.3. Phasing out of *ulwaluko*

Contrary to the participants that indicated that the custom should either integrate medical interventions or be preserved as is, Jola offered a distinct view regarding the relevance of *ulwaluko*. According to Jola, the relevance of the rite is waning in society. In his words, Jola stated that,

> *"I do not think there's any good that might come up from them going to the mountain. Because it was a currency that I needed because where I come from it is largely rural, but now it's getting ever more urbanized where I come from and my child won't need this … I don't think it's relevant. It is losing its relevance quick, a lot is being televised so much, it's almost like a cultural experiment. It almost has lost its relevance."*

As discussed earlier, Mabena (1999) noted that the relevance of traditional initiation is in danger. Mabena (1999) attributed this ideology to modernization and fatalities in initiation schools. Comparably, Jola indicated *ulwaluko* was a currency necessitated in rural spaces, but recent induction of urbanized spaces has diminished the significance of the practice.

Overall, this theme has demonstrated opposing views regarding the relevance of traditional Xhosa initiation in society. It is evident that the safety of the custom is a major concern among participants initiated in the Eastern Cape as opposed to those initiated in Western Cape. This view is attributed to the high initiate mortality rates recorded in Eastern Cape, as compared to the Western Cape. Lastly, modernisation in South Africa has called into question the significance of the custom in society.

4.7. Conclusion

This chapter presented various findings that speak to the aim and objectives of the study. An integration of four themes, subthemes, and a discussion on the respective themes were covered. The first theme included various meanings related to the failure to complete initiation, factors which are considered to contribute to failed initiation processes, factors that are believed to influence the participants' views of Xhosa men that fail to complete *ulwlauko*, and the participants' differentiation of men that failed to finish the rite and those who successfully completed the process. The second theme presented derogatory labels applied to men that fail the custom and perceived importance of these labels. The following theme highlighted various perceived consequences that men who fail the rite are subjected to. Finally, the fourth theme looked into the participants' perceptions on the durability and pertinence of the custom in Xhosa communities.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1. Summary of findings

This study shed light on several perceptions and stigmas related to Xhosa men who fail to successfully complete traditional initiation, as well as the perceived implications of these views. The themes that emerged included perceptions of failed customary initiation, demeaning views (associated with men who failed customary initiation), perceived consequences of failing customary initiation, and integration, preservation, and phasing out?

The study indicated that traditional male initiation is a significant custom in the construction of Xhosa masculinity. Failure to complete the rite positions these Xhosa men lower on the 'hierarchy of masculinities', thus marginalising them. This was presented in the way the Xhosa men who successfully completed the custom stigmatised and demonstrated their superiority over men that failed to complete *ulwaluko* through the use of dehumanising labels (e.g. *inkwenkwe* (boy), *intaka mpuku/ilulwana* (bat), and *inja* (dog)) , and by socially and culturally discriminating and ostracising these men. Several psychological issues were reported as advent effects of these stigmas and views such as suicide, lack of life satisfaction and self-esteem, trauma, and diminished sense of pride and dignity. Nevertheless, some of the participants maintained favourable views about Xhosa males who failed ulwaluko, including that they generally respect these men and they don't discredit them.

The participants' views on failed initiation processes were shaped by several factors distinguishable in one's microsystem such as their homes, peers, communities where they

grew up, and initiation schools. Moreover, there were opposing views regarding the relevance of the custom in Xhosa communities today. Xhosa men who underwent the rite in the Eastern Cape Province advocated for the incorporation of western practices during *ulwaluko,* while the majority of the Xhosa men who underwent the initiation process in the Western Cape Province were satisfied with the safety standards implemented to ensure safe initiation practices in the province. Lastly, the study presented that some men think the custom is waning out. This was attributed to the integration of urbanisation.

5.2. Significance of the study

This study shed light on the advent social rejection Xhosa men who have failed initiation are subjected to by those men who successfully complete the rite once reintegrated back to their communities. Annually, there is a large number of failed initiations reported, yet little information is available in literature that accounts for the advent realities following the failure of the rite. Furthermore, it added a recent perspective to the existing body of knowledge in the field of gender studies in South Africa. Particularly, it gave a context-specific insight in an understudied area of *ulwaluko* which pertains to social and psychological implications of the failure to complete the custom.

In practice, it is hoped the study encourages relevant governmental bodies (Department of- Health, Social development, Education, and Traditional Affairs) to develop educational, social, and psychological interventions to remedy discriminatory perceptions and stigmas Xhosa men who fail initiation are subjected to once they fail *ulwaluko*. In turn, this will assist these men to be constructively reintegrated back to their communities following their adverse experiences.

5.3. Limitations

The limitations of the study were confined to the following aspects. The sample was restricted to criteria bias and as such, the findings of the investigation cannot be generalized and representative of the broader populace. Furthermore, the researcher is aware that her position as a female researcher may have restricted participants from providing in-depth and descriptive responses. Moreover, due to financial constraints that limited the ability to travel, the researcher was unable to conduct in-person interviews with some of the participants who were located in other provinces. As a result, these interviews were conducted telephonically and had to be kept shorter.

5.4. Recommendations

The outcomes of this study present potential directions for future studies. An in-depth study, explored from the angle of Xhosa men who failed *ulwaluko*, would yield more personal data regarding the stigmas associated with the failure of initiation and the implications thereof. Furthermore, a more descriptive research design such as a narrative design would produce richer responses from those men who failed the custom. It would allow researchers to report on the stories and lived experiences of Xhosa men who failed customary initiation. Moreover, future studies, focusing on effective psychosocial initiatives for the affected men and communities, are necessary to address the root cause of the stigmas and the implications of failing the rite.

Subsequent to these research recommendations, it is recommended that policymakers should implement additional measures to ensure the effective implementation of legal frameworks (e.g. Traditional Circumcision Act of 2001) in initiation schools, particularly in the Eastern Cape Province. It is further recommended that current legal frameworks should mandate counselling services for all young Xhosa males before and after undergoing *ulwaluko* to mitigate the mental risks associated with undergoing the custom and the possible failure of the rite.

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Appendix A: Invitation to participate

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Appendix B: Ifomu yeMvume

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Enkosi ngokuvuma ukuthatha inxaxheba kule projekthi yophando enesihloko '*Unsuccessful Xhosa Male Customary Initiation: The Perceptions of Traditionally Circumcised Xhosa Men'*

Injongo yesifundo

Olu phando lujonge ukuqonda iimbono kunye namabala athi amadoda angamaXhosa aphumelele ukwaluka abambelele kumadoda angaphumeleliyo ukugqiba isiko. Olu phando lukwanomdla wokubona ukuba amadoda angamaXhosa alugqibe ngempumelelo ulwaluko ayabuqonda na ubungozi bokubekwa amabala kulawo madoda angalugqibanga ulwaluko. Ukuthatha kwakho inxaxheba kolu phononongo kuya kubandakanya udliwano-ndlebe nomntu ngamnye ubuso ngobuso (okanye ngomnxeba) ekulindeleke ukuba luthathe phakathi kwemizuzu engama-45-60. Udliwano-ndlebe ngalunye luya kurekhodwa kusetyenziswa irekhoda, kwaye kamva iya kukhutshelwa, ihlalutywe kwaye ibhalwe ukuba ipapashwe.

Iingqwalasela zokuziphatha

Ukuthatha kwakho inxaxheba kuphononongo kuya kugcinwa kuyimfihlo kwaye zonke iinkcukacha zakho zobuqu ziya kususwa kwidatha ukukhusela ubuwena. Ulwazi oluqokelelwe kuwe kudliwano-ndlebe luya kusetyenziselwa ukunika ingxelo ngeziphumo zophando oluya kufumaneka kuwe kwaye kamva luya kupapashwa kwijenali. Zonke izinto ezirekhodiweyo kunye nemibhalo ebhaliweyo iya kugcinwa kwifolda evaliweyo kwaye iya kufumaneka kuphela kumphandi obandakanyekayo kolu phononongo. Ukuba ukhetha ukuba udliwano-ndlebe lwenziwe ngesiXhosa, nceda uqaphele ukuba umntu othetha ulwimi lwenkobe uya kunikwa ithuba lokuqinisekisa oko kurekhodiweyo kunye nemibhalo eshicilelweyo, kodwa akukho lwazi luchazayo luya kutyhilwa kuye. Naziphi na iikopi ezingamaphepha eziveliswayo kubandakanywa neefom zemvume esayiniweyo ziya kugcinwa kwigumbi elitshixwayo ekuya kuthi kuphela umphandi oyintloko abe nokufikelela kulo. Ngenjongo yokunika ingxelo, onke amagama kunye nolwazi olubonakalayo luya kususwa, kwaye amagama angama-pseudnyms aya kusetyenziswa ukuze kuqinisekiswe ukuba idatha ihlala ingaziwa. Unelungelo lokurhoxisa ukuthatha kwakho inxaxheba kolu phononongo nangaliphi na ixesha ngaphandle kweziphumo ezimbi. Ukuba ukhetha ukwenza njalo, nayiphi na idatha osele uyinikezile iya kutshatyalaliswa kwaye ayiyi kusetyenziselwa uphando.

Iinzuzo kunye nobungozi

Imingcipheko enxulumene nokuthatha inxaxheba ithathwa njengencinci, kodwa kulindeleke ukuba imibuzo ethile yodliwano-ndlebe ebuzwe kuwe inokubangela ukungonwabi. Ukuba uziva ungonwabanga nangaliphi na ixesha ngenxa yophando, unokwazisa umphandi oya kwenza amalungiselelo okuba ufune uncedo lobuchwephesha kwiziko elikufutshane nawe (jonga uluhlu lokuthunyelwa oluqukiweyo). Akuyi kubakho mbuyekezo ngokuthatha inxaxheba kolu phononongo. Nangona kunjalo, umphandi uya kubonelela ngeevawutsha zokutya ezincinci njengomqondiso wokuxabisa ixesha olithathileyo lokuthatha inxaxheba kuphononongo. Uphononongo alunanzuzo ngqo kuwe, kodwa luya kuba negalelo kumzimba okhoyo wolwazi malunga nesenzeko solwaluko. Okona kubaluleke kakhulu, kuthenjwa ukuba olu phando luya kukhuthaza uphuhliso longenelelo lokunyanga imikhwa yocalucalulo eyenziwa kwamadoda angamaXhosa angaphumelelanga ekugqibezeleni ulwaluko. Umphandi unethemba lokuba uya kulifumana liluncedo eli thuba lokuvakalisa naziphi na iimbono kunye namabala ozinxulumanisa namadoda asilelayo ukugqiba ngempumelelo ukwaluka ngokwesintu.

Iinkcukacha zoqhakamshelo

Ukuba unayo nayiphi na imibuzo emva kolu dliwano-ndlebe, nceda uqhagamshelane nomphandi, uMantanzi Mcata (IPsychology, UCT) apha MCTMAN001@myuct.ac.za okanye kule nombolo 078 341 2132. Kungenjalo, qhagamshelana noGqr Mandisa Malinga (Psychology, UCT) apha mandisa.malinga@uct.ac.za okanye kule nombolo 021 650 4997. Ukuba unemibuzo malunga imigaqo yokuziphatha zophononongo, nceda uqhagamshelane noRosalind Adams apha Rosalind.Adams@uct.ac.za okanye kule nombolo 021 650 3417.

Imvume

Mna …..…… Ndiyaqinisekisa ukuba olu phononongo lungentla luchazelwe kum kwaye yonke imibuzo iphendulwe ngumphandi. Ndiyiqonda ngokupheleleyo intsingiselo yokuthatha inxaxheba kwam, kwaye ndiyazi ukuba ndingarhoxa kolu phononongo nanini na ukuba andisanqweneli ukuthatha inxaxheba. Ndiyaqinisekisa ukuba ndiyavuma ukuthatha inxaxheba kolu phononongo kwaye ndinike imvume yam yokuba ulwazi endibelana ngalo lusetyenziswe kulo naluphi na upapasho lwale projekthi ngaphandle kokubhengezwa kwalo naluphi na ulwazi oluya kundenza ndibonwe ngabanye.

Umsayino …… Umhla ……
(Umthathi-nxaxheba)

Ndikwanika imvume yam yokuba ndirekhodwe kusetyenziswa irekhoda ngexesha lodliwano-ndlebe.

Umsayino …… Umhla ……
(Umthathi-nxaxheba)

Umsayino …… Umhla ……
(Umphandi)

Appendix C: Consent Form

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Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project titled '*Unsuccessful Xhosa Male Customary Initiation: The Perceptions of Traditionally Circumcised Xhosa Men'*.

Purpose of the study

The study seeks to understand the perceptions and stigmas that Xhosa men who have successfully undergone traditional initiation hold of men who have failed to complete the custom. It is also interested to see whether Xhosa men who successfully completed *ulwaluko* understand the implications and dangers of the stigmas they perpetuate to those men who failed to complete the process. Your participation in this study will involve an individual face-to-face (or telephonic) interview that is expected to last between 45-60 minutes. Each interview will be recorded using an audio-recording device, and will be later transcribed, analysed and written up for publication.

Ethical considerations

Your participation in the study will be kept confidential and all your personal information will be removed from the data to protect your identity. The information collected from you in the interview will be used to report on the findings of the study which will be made available to you and will later be published in a journal. All audio recordings and transcripts will be kept in a password-locked folder and will only be available to the researcher involved in this study. If you choose to have the interviews conducted in IsiXhosa, kindly note that a first language Xhosa speaking person will be granted access to verify the recordings and transcripts, but no identifying information will be revealed to them. Any hardcopies produced including the signed consent forms will be kept in a lockable compartment that only the principal investigator will have access to. For the purpose of reporting, all names and identifiable information will be removed, and pseudonyms will be used in order to ensure that the data remains anonymous. You have the right to withdraw your participation from this study at any point without any negative consequences. Should you choose to do so, any data you have already provided will be destroyed and will not be used for the study.

Benefits and risks

Risks associated with participation are considered minimal, but it is expected that some interview questions posed to you may cause discomfort. Should you feel discomfort at any point as a result of the study, you can inform the researcher who will arrange for you to seek

professional help at a facility closest to you (see attached referral list). There will be no compensation for participating in this study. However, the researcher will provide small food vouchers as a token of appreciation for the time you have taken to participate in the study. The study has no direct benefits to you, but it will contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding the phenomenon of *ulwaluko*. Most importantly, it is hoped the study will encourage the development of interventions to remedy the discriminatory behaviours incurred by Xhosa men who were unsuccessful at completing *ulwaluko*. The researcher hopes you will find useful this opportunity to voice any perceptions and stigmas you associate with men who have failed to successfully complete customary male initiation.

Contact details

Should you have any questions following this interview, please contact the principal investigator, Mantanzi Mcata (Psychology, UCT) at MCTMAN001@myuct.ac.za or on 078 341 2132. Alternatively, contact Dr Mandisa Malinga (Psychology, UCT) at mandisa.malinga@uct.ac.za or on 021 650 4997. Should you have questions regarding the ethics of the study, please contact Rosalind Adams at Rosalind.Adams@uct.ac.za or on 021 650 3417.

Consent

I …..…… confirm that the above study has been explained to me and all questions have been answered by the researcher. I fully understand the implications of my participation and am aware that I can withdraw from this study at any point should I no longer wish to participate. I hereby confirm that I agree to participate in this study and give my consent for the information I share to be used in any publication for this project without the disclosure of any information that will make me identifiable by others.

Signature…… Date……
(Participant)

I also give my consent to be recorded using an audio-recording device during the interview.

Signature…… Date……
(Participant)

Signature…… Date……
(Researcher)

Appendix D: Interview guide

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Demographic Information:

- Please tell me about yourself …
  - How old were you when you got circumcised?
  - Where did you get circumcised (town and province)?
  - What is your marital status?
  - What is your highest grade in school?

Questions regarding perceptions on failed customary initiation:

- While most men who go through the process successfully complete it, some do not for various reasons:
  - Do you think it is important for Xhosa men to complete their initiation rituals?
    Probe: Why?
  - What do you think of a man who failed to successfully complete initiation?
    Probe: How did you come to have this view?
  - Do the reasons for why you the process was not successful shape how you think of them?
  - What would you say informs how you see or think of them?
  - In your view, what separates a Xhosa man who successfully completed initiation from a Xhosa man who failed to complete initiation?
    Probe: How do you think this separation affects a man that failed to complete the ritual?

Questions on stigmatizations:

- In conversations about Xhosa men who failed to complete their initiation ritual, how do you refer to them?
  Probe: Are there any particular terms you use to refer to them?
  Probe: If yes, what are these terms?
  Probe: Why do you use these terms?
  Probe: What do they signify/mean to you?
  Probe: How do you think these terms affect a man who failed to complete the rite?
  Further probing: Do you think the way you view, speak about, and treat men who did not successfully complete the process poses any harm to how they see themselves?

- Do you treat these men any different from the way you treat men that successfully completed initiation?
  Probe: If yes/no, why?
- According to your experience, are there any social/cultural activities these particular men are prohibited from participating in?
  Probe: If yes, which cultural activities?
  Probe: How do you think the exclusion of these men from the activities affects them?
  Probe: Do you think there is a need to change how these men are viewed?
  Further probe: If so, why? If not, why do you say that?
- Do you have a boy child?
  - If yes, given the reported risks at some schools, would you grant permission for him to go through the process in the way you did?
- Do you think anything needs to change about the process/practice?

Closing question:

- Are there any additional thoughts you would like to share about your views on this topic?
- How did talking about this make you feel?

Appendix E: Referral List

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This study does not intend to deliberately harm you, but it is expected that some interview questions posed to you may cause discomfort. Should you feel discomfort at any point as a result of the study, you can inform the researcher who will arrange for you to seek professional help at a facility closest to you. As such, the researcher would like you to inform her immediately should you experience any emotional distress as a result of your participation in this study and she will arrange for you to seek assistance at a facility closest to you. Please also find below a list of free services that you may be able to contact should you wish to seek such services. While most of these facilities offer free and telephonic assistance, some may have a minimal charge (often a donation), in which case we would be of assistance.

- SADAG (24 hour helpline): **0800 12 13 14**
- Cape Mental Health: **021 447 9040**
- Good Hope Psychological Service: **021 887 7913**
- LifeLine: **021 461 1113**
- Hope House: **021 715 0424**
- FAMSA Western Cape: **021 447 7951**
- The Counselling Hub: **021 462 3902**

Appendix F: Ethical Clearance

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Department of Psychology

University of Cape Town Rondebosch 7701 South Africa
Telephone (021) 650 3417
Fax No. (021) 650 4104

26 April 2022

Mantanzi Mcata
Department of Psychology
University of Cape Town
Rondebosch 7701

Dear Mantanzi

I am pleased to inform you that ethical clearance has been given by an Ethics Review Committee of the Faculty of Humanities for your study, *Unsuccessful Xhosa Male Customary Initiation: A Lens of Traditionally Circumcised Xhosa Men*. The reference number is PSY2022-005.

I wish you all the best for your study.

Yours sincerely

Signed by candidate

Lauren Wild (PhD)
Associate Professor
Chair: Ethics Review Committee