THE PORTRAYAL AND INFLUENCE OF POLYGAMY IN A TELEVISION SERIES,

UTHANDO NES'THEMBU

by

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DECLARATION

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DEDICATION

A journey of research was not an easy one, especially after negative experiences with other institutions. It was in October 2018 when I was ready to submit my dissertation in one of the institutions when I was told that I could not submit it, as they had no records of my proposal three years after my first registration. This was the most traumatising experience of my academic life, but life had to continue, and I registered with UNISA in 2019. Although much had gone into the work that could not be submitted, the experience traumatised to the extent that I had to choose a different topic. The strength to continue came from the words that my late father, Themba Gumede left me with a few days before he passed on in 2009, about the importance of education. He valued education although he never went to school. This study is dedicated to you, *Mnguni! Khondlo! Phakathwayo! Sidlabehleli!* I believe wherever you are you are watching over me alongside my grandfather, *Mankansa kaMpobeyana kaMamfongonyana!*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

This is a mixed method study that investigates the portrayal and influence of polygamy in a television series, *Uthando Nes'thembu*. The television programme is unique in the Southern African television space, with the show following the life of a polygamist, Mr Musa Mseleku and his family navigating through their polygamous relationship. The study focusses only on season one of five for feasibility purposes. The premiering of *Uthando Nes'thembu* in 2017 revived the debate of polygamy after that of former South African president, Jacob Zuma. In essence, the study investigates the portrayal of polygamy in this programme holistically – for children, wives, and the man in question – and whether the programme has captured this cultural practice correctly or not. In addition, the study interrogated the viewers' perceptions through a survey questionnaire in an attempt to eliminate any researcher bias and to obtain an inclusive viewpoint about the series.

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KEY TERMS

Colonisation: The action or process of settling among and establishing control over the indigenous people of an area. Africa is one of the continents that experienced this taking over by Britain, France, Portugal and Belgium, among other countries.

Culture: It is a combination of ideas, customs and acceptable social behaviour for a particular group of people (Wiener & Simpson Oxford English Dictionary, 1994).

Cultural imperialism: The influence of dominant cultures on others through different forms – this may be through media or other forms such as religion.

Custom: This is described as a tradition that is widely accepted and adopted by a group of people – which is specific to a particular people in society, place, or time. This is more of a habit of a particular group of people (Wiener & Simpson Oxford English Dictionary, 1994).

Mass Media: It is the primary means of communication used to reach most of the general public – these could be print media and broadcast media.

Musa Mseleku: He is a businessperson, polygamist, and a television host for *Umnakwethu* – a show born out of his reality show, *uThando Nes'thembu.*

Polygamy: This is defined as a practise whereby a person marries more than one spouse – this may be done by a man (polygyny) or a woman (polyandry).

Portrayal: A depiction of someone or something in a work of art or literature; a picture in a certain way.

Reality television: Corner (2002) defines reality television as a hybrid or fusion of different genres of television such as documentaries, soap operas and talk shows. It is regarded as pre-planned but not scripted.

Religion: The belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods.

Sister wives: These are women married to the same husband in a polygamous cultural practice.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BRCSA	Broadcasting Research Council of South Africa
CAPWOI	Campaign Against Polygamy and Women Oppression International
eNCA	eNews Channel Africa
GMMP	Global Media Monitoring Project
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
RCMA	Recognition of Customary Marriages Act of 1998
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
STDs	Sexual Transmitted Diseases
STIs	Sexual Transmitted Infections
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
WLSA	Women and Law in Southern Africa

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CHAPTER 1:   INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1   Introduction

Polygamy in Africa is an ancient tradition or culture for the people of the land that has existed long before the arrival of white missionaries or colonisation, which preached the gospel of Christianity with monogamy central to their beliefs (Mann, 1994:169). Those who chose Christianity and devoted themselves to this religion had no choice but to divorce all their other wives and remain with only one (Diffin, 2010). Nwoye (2007:384) argues that denouncing polygamy was one of the approaches used by colonisers to force Africans to dump their rule of custom and adopt the rule of European law as enforced in colonies – from polytheism to monotheism and from polygamy to monogamy. However, it is worth noting that polygamy was more of a 'privilege and not a norm', and therefore dependent on the status of a husband (Moller & Welch, 1985:14).

With this said, the introduction of media in Africa exacerbated the problem of undermining the African traditions and promoted Western cultures through media programmes, be it television or radio (Udoaka, 1998). Acholonu (2011) argues that the media is to blame for the distortion of many African cultural practices, as it enforces what people should value as their culture. Acholonu continues to postulate that the distorted media products beamed to Africa have succeeded in undermining accepted moral values, and that African culture is under the influence of Western imperialism. These may come in different forms such as television news bulletins or Hollywood movies, which frequently distort the image of Africans and African cultural beliefs (Udoaka, 1998).

Western imperialism does not only take the form of distortion but may also be through the ignoring of African customs such that the young people grow up aspiring to be like people they see on television. Foreign films have led most young Africans to ignore their culture and to imbibe an alien culture instead (Acholonu, 2011; Best & Kombol, 2009). With all these notions, the researcher took a decision to investigate how polygamy as one of the ancient customs in Africa is portrayed in South African television.

The topic of polygamy in South African media is one that is seldom discussed, aside from the occasional incident which is deemed to be sufficiently newsworthy. However, when the polygamist and former South African president, Mr Jacob Zuma ascended to the presidential seat, the topic of polygamy gained momentum in the media (Davies-Laubscher, 2014; Geertsema-Sligh, 2015).

As the number one citizen in South Africa, the hype about Zuma's polygamy was expected, as his lifestyle was funded by taxpayers. Mzansi Magic, a satellite television channel, subsequently introduced a television show on polygamy. Understanding the influence of television, as noted above, it was an opportune moment to investigate the show's portrayal and influence. This study investigates the portrayal and influence of polygamy in a television series *uThando Nes'thembu*. The programme premiered in May 2017 for season one of the series, which is the one that is studied in this research. Although it is not clear how many viewers it amassed in the first season, the growth of the programme became evident as the viewership grew in 2019 in its third season to 1 343 955 (BRCSA, 2019).

The title of the show translates to 'Love and Polygamy', and the show is set in the hilly KwaZulu-Natal and follows the lives of businessman Musa Mseleku, his four wives, Busisiwe 'MaCele' Mseleku, Nokukhanya 'MaYeni' Mseleku, Thobile 'MaKhumalo' Mseleku, Mbali 'MaNgwabe' Mseleku and their 10 children.

1.1.1 A case of Uthando Nes'thembu

This is a reality television show that follows the life of Musa Mseleku – a polygamist who was 47 years old in 2021 – with four wives and at least 10 children. Mseleku is a businessman with a focus on property development. He was born and raised in KwaMadlala in Mzumbe, in the South Coast of KwaZulu-Natal, where he has dedicated his life to community development in Ugu District Municipality. This series shows the lifestyle of Mr Mseleku and his family in a polygamous setup. It takes the audience back from how Mseleku met all his wives and how he introduced the concept of polygamy to the first wife and the others who followed thereafter[1]. In this season, Mseleku had 10 children – nine of whom he fathered with his four wives and the other he fathered with his late girlfriend. The children are between the ages of 23 and two

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[1] https://zalebs.com/top-of-the/musa-mseleku/musa-mseleku-biography-age-family-wives-reality-tv-wealth-controversy-net-worth?content

years old. Mr Mseleku announced during this season that he wanted to have at least 20 children in order to grow his surname. Sabalele (2010) argues that unlike in a Western marriage, in the African context marriage is premised on expanding the family and culture of a man where a boy child would carry his surname. However, for this belief to materialise, a child must be born in wedlock, or the father would have to pay 'damages' for the child and *lobola* for him to take his surname. This becomes a critical custom for cultured Africans who use this process to 'register' their children under their ancestral name.

When it comes to marriage, Waruta and Kinoti (2005:103) argue that 'for African people, marriage is the focus of existence. It is a point where all members of a given community meet: the departed, the living and those yet to be born. All dimensions of time meet here and the whole drama of history is repeated, renewed, and revitalised. It is the drama in which everyone becomes an actor or actress, not just a spectator'.

In addition to his profile, Mseleku has a background in communication and media and worked for a community radio station, Durban Youth Radio and the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), before focusing on his businesses[2]. The promo picture of Musa Mseleku and his four wives is shown in Figure 1.1 overleaf.

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[2] https://southcoastherald.co.za/281210/television-star-speaks-at-breakfast/

Figure 1.1: The promo picture of *Uthando Nes'thembu,* with Musa Mseleku and his four wives

Source: (Mzansi Magic, 2017)

Polygamy in South Africa is such a divisive topic among many, with proponents and opponents struggling to reach a common view. Davies-Laubscher (2014) argues that polygamy had been forgotten somewhat – not as a practice, but as a 'newsy and debatable subject', before a polygamous man ascended to the presidency office. According to eNCA (2017), *Uthando Nes'thembu* has created a debate, particularly on social media, about the possibility of Mseleku affording his luxurious lifestyle with so many dependents, whilst others question the relevance of polygamy and its risks with regard to sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Setai (2017), on the other hand, argues that the show itself anchors patriarchal behaviour in society and that women should depend on their husbands. Setai asked whether it was a responsible decision to have a television programme that promoted polygamy, which according to Setai is seen as a form of women's oppression.

Considering the above, the study investigates the role that television plays in portraying polygamy. It investigates the obvious and the nuanced messages that the series convey about polygamy through verbal (monologues, discussions) and non-verbal cues (visuals, clothing, and so on). The researcher investigates the eight episodes of season one, as this was the season that stirred the hornet's nest when it comes to the debates and arguments on polygamy amongst the South African public.

The subject of polygamy is scarcely covered in television, which could be due to the lack of mass media coverage when it comes to polygamy. As stated already, the media's major focus on polygamy coverage was largely restricted to instances that involved the former president, Jacob Zuma as a prominent figure (Davies-Laubscher, 2014; Geertsema-Sligh, 2015). Lack of media coverage aside, the dearth of research in this area of focus motivated the purpose of this study in order to contribute to the body of knowledge when it comes to television and polygamy, as opposed to many studies that tend to investigate polygamy in the areas of culture and religion without a media or television focus.

1.2 Context of the Study

1.2.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to investigate how the programme *Uthando Nes'thembu* portrays polygamy and the influence it has on the viewers of the show. People have generally had many assumptions and opinions about polygamy even before the premiering of the show, and after season one many people reached a certain opinion or confirmed the beliefs that they held.

The main motivation for the study is that the show is somewhat of a trend-setter as it is the first of its kind, especially in South African television; therefore, it is assumed to play a major role in how polygamy is portrayed, and this study investigates the influence of such portrayal on the programme's audiences. The show directly and indirectly provides a perspective on polygamy, whether it be negative or positive.

1.2.2   Relevance of the topic

Researchers of polygamy contend that polygamy is an ancient lifestyle that still exists in the 21st century, however, it had not featured much in the news in South Africa until a polygamous president ascended to power in 2009. The debate about polygamy was revived by the fact that the country was led by someone (Jacob Zuma) with many wives and, when quizzed about his polygamous lifestyle, he said it was his culture and he had a right to practice it (Davies-Laubscher, 2014; Geertsema-Sligh, 2015). Zuma continued to defend polygamy even when there were problems with his estranged wife, Nompumelelo Zuma (uMaNtuli). According to media reports, the latter demonstrated a behaviour unbecoming of a wife of Zuma, at the presidential residence in *Mahlamba Ndlopfu,* when she disapproved of Zuma marrying another wife (Mopiloko & Keepile, 2010).

Therefore, when *Uthando Nes'thembu* premiered in 2017 there were divided opinions about polygamy, with some defending the lifestyle of Musa Mseleku and others bemoaning the depression and psychological burden that comes with this ancient practice, especially when it comes to the wives and children (see discussion in Chapter 2). Furthermore, a television series that lay bare the lifestyle of polygamists was unheard of until then, being the first of its kind, which led many viewers to be glued to their television screens on Thursdays, from May 2017, when the programme first aired. Those who grew up in monogamous families thereby became exposed to this lifestyle and got to learn about how polygamous marriages differ from monogamous unions.

In addition, although the episodes depicted a polygamous life, the fact that this was screened on television led to questions about the extent of the 'reality' that the so-called reality television programme showcased. The show might not necessary be scripted, but it still follows a storyline created by the Mselekus and the producers. Furthermore, the post-production process is another element to factor in, as this is not a live television programme, hence the likelihood of certain clips being edited out to 'suit' a desired storyline.

1.2.3   Background of the study

The term 'mass media' refers to the platforms used to relay messages to audiences at a large scale (Kraidy, 2002). The commonly known platforms that constitute the mass media include newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the internet.

However, for the purpose of this study, the focus will be on the influence of television on the chosen topic, as briefly discussed above. Since its inception, television has had powerful effects over its audiences including the potential to influence how people view certain things in a certain way and, as a result, then behave in a certain way (Chomsky, 1989; Kraidy, 2002; Baran & Davis, 2006).

The topic of polygamy is divisive, as certain sectors of the population believe that this custom is obsolete, while others believe it is part of a tradition that must continue, and hence accuse its opponents of being Eurocentric (Halperin & Epstein, 2004). In addition, those opposing polygamy further argue that the practice objectifies women and puts them at risk of contracting STIs, due to the husband having sexual intercourse with more than one partner in these concurrent marriages (Halperin & Epstein, 2004; Kenyon & Badri, 2009).

When discussing the influences of television on people's perceptions, Pozner (2004) argues that the platform tends to perpetuate the stereotypes of men as powerful and rich, whereas women are depicted as beautiful but submissive or scheming. The question emanating from the above paragraph is therefore this: How can *uThando Nes'thembu* portray this cultural custom without being seen as objectifying women? According to van Zoonen (1994), it is almost impossible to discuss any topic that touches on gender without involving the issue of culture. Van Zoonen further posits on gender 'as a discourse, a set of overlapping and sometimes contradictory cultural descriptions and prescriptions referring to sexual difference' (van Zoonen 1994:40).

As discussed by Antonio Gramsci (1971) regarding hegemony, the mass media tends to portray certain groups of society as being powerful. With respect to the *Uthando Nes'thembu* series, the programme appears to portray male dominance over females in the eyes of certain viewers, whereas others instead see the beauty of the culture that is being portrayed. Carter and Steiner (2004) argue that the South African media tends to depict men as independent, physically strong beings who 'bring home the bacon', whilst women are depicted as 'cry-babies', 'stay-at-home wives', incompetent and dependent. Others, however, see the programme as a way of breaking the dominance of the Western culture over the mass media.

1.2.4 Relationship of the topic to the discipline of communication

Television plays a pivotal role in influencing its consumers as it has both a positive and negative influence on its audiences and, as such, media barons have attempted to indigenise content through programmes such as *Uthando Nes'thembu*, which depict the lives of the indigenous and ordinary people and how they live. As mentioned previously, not everyone agrees with the depiction of polygamy in this television series. This disagreement includes the way that women are depicted, the modernised culture that the series portrays, and its promotion of 'obsolete' cultural practices. Therefore, the focus which makes it a communication discipline is not polygamy, but how it is portrayed and ultimately the influence it has on its viewers.

Blumler and Katz (1974) argue that television plays a major role in educating (correctly) and misinforming (incorrectly) on whatever topic is being portrayed. As such, uses and gratifications researchers point out that regardless of what audiences might have known prior to watching a television programme, they often use the 'knowledge gained' to make certain decisions (Blumler & Katz, 1974; Livingstone, 2000). Therefore, what audiences of *Uthando Nes'thembu* might have understood about polygamy before tuning in, might end up changing, with them having a different point of view after the show. It is for this reason that the researcher considered it important to seek opinions from respondents about the show after they had watched it.

1.3 Type of Study

A research paradigm is a belief system which has to do with many components, namely: ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods, which inform the direction of the research to be conducted (Scotland, 2012; Raddon *et al.*, 2009). This study focusses on methodology and methods in order to help unpack how polygamy is portrayed on *Uthando Nes'thembu* and the influence thereof on the viewers of season one – whether it be positive, negative or both. This will guide the researcher on how the data is collected and how it will be analysed.

1.4 Formulation of the Research Problem

The following sub-sections discuss and explain the research problem, sub-problems, and resultant research question which this study aims to address. Some may take this

aspect of research for granted, but it is what shapes and makes clear what is being investigated. Furthermore, the formulation of a research question helps both the researcher and reader or reviewer/s to understand what is being investigated and whether the researcher managed to answer the question, and whether it confirmed or dismissed the hypothesis of the study (Pardede, 2018). In essence, this means that for the researcher to obtain the right answers, they must know and understand the question they are trying to answer.

1.4.1 The research problem

Since its inception, television has had powerful effects over its audiences, including the potential to influence how people perceive certain subjects and, as a result, behave in a certain way or hold a particular view (Chomsky, 1989; Kraidy, 2002; Baran & Davis, 2006). When discussing the influences of television on viewers' perceptions, Pozner (2004) argues that the platform tends to perpetuate the stereotypes of men as powerful and rich and women as beautiful but submissive or scheming and depending on their male counterparts or husbands for survival. According to van Zoonen (1994), it is almost impossible to impartially unpack any topic that borders on the issue of gender without involving culture. As stated by van Zoonen (1994:40), 'Gender as a discourse, is a set of overlapping and sometimes contradictory cultural descriptions and prescriptions referring to sexual difference'.

As early as the '70s, Italian philosopher, Antonio Gramsci wrote elaborately on hegemony, where he posited that the mass media tends to portray certain groups of society as being powerful (Gramsci, 1971). Considering Gramsci's theory, some viewers perceive *Uthando Nes'thembu* as a series that perpetuates male dominance, whereas other viewers believe that it showcases the beauty of a cultural practice – polygamy. Carter and Steiner (2004) argue that South African media tends to depict men as providers. Others, however, see the programme as a way of breaking the dominance of the Westernisation of mass media. Accordingly, the theoretical framework of this study analyses the cultural imperialist and media framing theories by looking into how these two relate to *Uthando Nes'thembu.*

1.4.2 Research objectives

The objectives of the study are to investigate how the television programme, *Uthando Nes'thembu* portrays polygamy as practised by the Mseleku family. The study aims to determine the role of the series in shaping the thinking of audiences when it comes to polygamy as an African custom practised by Musa Mseleku; to examine the factors that promote polygamy; to evaluate whether the series promotes patriarchy; and to examine how the programme portrays women.

1.5 The Research Questions

The questions that form part of the study and which this research intends to answer are as follows:

- What is the role of the series in shaping the thinking of audiences when it comes to polygamy as an African custom practised by Musa Mseleku?
- What are the factors which promote polygamy?
- Does the framing of the television series promote patriarchy?
- How does the programme portray women?

1.6 Research Methodology

Research methodology is the decision and selection of a process that is suitable for the research project, which involves analysis of the assumptions, principles and procedure (Schwandt, 2007). Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) write that it is important for the researcher to first understand what problems are being investigated in the study, what the testable hypotheses are, and how they are going to frame the problem using certain procedures in collecting and collating data.

Brynard and Hanekom (2006) postulate that research methodology in such studies is vital, as it assists the researcher to seek the correct data, collect it, and analyse it with the right framework. Furthermore, research methodology informs the researcher about the three methods of data collection, namely, qualitative, quantitative, and a mixed method (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). This study used a mixed method approach, as discussed in Chapter 4.

1.6.1 Data collection, analysis, and interpretation

To determine how the programme depicts polygamy and ascertain its influence on audiences, the researcher watched the show, which forms part of the qualitative method of collecting data. In order to ascertain the views of the show's audiences, a list of questions that relate to the show was drawn up in the form of a questionnaire to establish the thoughts of 30 participants on the show and on how polygamy is portrayed.

Firstly, data was collected through watching and re-watching eight episodes of season one of *Uthando Nes'thembu* for coding purposes, and then through responses from the survey questionnaire, where the 30 respondents answered questions about the television programme based on their own observations and opinions. This is a mixed method study, as data collected through the episodes could be classified as qualitative and data from the survey questionnaire classified as quantitative. The same applies to its analysis, as discussed in Chapter 5 (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007).

Secondly, after collecting all the required data, it was then analysed through content analysis, which entailed unpacking important aspects of the show and how it portrays polygamy. Lastly, data collected from the questionnaires was discussed and presented graphically to show certain patterns about how the viewers of the show perceived the television programme (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

1.6.2 Feasibility of the study

The sampled episodes from season one of *Uthando Nes'thembu* were viewed through the Showmax platform. This made things easier for the researcher, as obtaining DVDs of the show was impossible. Subscribing to the Showmax platform was therefore the best option as one could watch and re-watch the episodes in one's own time – provided there was internet connectivity.

The above enabled the three stages of coding, which helped in scrutinising the collected data. The study also made use of a survey questionnaire to obtain the responses of the viewers of the programme. The researcher posted a request on WhatsApp to elicit respondents for the research, with some of his contacts

volunteering to partake in the study, while others were approached by the researcher and asked if they would be willing to participate in this study. This was done after the Google form questionnaire were created, which made it easy to simply share the link to the respondents. The moment a respondent pressed the submit button, that response was accessed by the researcher. The form also indicated how many people responded and provided a summary of responses graphically.

1.7   Chapter Overview and Breakdown

Chapter 2: This chapter deals with the literature in the studies of culture, polygamy, and media, with the major emphasis on television.

Chapter 3: This chapter outlines theories that are relevant to this study by discussing their origins and how they relate to the topic at hand.

Chapter 4: The chapter discusses the relevant methods and methodology that underpin this study and which the researcher used to collect data for this investigation. It further discusses the issue of ethics, validity and credibility as well as the limitations of the study.

Chapter 5: This is where the collected data is presented and analysed using methods discussed in chapter 4.

Chapter 6: After presenting and analysing the data in chapter 5, conclusions need to be drawn and recommendations made for further studies, which this chapter endeavours to do. This concluding chapter also includes whether the questions were answered or not.

CHAPTER 2:   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

This chapter discusses the history of polygamy, factors of polygamy and different aspects of this cultural practice. It contains the literature pertaining to issues such as the practice of polygamy around the world, as well as in Africa and specifically in South Africa. It further investigates the way the media covers, treats and portray polygamy, with a sharp focus on how television can influence its audience based on how the topic of polygamy is portrayed.

The topic of polygamy is extremely complex. It is therefore important to discuss this topic in detail looking at various perspectives before touching on the media and television angle on this topic.

Polygamy is defined as a method of marrying more than one partner. This could be practised by either a man (polygyny) or woman (polyandry) (Mbatha, 2011). Mbatha continues to state that polygamy among the Nguni people (a Bantu ethnic group from Southern Africa) is common among chiefs and kings. However, Ntshangase as cited in Diffin (2010) argues that this had nothing to do with social standing in society, but solely depended on the economic status of those wanting to have more than one wife. Ngubane (2015) posits that polygamy existed long before the formation of the Zulu nation, with it is often associated with in South Africa. However, researchers argue that the term polygamy is a generic term referring to the process of having more than one spouse, whereas polygyny refers to a man's multiple relations (Doke & Vilakazi, 2012; Mavhina, 2010; Trocaire, 2016; Mswela, 2009; Moosa, 2009).

Diffin (2010) and Epstein (2010) agree that polygamy in Africa has always had a traditional socio-economic basis that promoted clan solidarity by linking up families whilst ensuring that all women were married off, and thus perpetuating the continuation of the lineage of the clan. For the Nguni people, polygamy was widely adopted owing to the imbalances of the gender ratio. Historically, there were more women than men, and some young men were recruited to wars, which then saw a further decline in the male population; thus, polygamy was seen as a solution to have more married women and children raised in a fully functioning family with both parents (Diffin, 2010).

Moreover, the dependency of the people on subsistence farming was another contributing factor for polygamous relationships, with bigger families having bigger harvests as there were more people available for planting and cultivating (Diffin, 2010). Diffin (2010) and Mwambene (2017) agree that polygamy was also intended to alleviate the imbalance in the ratio of men and women, which could have resulted in unmarried women marrying other women's husbands due to the lower number of men in these societies. Another justification for polygamy pertains to the culture that forbids having sex during pregnancy, as well as during the menstruation period for at least seven days, with the men nevertheless still wanting to satisfy their conjugal desires (Mavhina, 2010; Moller, 1985).

Moller and Welch (1985) add that in the African tradition, especially among the VhaVenda, if a wife has a small baby she cannot cook or join the husband sexually, as she is described as 'unclean' for at least three months after giving birth. Furthermore, if a woman reaches the menopause stage, she cannot meet the man sexually owing to the belief that a man will suffer from '*Tshikwilimimba*', a condition whereby a man's stomach bulges alike to that of a pregnant woman. However, women's rights activists beg to differ with this, citing oppression of women, as these beliefs favour men at their expense.

In South Africa, Moosa (2009) argues that the practice of polygamy has been morally disapproved of as an offence against public policy and social norms, hence polygamous Muslim marriages were shunned historically even though this is an accepted practice in Muslim religion. Moosa continues to argue that although polygamy is not frowned upon in Muslim societies, only about 2% of the male Muslim population are in polygamous marriages. Instead, monogamous marriages are favoured in the context of common law, which indicates a clear bias in favour of Western and Christian moral values notwithstanding the country's multi-cultural and multi-faith society (Mswela, 2009; Moosa, 2009).

According to Zeitzen (2008), polygamy is becoming a subject of different opinion, with both opponents and proponents for this practice. It is the right of an individual to practice what they believe in. While polygamy falls under a tradition that is protected by the Bill of Rights in South Africa, gender activists nevertheless perceive it as oppression for women. Scholars argue that the proponents for polygamy use this

custom to ignore women's rights, with women often being violated in the marriage setup (Zeitzen, 2008; Palitza, 2006). Notwithstanding these arguments, South African media has been critiqued about the way it covers or depicts certain stories, including cultural practices (Palitza, 2006). This was glaring during Zuma's presidency, where various socio-political commentators, politicians and media practitioners sharply criticised his polygamous lifestyle.

Therefore, in this chapter the researcher will review literature on the subject of polygamy in a dichotomous manner. This will investigate polygamy as a whole, as well as look at the influence of television and how polygamy is depicted on television in a television series, *Uthando Nes'thembu*. In this study, the researcher defines and explains polygamy and the role played by television in portraying this practice, whether negatively or positively. There are various reasons why people may choose to be polygamists, and these are discussed in detail below.

2.2 Factors Leading to Polygamy

In essence, a literature review section entails a researcher in a scientific research going through studies that have been conducted on that topic of investigation. As the focus of this study is on polygamy, it is important to discuss the factors that may lead a person to opt for a polygamous relationship. According to Mavhina (2010) and Davies-Laubscher (2014), there are various factors that may lead to polygamy for different tribes and nations which have been discussed and debated over the years. Among the major factors that contribute to polygamy are migrant labour, barrenness and procreation, cultural reasons, and religious preferences.

2.2.1 Migrant labour system

The migrant labour system as introduced by the architects of colonialism and apartheid was designed to perpetuate oppression by making sure that black people remained in their homelands and only migrated to the cities for the purposes of work only. As such, men were forced to migrate to the cities on their own, leaving their wives back home (Clignet, 1970).

Historians have recorded that Africans have always been mobile owing to the search for better agricultural areas, trade, and labour (Rutabanzibwa, 2006). These patterns changed after the arrival of the colonialists, which resulted in a shift in terms of means

of production. According to Clignet (1970), this form of migration resulted in a two-pronged system which saw the migrant labourer marrying 'in-town' wives to take care of them in the absence of their first wives, who remained at home. However, Clignet continues to suggest that there were men who remained in the countryside and could also afford to have more than one wife – usually due to their affordability and wealth – which did not depend on being employed. The government of the day had gazetted a law to force blacks to sell their services to whites and failure to do so would mean paying higher taxes (Breytenbach, 1972).

Such migration resulted in the dismemberment of families whereby women who remained in homelands and the outskirts had to fend for themselves and raise children on their own. This disrupted the family setup, resulting in absent fathers who were busy working in the cities for meagre wages (Ramphele & Richter, 2006). Fanon (1961) postulated that migrant labourers were mainly non-whites and mostly black, whose presence in the cities relied on them trading their energies and skills for meagre wages, following which they had to go back to where they came from.

The mining industry in the 19th century, which by then had surpassed the agricultural industry saw a huge wave of urbanisation, the result being that migrant labour lived in single-sex hostels without their wives, which in turn resulted in infidelities on the men's part as they would be away from their families for months (Hunt, 1989; Moller & Welch, 1985). Men from the then Natal Province and Eastern Cape especially would join *uTebha*[3] to work in the then Transvaal mines (now Mpumalanga Province, North West Province, Gauteng, and Limpopo). Moller and Welch (1985) note that polygamy was a solution for men who were away from their wives for a long time, which resulted in sexual frustration. To satisfy their sexual desires, they started to have city girlfriends which led to cohabitation. Some of these girlfriends later became their second or third wives upon the men's return to their homes (Breytenbach, 1972; Moller & Welch, 1985; Hunt, 1989). This, however, does not suggest that migrant labour is what led to polygamy; instead, this system of forced separation perpetuated polygamy, as even those who had one wife ended up marrying or cohabiting with their 'in-town' girlfriends for reasons as mentioned above. In the section below, the researcher looks into the *vat en sit* system as a result of migrant labour, and which had an impact in some men

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[3] uTebha was a recruitment agency for people who would leave their homelands in the then Natal Province and Eastern Cape to work in mines. They would normally work for six months before returning home

and women abandoning their families. Television programmes such as *Khumbul' ekhaya* on SABC1, for example, are a result of dismemberment of families owing to migration to big cities.

2.2.2 Vat en sit system (Cohabitation)

The hostels that were an integral part of the migrant labour system remain the tangible evidence of the ugly legacy of apartheid and segregation and blatant economic exploitation (Ramphele, 1993). Demissie (1998) argues that whenever apartheid was discussed, the issue of architecture was often ignored, even though it played a pivotal role in dismembering families of the black majority through migrant labour and exploitation. As hostels were for single-sex habitation, the wives were not allowed to live with their husbands and even visitation was restricted, with security guards present to enforce the laws (Hunt, 1989; Moller & Welch, 1985; Demissie, 1998).

Murray (1981) notes that mine owners justified their poverty wage on the fact that they gave out food rations and free accommodation for their workers. Murray argues that having single-sex hostels helped the employer in ensuring that they were not obliged to build homes for black workers, although this was not the case with white managers, who received subsidies from the mining companies to build their own homes and, in addition, they were also allowed to live with their families. This further helped in controlling the influx of too many black people living in proximity with white people, which was deemed a 'threat' (Hunt, 1989; Murray, 1981; Demissie, 1998).

Some relationships the men would have would result in having children out of wedlock, and this would result in the pressure to marry that woman. However, Moller (1985) notes that this presented problems, as the little resources that the husband had would now be shared among the wives and children, resulting in traumatic experiences for children who needed to share the scarce resources, resulting in animosity among wives which then filtered down to children. Hunt (1989) asserts that after the families had grown in such a manner, the meagre wages that the husbands were receiving resulted in women emigrating to the cities to seek similar job opportunities, which also contributed to urbanisation. They also found boyfriends in the city, with others cohabitating with them as a result (ibid).

Hargrove (2008) posits that urbanisation contributed to the surge of the spread of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), as men have tendencies to womanise and are

likely to contract STIs from their sexual escapades. These men then return home to have unprotected sex with their wives in the rural areas. According to Reniers and Watkins (2010), studies on STDs show that multiple or concurrent sexual partnerships are among the super spreaders of STIs, which corroborates what Hunt postulated as early as 1989. Reniers and Watkins continue to argue that polygamy has a potential to be a super spreader of STIs. A case in point is former President Jacob Zuma's fathering of a child with Sonono Khoza, when he already had two active marriages and was engaged to marry a third wife. This came after admitting in his rape trial in 2006 that he had unprotected sex with an HIV-positive woman ('Jacob Zuma admits fathering love child', 2010). According to Stats SA, the greater region of sub-Saharan Africa is home to 62% of the world's HIV cases, with more than 14 000 people infected daily with HIV and 11 000 people dying daily due to HIV/AIDS-related diseases (Epstein, 2007).

2.2.3 Barrenness and procreation

Møller and Welch (1985) share a common view on a woman's role in a polygamous marriage. They contend that it is dependent on two aspects: productivity and reproductive services. The first aspect of productivity is normally realised when the family has grown – by having many children. However, this cannot be achieved if there is no procreation (Mavhina, 2010). Phophi as cited in Mavhina (2010) argues that a wife's infertility robs the husband and the family of the pleasure that comes with having a newborn baby, thus the husband might decide to marry another wife. However, there are times where the husband is infertile, which could also be a traumatic realisation for the family. In line with this, Zungu (2019) contends that polygyny, which is deeply entrenched as a result of patriarchy, undermines gender equity, as only men can have more spouses, even if they cannot bear children themselves.

Traditional African culture places much emphasis on the importance of having children and, by default, women find themselves under pressure of having children, when they are elevated to being adults. Women with children command much more respect than those who cannot bear children, with the latter being treated with disdain or like children (Tabi *et al.*, 2010). The pressures that come with being infertile sometimes result in psychological breakdown for the wife, as she is expected to procreate. In the Islam religion, Maududi (1996) asserts that marriage for a man are for dual reasons,

which are to procreate and to satisfy his sexual desires, since sexual relations out of wedlock are forbidden.

Nwoye (2007), Leclerc-Madlala (2008) and Tabi *et al.* (2010) postulate that in the African culture children are essential, as they carry the name of the family or wealth when a girl child's lobola is paid. It further gives women an adult status when they can have children. However, when giving birth to only single-sex children – i.e. only boys or girls – it might also be a challenge, as both genders have imperative roles to play when they are grown. The girl child would grow and be expected to marry in exchange for *lobola,* whereas the boy child would grow and be expected to carry the name of the family, and thereby grow the clan (Nwoye, 2007).

Sabalele (2010) corroborates this argument, suggesting that both female and male children are regarded as assets, and for the same reasons as mentioned above. He, however, decries the commodification of women, which undermines the concept that women too are created in the image of God. The research shows, according to Mthembu (2000), that polygamy brings about respect in the Zulu nation, although the practice has been besmirched by the Western teachings which denounce polygamy as a barbaric practice that undermines women's rights, as they are expected to submit to their husbands. Sabalele (2010) argues that commodification of women through payment of *ilobolo* (dowry) are among the difficulties experienced through the practice of polygamy. Some may argue though that this is part and parcel of the African customs.

2.2.4 Economic factors

Notwithstanding the uncertainty of where polygamy or, more specifically, polygyny originated, there are cultural variables that suggest that the need for manpower was a contributing factor, with war and pre-colonial subsistence farming serving as a springboard for the practice (Valley, 2010). In the Zulu culture, Ndela Ntshangase, a lecturer of Zulu studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, states that polygamy was all about teamwork, where the entire family would work together to increase the wealth and the livelihood of the family through subsistence farming (Diffin, 2010). This means that the bigger the family, the bigger the harvests – which in turn would mean greater sustainability in that family as hunger would thereby be averted, as the harvest would be sufficient.

Moller and Welch (1985) assert that productivity is simplified when the family is bigger, and the number of children the man has is regarded as his wealth. Ware wrote as early as 1975 that pressure from parents and peer pressure were among the reasons women would enter into polygamous marriages. This point is corroborated in Nyathikazi (2013), where she argued that it was rare for women to enter into a polygamous marriage willingly, but that the economic and financial circumstances of their families and stigmatisation of unmarried women are among the reasons to 'prefer' polygamous marriages as opposed to monogamy or celibacy. Nyathikazi continues to state that these women would marry into a polygamous family to avoid the status of being a girlfriend or cohabiting, as this was regarded as taboo.

2.2.5 Cultural reasons

According to Albertyn (2003) and Lipinge and Lebeau (2005), there are various cultural reasons that may result in a man taking many wives, including uncleanness and what are termed levirate and sororate. Opponents of polygamy believe that cultural and customary practices have patriarchal notions of gender and family which reinforce women's oppression (Albertyn, 2003; Lipinge & Lebeau, 2005). However, the proponents of polygamy argue that this practice is embedded in their roots, as their forefathers have practised it. Below are some of the cultural factors that may lead to polygamy.

2.2.6 Uncleanness

Menstruation across many countries is regarded as taboo and a woman during this period is regarded as unclean, hence a man should not have sex with her until that process is over (Mavhina, 2010; Moller & Welch, 1985). This is a common belief in many developing countries in the African continent and elsewhere in the world; for first world countries such as United States, this was more prevalent until the 20th century (Deo & Ghattargi, 2005; Tsoory *et al.*, 2008). Scholars note that culturally, different tribes and nations believe that touching a menstruating woman is toxic, and as a result the women are prohibited from engaging in sexual activities, cooking, or being in contact with crops or even food stores. They are also prohibited from certain religious activities, as in some churches they should not stand up or comment during a church service or deliver a sermon (James, 1997).

Some of these prohibitions are also emphasised in the African custom, where at times a woman is regarded as impure and therefore cannot care for her husband or engage with him in sexual activities (Moller & Welch, 1985; Mavhina 2010). During the menopause stage, menstruation period and the first three months after giving birth, a woman is regarded as 'unclean' and is therefore not supposed to care for or prepare food for their husbands, and polygamy was seen as a solution to this (Moller & Welch, 1985).

Even from a medical perspective, sexual intercourse during menstruation is discouraged because it may result in STIs such as chlamydia and gonorrhoea. Medical practitioners encourage the use of protection should sexual partners fail to abstain during the menstrual period to avoid infections (Wagner & Ottesen, 1982). Although there are few counterarguments about the impurity of a woman during her menstrual cycle, there is equally little evidence as to why during this period, women should not partake in other activities such as cooking. The arguments from the religious, cultural and medical perspectives seem to all be congruent on the 'abstinence from sexual intercourse' during this period.

2.2.7 Levirate (*ukungena)*

The term levirate is used to describe a marriage between a brother or male relatives of a deceased man and his widowed female in order to take care of her on behalf of the late relative (Kudo, 2018). As much as there is a difference in opinion regarding this practise, Kudo argues that some view it as a safety net for widows with limited property rights. In a patriarchal society, a woman may often not be allowed to own property in the absence of a husband or elderly son, and as a result, a levirate marriage is seen as a blessing in disguise (Ngidi, 2012; Kudo, 2017; Kudo, 2018).

Although polygamy or, more specifically, levirate polygamy is still practised in many African tribes, history has it that it is not an African 'invention' (Gaskiyane, 2000; Oliello, 2005). In the African custom, especially the Ngunis, death does not necessarily mean the end of marriage, as *ilobolo*, the slaughtering of a cow and a goat symbolise an unbreakable bond (eternal binding) between two families (Ngidi, 2012). Radcliffe-Brown and Forde (1987) as cited in Ngidi (2012) records that the gall from a cow is sprinkled on the woman's toes, symbolising that there is no force that will separate her from the family she is marrying into and that in the event her husband passes, his

brother might take over and bear all responsibilities that the deceased would have borne.

Ngidi (2012) argues that the brother who is taking over would now be expected to raise his brother's children, sire more children (on behalf of his brother), and fulfil the sexual desires of the widow, among other duties. However, this practice is on a downward spiral owing to Western influence, which has led to many women being independent. Another contributing factor is the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases which have led many people – both male and female – to be reluctant to enter a levirate marriage, especially if the deceased died of STIs (Malungo, 2001; Ntozi, 1997).

2.2.8 Sororate (*ukuvus' amabele*)

The term 'sororate' is derived from the Latin word 'soror', which literally means 'sister', and in this case refers to someone who is a 'seed giver' and who is married in a polygamous setup when a wife is unable to bear children (Schapera, 1970).

In this form of marriage, the family of the wife give their son-in-law a second daughter to be his wife if the first wife cannot have children or has passed on (Bekker & Buchner-Eveleigh, 2017). The substitute could be an unmarried sister or another female relative of the infertile or deceased woman who must bear children for the house of the infertile or deceased wife. If the wife does not bear children, it is occasionally arranged that the husband takes her sister to be his wife even if the first wife is still alive. This practice is referred to as a sororate union (Boonzaaier & Hartman, 1988; Ngidi, 2012). In this form of polygamy, it is believed that there will be harmony if wives are sisters. However, this is not always the case, as the husband might love one wife more than the other (Altman & Ginat, 1996).

Furthermore, this could be a traumatic experience for both sister wives if there is no peace in that family. Ideally, under such circumstances the sisters could console each other, however, such a sororate arrangement, it could be difficult as they are both subjected to same treatment. This was the case with the Owami and Olwethu Mzazi sisters of Vosloorus, who had a terrible experience in their polygamous setup with the husband, Mzukiseni Mzazi (Malema, 2019). Although this kind of sororate arrangement is uncommon, a more common one is whereby a sister marries a man to raise her sister's children, as it is believed that the aunt would raise them better than a stranger who might be jealous, especially in instances where she cannot bear her

own children (Mbiti, 1969 as cited in Ngidi, 2012).

2.2.9 Religious preferences

The topic of polygamy often divides people along religious lines, leading to arguments on whether polygamy is acceptable or not. This may result in religious preferences, as some people may opt for a particular religion simply because it is not against polygamy, or vice versa. However, it is worth noting that others would prefer to distance themselves from any religious domination so that they could do what pleases them – often arguing that they would rather stick to their ancestral beliefs instead. With the above in mind, it would be amiss to not briefly discuss the stance of different religious formations on the topic of polygamy.

Pro-polygamists and anti-polygamists would often 'in principle' support a religion that favours their preferences. Although it is not clear what domination the Mselekus belong too, with religion being something that divides people in the country just like polygamy, it would be worth looking at the major religious formations and their stances on this practise. These religions include Christianity, Islam, and the Shembeites / Nazarites of Shembe.

2.2.10 Christianity

Generally, the Christian religion appears to be against the practice of polygamy. In certain instances, polygamists were not permitted to be baptised – and only wives, if they were true converts, could be baptised if they were in a polygamous marriage involuntary (Hastings, 1973). However, this belief was not held by everyone. Notably, Bishop John Colenso, the first Bishop of Natal of the Anglican Church challenged this notion of not allowing polygamists baptism or allowing them into Christianity without denouncing the junior wives. He wrote a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury saying:

> The conviction has deepened within me more and more that the common practice of requiring a man, who may have more than one wife at the time of his conversion, to put away all but one before he can be received to Christian baptism, is unwarranted by the Scriptures, unsanctioned by Apostolic example

or authority, condemned by common reason and sense of right and altogether unjustifiable[4].

However, Colenso's plea was vehemently rejected by the Bishop at Grahamstown, Dr Cotteril. The decision to not baptise polygamists was upheld, but he compromised in that they could be accepted as candidates and kept under Christian instruction until they were ready to accept the law of Christ (Hastings, 1973). Barth (1961) and Clark (1961) argue that despite the teachings of Christianity against polygamy, there is no scripture, especially in the New Testament, which instructs against polygamy. This sentiment is echoed by Schillebeeckx (1965), who posit that the condemnation of polygamy is not based on biblical teachings, as there is no explicit commandment forbidding polygamy; instead, the case against polygamy is developed on inferences and assumptions.

Nevertheless, the opponents of polygamy and the early missionaries encouraged men to divorce their junior wives, although there was no basis for this in the scriptures. Gitari (1984) questions whether Africans should discard their ways of living, practising polygamy, or whether they should divorce their wives despite divorce being more un-Christian than polygamy. Gitari argues that some men become polygamists by default, when their first wives can no longer meet their sexual needs or fulfil other wifely duties owing to age and illnesses. Gitari (1984) contends that in African customs, marrying a second wife is a lesser evil when compared with divorce.

2.2.11 Islam

Islam is another religion that is usually castigated by the opponents of polygamy for allowing its members to practice this ancient custom. Notwithstanding this, Malik (1994) argues that before the advent of Islam, the earlier religions practised unlimited polygamy, whereas this religion emphasises that a man should not have more than four wives should he opt for the custom, as it not a prescription for men.

Prophet Muhammed's polygamy is often understood out of context, as he only practised polygamy after the death of his wife Khadija, with whom he was married for

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[4] Henry Venn's opinion is from W. Knight, *The Missionary Secretariat of Henry Venn B.D*. (1880) pp. 345-57, quoted by Hastings op.cit., pp.12-13. John Colenso's opinion is from 'Letter to His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury upon the question of the proper treatment of cases of polygamy' (1862) para.3 quoted in Hastings op.cit., p.13

25 years (Malik, 1994). The prophet became a polygamous man after he relocated from Mecca to Medina in 620 AD. Islam scholars record that after the Battle of Uhud, many women were left without husbands, as they died in this infamous battle, and children as a result were often left as orphans fending for themselves. It was therefore advised that men who could afford to have more than one wife could do so to a maximum of four wives, could do so as a way of curbing illicit sex and prostitution (Helal, 2000; Malik, 1994; Doi, 1996; Haleem, 2005; Badawi, 2010).

2.2.12 Nazarites of Shembe

The Nazareth Baptist Church of Shembe is one of the earliest churches which forms part of the African Independent Churches. Owing to the settling of Prophet Isaiah Shembe, the founding leader of the church in the province of Natal in 1910 from Harrismith (*eNtabazwe*), the church has amassed more than four million followers, although there are now more than seven splinter groups following their centenary of existence, the majority of whom are Zulu (Gunner, 2004). It is worth noting though that its membership and following has spread to other provinces and many other SADC countries. According to McNulty (2003), the Shembe faith and Zulu Zionism have attempted to syncretise the two religious worlds of 'African tradition' and 'orthodox Christianity'. Among other traditions that the two have amalgamated are *ukuthetha idlozi* (burning of *impepho* (an aromatic herb) to communicate with ancestors), slaughtering goats and cows (sacrificing for ancestors), wearing traditional regalia and the practice of polygamy. However, for the purposes of this study, the researcher will only look into polygamy as practised by some followers and members of this church.

The founder of the church was born from a Zulu polygamous father, Mayekisa and his one wife, Sitheya Mlindi (MaHadebe) (Mzizi, 2004). Mayekisa was a landless farm dweller in Harrismith. As legend has it, when Isaiah Shembe's mother was already pregnant, a voice said to her, '*You will bear a son who will be a special messenger'* (Gunner, 2004:57). Mayekisa did not fully understand the words because she was not a religious person. Her son was eventually born and named Shembe, and he never went to a formal school. He only learnt to partially read and write later in life (Sundkler, 1976:187). Although Shembe had little 'mission education', he was able to cite biblical verses from memory, outwitting most European missionaries (Muller, 1999:45).

Kumalo and Mujinga (2017) record that the gospel of Shembe, being unique, caused disputes with Christian churches and other organisations that did not approve of his ministry in the then Union of South Africa. The enemies of Shembe's gospel accused him of poaching their members, and disturbing the peace as a result. Some took him to court for this, causing discontent among African Christians, who accused him of teaching the wrong gospel of God, as he allowed his followers to worship in their traditional regalia and stated that polygamy 'was not a sin', as the earlier gospel had professed (Cabrita, 2012). More than 100 years later, Nazarites of Shembe are still permitted to practice polygamy, although this is not a requirement. The leader of the largest faction, Ebuhleni, Lord M. D. Shembe has only one wife (*uMaMsomi*). However, some outside of the Nazarite domination admire the religion for observing certain African customs, including polygamy.

2.2.13 Appeasing the ancestral spirits

Some enter into polygamous marriages due to the call from their ancestors. Polygamy in sub-Saharan Africa exists under what some call the 'cult' of ancestry and gerontocracy (Caldwell & Caldwell, 1987). Having the presumed ability to communicate with deceased ancestors, who are believed to possess the powers to reward good behaviour and punish bad behaviour, the old patriarchy of a family thereby has authority over all his descendants. This includes the arrangement and timing of their polygamous marriages to appease the ancestral spirits (Hayase & Liaw, 1997).

The main goal of the practise under this banner is to have many descendants so that the family line is strengthened, and the deceased ancestors are given opportunities of rebirth within the family. As such, polygamy serves to maintain endless line of births and rebirths and to strengthen the power of the family as well as the status of the old patriarch through the growth of the family size and the expansion of conjugal linkages to other clans (Hayase & Liaw, 1997).

2.3 Psychological Impact of Polygamy on Wives

Moller and Welch (1985) note that the taking of a second wife usually creates tension between co-wives, and this often spills over to the children, and ultimately depression or stress for the husband should he fail to get his house in order. Jivan (1997) posits that additional wives are an imposition to the first wife, as the man is now expected to

divide his attention, finances, and other resources equitably among his wives and children – which results in stress for the former. As noted by Hunt (1989), the men would typically survive on meagre wages, which implies that poverty thrives under such conditions, and which clearly adds a greater burden on the wives, as they are primarily responsible for seeing that their children do not go hungry.

Several studies link marital depressive and internalised symptoms emanating from the conflicts experienced in the polygamous setup (Katz & Gottman, 1993). Several studies suggest that the bigger the family, the more attention may be needed, especially from the father, and that this is not always possible for all his children – financially and otherwise, which is strenuous for the mother who needs to care for her children with a 'part-time' father (Cleveland *et al*, 2000; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986). Mothers are often left on their own to fend for their children, which is stressful if they are unable to do this to their children's satisfaction.

According to various scholars of polygamy, there is a correlation between marital status and mental health. Marriage alone can be stressful, especially if there is a communication breakdown or no communication at all, and this is made even worse in a polygamous setup. Such scholars argue that tensions in the household could result in several psychological and emotional disturbances. They propose that the senior wives are usually prone to more ill-treatment by their spouses, who give most of their attention to the junior wives and their children, resulting in psychological distress for the former (Al-Krenawi, 2001, 2010; Al-Sherbiny, 2005; Ozkan *et al.,* 2006; Al-Krenawi & Slonim-Nevo, 2008; Al-Krenawi *et al.,* 2011).

Al-Krenawi and Slonim-Nevo (2008) note that distress in women in polygamous marriages could be averted and improved if the economic status is not dire and the family becomes functional. Their argument is that polygamy may not necessarily have negative impacts on some women if they have ample resources to fend for their children. Studies conducted in the past point out that transmission of HIV in developing countries, especially in Africa is largely due to heterosexual intercourse (UNAIDS, 2010). Women find themselves in a very difficult position when negotiating for safer sex, as men have always had an upper hand when it comes to sexual intercourse – and their male dominance is echoed in a patriarchal society (Ruth, 1998; Cornwell, 2000; Tfwala, 2008). In Southern Africa, women live with HIV/AIDS as a constant

threat and most of whom are infected while married, as some men refuse to use protection when having sex with their wives. Additionally, some women refuse to use protection as they want to have more children than their counterparts, which make them prone to infections (Davies-Laubscher, 2014).

In the study by Wilkinson *et al.* (1999), it is highlighted that the migrant labour system also contributed to this, as the men leave their rural wives to go to urban areas for work, and their promiscuity tendencies expose their rural wives to infections upon their return home as protection is rarely used. In her dissertation, Nyathikazi (2013) believes that there may be a link between the prevalence of *ubusoka* (having multiple sex partners for a male) and the HIV infection rate in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, as there are many females who contract the virus within marriage or cohabitation. However, Mogotlane *et al.* (2008) argue that as much as polygamy is acceptable in the Zulu culture, *ubusoka* or extramarital sexual relations is not encouraged, as the culture promotes marriage or formalised union and discourages cohabitation.

Furthermore, societal expectations lead women to seek validation and acceptance, and not only from men, which may result in women subjecting themselves to dangerous situations such as having affairs or sleeping with multiple partners – which poses a risk for them in terms of contracting STIs (Esu-Williams, 2000; WLSA, 1998).

2.4   Legality of Polygamy

It is worth noting that the one-man, one-wife policy came with religion in the African context, and specifically from Christianity (Kahiga, 2007; Gaskiyane, 2000). This, however, does not suggest that monogamy did not exist prior to colonisation, but that polygamy was simply an option for those who could afford it (Mbiti, 1969; Diffin, 2010). In this way, the colonial powers denounced some of the original African ways, culturally and otherwise (Bekker, 2001), and polygamous beliefs were denounced through religions and through government policies. Maluleke and Baker (2020) posit that before the promulgation of the Recognition of the Customary Marriage Act 120 of 1998 (RCMA), settling disputes in courts proved to be difficult for those who were married in customary marriages, as they were regarded as cohabitants (Government Gazette, 1998). This legal vacuum left many in a limbo if the traditional courts, presided by *Inkosi* or *Induna*, could not resolve such an issue, and conflicts were therefore common in polygynous marriages, especially after the husband had passed on.

However, Semenya (2014) argues that traditional marriages were deemed solid and binding according to customary practices. Moreover, whatever the dispute that arose, the two families would come together to deliberate on an amicable solution. The payment of *ilobolo* is regarded as a cord that keeps these two families together and the gall sprinkled on the wife during the wedding is regarded as an 'irreversible' contract (Ngidi, 2012; Semenya, 2014; Maluleke & Baker, 2020). Polygamy has not only created challenges for people of African descent though, as even in other cultural backgrounds, such as for Muslims, the majority of whom are of Indian descent in South Africa, similar challenges are frequently faced where the polygamous lifestyle is permissible.

Horning (1999) postulates that the RCMA provides that all wives in a polygynous setup should have the matrimonial property divided equally among them in the event of the death of their husband. However, the downside to this, according to legal experts, is that it might be expensive for men to formalise their relationships with other wives, which could result in those women left with no security. Horning (1999) argues that despite Islamic marriages being recognised under the Customary Marriages Act (Government Gazette, 1998), the legislation is silent on Muslim polygamous marriages and continues to be a contentious issue, and that Shariah Law (Islamic Law) could be utilised as a point of reference to resolve issues of inheritance among co-wives and children. Prior to the enactment of the RCMA in 1998, Muslim and Hindu marriages had no legal recognition; the wives had no entitlement to share in any property, and were only regarded as subjects of their husbands. It was for these reasons that civil unions or Christian marriages were dominant.

As a result of a Constitutional Court decision in Gumede v President of the Republic of South Africa and others, customary wives now benefit from a general judicial discretion to distribute marital assets equitably upon divorce (Bekker & Van Niekerk, 2009). Such a general discretion is not available in civil marriages and customary wives are currently in a more advantageous position than civil law wives in this respect. Although polygamy remains possible in customary marriage, the practice is not widespread, and the 2012 Supreme Court of Appeal case (Ngwenyama v Mayelane & another) has been a game changer for men, as they are required to seek permission from the first wife/wives before marrying another (Himonga & Pope, 2013). Although under the customary law, a man can have more than one wife, the landmark

judgement in 2012 requires the man to seek permission before doing so, or else he could be charged with bigamy. Broughton (2015) writes that a Durban High Court nullified two marriages of a popular radio disc jockey and television presenter, Ngizwe Brian Mchunu, after he married two other women without the knowledge of the first wife and contrary to the law.

Notwithstanding this ruling, the constitution of the country protects the rights of individuals when they want to practice their cultural beliefs and customs – as long they are not infringing on other people's rights. Act 108 of 1996 (section 9.3), dealing with the Bill of Rights of South African citizens, explicitly states that: 'The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, and birth'.

Ras (2010) and Bonthuys (2016) contend that with these provisions in place, no persons should be prohibited or discriminated against from practising their culture regardless of their social standing in society. Whether it is former President Jacob Zuma, the late King Goodwill Zwelithini, Milton Mbele or Musa Mseleku, people who are in polygynous marriages should not be seen as immoral or sinning in the eyes of the law.

2.5   Polygamy in Africa

Between Western civilisation and Christianity, Africans were led to despise their traditions in favour of the Western world (Njoh, 2006). Nyathikazi (2013) writes that the Westerners indoctrinated people about polygamy being ungodly despite the pervasiveness of polygamy in Biblical narratives, quoting among others, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who practiced polygyny in the Bible.

Khapoya (1998) as cited in Nyathikazi (2013) argues that in the African tradition marriage is something that many people aspire to attain, as there is a glaring bias or social exclusion in certain instances for unmarried people. As a result of a shortage or undersupply of marriageable men, polygamy becomes the solution. This also helps marriageable women to enjoy the benefits of marriage, whereas in a monogamous society they would have otherwise been concubines or spinsters (Njoh, 2006; Khapoya, 1998; Nyathikazi, 2013). As discussed in other sections, Ntshangase as

cited in Diffin (2010) records that polygamy for Ngunis was accepted to provide a balanced ratio, as there were fewer men than women.

As much as polygamy is still practised in Africa, it is on a downward spiral as result of religion and education which teaches independence (Lawson & Gibson, 2018). Arthi and Frenske (2018) write that the Department of Human Settlement surveys depict that one in four married women are in polygynous marriages, with almost the same fraction of children under 14 years being born to polygynous mothers. Frenske (2015) records that the decline in the practice of polygamy is glaring in countries with a history of Christian missionary influence, as Christianity denounced polygyny centuries ago, whereas Islam allowed albeit with some conditions. Although the hostility towards polygamy by Christianity is well-documented, this does not imply that there are no Christians who practised polygamy (Wagner & Rieger, 2015). In a local case, Dr H. Q. Nala is among the well-known Christians who practices polygamy openly, although this is rare from charismatic Christians. Nala had quoted the scriptures of the Old Testament, which does not reject polygamy, in his defence (Chutshela, 2016). Nala's much-publicised polygamy received a great deal of criticism in the media, with other Christians arguing that he had brought the religion into disrepute (Ibid).

2.6 Polygamy: Global Perspective

Notwithstanding the legality and acceptability of polygamy in certain parts of world, there are countries where it is still not legalised, such as United Kingdom, United States of America, and many Western countries (CAPWOI, 2004). Despite the illegality of the practice, scores of Mormons practice polygamy, although they often do so in secret (Kilbride & Page, 2012). Contrary to the belief of the opponents of polygamy, Badawi (2010) argues that it is not just about satisfying the sexual desires of a man; instead, it is about compassion towards widows and orphans, as recorded on the Qur'an.

Polygamy is practised all over the world but is most prevalent in the Islamic countries. That said, polygamy is not a requirement in the Islam religion, but is permissible for a man up to a maximum of four wives – at which time the man is permitted to terminate his union with a wife on his own free will (Mir-Hosseini, 2003). However, in Morocco, women have some liberty in this regard, as a wife, at the time of the marriage can opt for a monogamous union, stipulating in the marriage contract or certificate that the

husband may not take another wife if the first wife is still alive (Dangor, 2001; M'Salha, 2001; Afary, 2004). Ginat and Altman (1996) and Kilbride and Page (2012) write that for Muslim men, polygamy is about power and honour, as the more children a man has, the more power and honour he would have. They further note that polygamy is on the decline, as wives in a polygynous union must be treated fairly and equally, which is not always easy or simple to do.

Nyathikazi (2013) records that in Australia the proponents of polygamy felt excluded by government when it enacted a law forbidding the practice of polygamy. The custom is commonly practised by Muslims and Aboriginal communities in Australia, and they argue that it protects them from committing adultery and that widows and orphans are well-looked after as a result, without relying on social grants and the government's support for survival.

In Canada, Section 293 of their Criminal Code forbids the practise of polygamy; however, the more multicultural the country becomes, the more difficult it is to police this, what with the influx of Asian and African migrants who have been practising this for years in their native countries. Facing the same problem in France in the early '90s, the government passed a law known as the Pasqua Law of 1993, which prohibited immigration of more than one spouse. Kaufman *et al.* (2022) argue that although the intention behind the Pasqua Law was not to denounce polygamy, the French government under Jacques Chirac around 1995 emphasised that the migrants' families were too big and that they over-relied on the government's subsidy, which was given to migrants. These migrants were mostly Muslims, the majority of whom were black, and they were able to live off the social benefits given the large size of their families, which was propagated by polygamy. When more stringent rules on immigration were enforced by Chirac's administration, there was an increase in the number of people who were caught trying to enter the country illegally (Hollifield, 2004). This was well documented in various media platforms, the result being that the media played a substantial role in how migrants were portrayed in France, being regarded as a 'burden', especially when considering the large size of their families due to their polygamous lifestyles.

2.7   The Impact of Polygamy on Children

Most studies that the researcher consulted on polygamy focussed more on the effects

on polygamy on adults rather than on children. There are both positive and negative impacts when it comes to children: among other benefits are that children have access to various role models; however, competition among siblings and co-wives could lead to negative impacts (Valsiner, 1989; Valsiner, 2000).

Psychology studies reveal that polygamy can result in traumatic experiences for children, which can be tantamount to that of a divorce. This may also lead to low self-esteem, academic problems and hostility towards a parent or parents (Gwanfogbe *et al.,* 1997). A challenge also arises in the event when the father passes on, as there are often clashes between the children of the senior wives and those of the junior wives. The clashes normally ensue as a result of inheritance issues, especially if the deceased had not divided his assets equally among the various spouses and/or children (Al-Krenawi *et al.,* 1997). Most recently, the media has focused on the disputes over the Kingdom of the Zulus, with the Zulu Royal Family divided as to which among the princes should ascend to the throne after the passing of King Goodwill Zwelithini kaBhekuzulu in 2021 (Mavuso, 2022). While the media focus has mainly been on the older princes, the younger siblings may be equally affected by the disputes.

Favouritism is one of the challenges in a polygamous setup, as some men display preferential treatment towards their junior wives, the result being that the children of the junior wives frequently receive better treatment than those of the more senior wives. Children from senior wives feel abandoned as a consequence, and this creates animosity among the children (Gwanfogbe *et al.,* 1997). Some husbands also fail to maintain fair and consistent contact with all their children, and this may negatively impact the children as well (Shariefa, 2004).

2.8 Mass Media Effects

Mass media plays a substantial role in how people perceive certain things based on how they are portrayed by the media. The media has played a major role in shaping the perception of people about the custom of polygamy, hence this study which looks into the effects of the mass media in shaping people's perceptions in this regard. McQuail (1979) proposes that the mass media is diverse in both content and organisation, which could in turn have effects – whether positive or negative – on society. Grossberg *et al.* (1998) posit that there are various effects on account of the

media, namely, behavioural, planned, and unplanned. McQuail (2000) contends that media messages have the potential of changing a particular behaviour – such as knowledge and feelings – and this could be intended or not. Such effects could manifest at the level of the individual, society, institution, or culture.

DeFleur (1970) posits that the media has the power to influence the norms and behavioural patterns for individuals. The media has the capacity to change the way people see life and convert the thinking of society, its beliefs, and the way people observe their cultural practices – and just like how polygamy is presented on television and other mass media platforms, the way it is framed is likely to change the mindsets of the viewers, listeners, and readers. The power of the media is substantial, such that it affects the individuals, the society, and culture. As such, the media institutions help to produce meanings of social norms to establish hegemony (Gramsci, 2001).

Curran (1970) proposes that the media is an ideological state apparatus which mediates social conflicts and has a role in interpreting and making sense of the world, and the way people see it. With the arguments from the above scholars, it is worth noting that the mass media plays a pivotal role in mediating and making sense of social conflicts, and that this results in the audiences of mass media believing one aspect of an issue and rejecting the other or others based on what the media tells them. For example, the infidelities of some of the King Mswati's wives drew a much media attention, with some citing polygamy as a problem and claiming that he was not satisfying his wives as a result (Smith, 2010; Dlamini, 2022).

Notwithstanding the above arguments, McLuhan (1964) proposes that the content of media has little effect on society, but that the characteristics of the medium play a huge role in how society receives, interprets and understands it. McLuhan's statement, 'the medium is the message' emphasises that the medium engages audiences in different ways, and television is one of the mediums with a great deal of influence. In the sections to follow, the study drills down to investigate the portrayal of polygamy and the influence of television on people's perceptions of polygamy. This is in line with the main purpose of the research, which is to look at a television series *Uthando Nes'thembu*, a reality television series based on the lives of a polygamous family in South Africa, and its effects on people's perceptions of this practice.

Singer (2017) posits that mass media's effects or influence can either be positive or

negative, and that this plays a major role in shaping the cultural uniformity with regard to the value systems, thoughts and actions of individuals. According to Rosengren (2005), the impact of media influence and its effects can be noticeable on a small scale (individual) and at a wide scale (society). The media has the power to arouse and influence different attitudes and behaviours of individuals and groups (communities). The media plays a vital role in defining a nation's identity and culture (Saba *et al.*, 2010). Audiences may consume a particular television or radio programme with a particular mindset to begin with, but later might have a change of attitude and mindset as a result of what they see or hear.

Saba *et al.* (2010) contend that the mass media not only provides entertainment and knowledge, but is also a platform that provides social, cultural and personal development and empowerment of individuals, whether in a negative or positive way. In line with this, the television series on polygamy, *Uthando Nes'thembu,* is meant to provide knowledge, entertainment, and social, cultural and personal development, and thereby empower its viewers as a result*.*

2.9 Influences of Television

Television consists of programmes that reflect things that happen in society. Its programmes are produced and sold as commodities and scheduled to be aired at specific times, and targeting specific audiences (Fiske, 2010). Griffin (2011) and Fiske (2010) note that television has changed people's lifestyles, political inclinations, and religious and social policies, whereby individuals no longer view their lives in a vacuum but instead do so in comparison with others as depicted on television. Therefore, whatever people see on television may influence them as a result, and this may be positive or negative.

Gauntlett and Hill (2001) hypothesise that the relationship between television and daily living is a complicated one, as television programmes have become an integral part of every household. In some families, television programmes have become part of the daily routine; for example, in some families, dinner is eaten at a particular time so that it does not clash with a particular programme. However, Gauntlett and Hill record that as much as there might be a routine in a family or families, these could differ in terms of age, class, race and otherwise.

The reality is that media is powerful, and the media practitioners should guard against

their biases when covering news or presenting content to its viewers (Sinani & Matoshi, 2019). Sinani and Matoshi (2019) continue to state that the power of media's influence is something that media practitioners need to tread carefully, as the media has been used for both good and bad, which continues to be the case up to date. Sinani and Matoshi (2019) postulate that among other mediums, television has been the leader in mass communication – and with this in mind, audiences are not blank slates but watch television with already pre-conceived ideas which could either be confirmed or dismissed after the television programme, based on what they hear and see.

With the influence of television being so huge, it may contribute to an individual's development. Gladkova (2013) proposes that viewers of television sometimes consume content that has acts of violence, gender and/or ethnic stereotypes or discrimination. The content viewed on television could construct or may paint a particular picture where women may be viewed as sexual objects. In the case of polygamy, societal expectations and prior knowledge about the practice already exist, therefore, the way television frames and portrays polygamy is very important. Television producers need to execute their duties with due diligence and responsibility as they have the power to influence people in a way that may become the 'reality' for the viewers. In this way, the media plays a pivotal role in forming perceptions and attitudes of the audiences. Furthermore, during the selection and editing process of television programmes, there is a great deal of filtering before dissemination through media channels, including the setting of agendas for audiences (Shoemaker, 1991; Vartanova, 2012).

2.10 Uses and Gratifications on Television

Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch have been credited as scholars who coined the Uses and Gratification Theory in 1974 (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994). However, McQuail (2010) argues that it could be traced back to the 1940s when researchers investigated the reasons for the choices of listening to a particular radio programme or buying a particular newspaper. The same could be asked about people's choices in watching television at a particular time, watching a particular programme – and what really influence them to make such choices. This theory is premised on the fact that consumers of mass mediums do so for various reasons and seek different gratifications. These may be for education purposed, entertainment, companionship,

knowledge, and the appeasement of boredom, among other things (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994; Asemah, 2011).

Television plays a major role in the daily routine of families, and the feeling of fulfilment is always present when the television programme provides relevant information for its audiences in the form of entertainment, companionship, education and convenience (Asemah, 2011). According to McQuail (2010), the uses and gratifications approach is a sub-tradition as a tool to gauge and explain the uses of the media and the satisfaction emanating therefrom in answering the needs of its audiences. *Uthando Nes'thembu* viewers can either be entertained, educated, or inconvenienced by the programme if it presents content they do not agree with – which may result in cognitive dissonance.

O'Sullivan *et al.* (1994) and McQuail (2000) posit that the media plays a substantial role in providing the relief that people (users) might be seeking. Due to traumatic experiences, people face different challenges in their daily lives, and the mass media plays an integral part in providing some emotional release, albeit of a temporary nature. With regard to polygamy, both men and women viewers may also learn new ways of navigating through a polygamous marriage in the television series. Equally, both men and women can learn other bad behaviours from the participants of the show (McQuail, 2000).

2.11 Gender and the Media

According to Gramsci (1971), the media has a tendency of using hegemony in the way it represents different groups of people. Gramsci argues that the media re-enforces stereotypes and the 'accepted' norms of society. Carter (2004) corroborates this, noting that the media could portray men, especially, as powerful and dominant over women. According to Pozner (2004), television often portrays men as being macho and aggressive, whereas women are represented as beautiful but submissive or scheming. Some women (and often men) are willing to do almost anything to attain their unrealistic and unhealthy ideals (Pozner, 2004). As the television programme projects different genders, it is crucial for the researcher to look at how it portrays the different genders. This is of prime importance in this case, whereby polygamy is investigated through the lens of television.

As early as 1978, Gaye Tuchman had written about how the mass media consistently

'underrepresented' and 'misrepresented' women, often through demeaning stereotypes where they are depicted as victims or a docile and submissive gender only (Tuchman, 1978). Byerly and Ross (2004) attribute the misrepresentation and underrepresentation of women to the strategic and decision-making position. This results in men producing or being the 'brains' in a programme that has to do with women, hence the poor representation of the latter. Lauzen and Dozier (2004) argue that there is a direct correlation between women in production and the way women are depicted in the media. However, they concede that this might be difficult to prove.

According to GMMP reports, television content is dominated by male issues. In issues concerning women, according to GMMP (2015), only 24% of subjects of news stories, for example, are female. The report states that even with issues that predominantly affect women, it is the male voice that appears to dominate. Polygamy by its very own nature seems to benefit men more than women in marriage as they are allowed to have more wives, whereas it is taboo for a woman to have more than one husband. It is therefore important to look into how *Uthando Nes'thembu* portrays the role of women in a polygamous marriage, as depicted in this television series.

According to Basow (1992), the media has a tendency to distort reality in the way women are represented. In prime-time television, for instance, there were about three times as many men as women (Basow, 1992). It must also be noted that women are often misrepresented. However, men are also misrepresented, as they are depicted as masculine who are abusive, self-centred, serial cheaters and polygamists (Pozner, 2004). Among other things, women are depicted as being dependent on men for luxurious lives, whereas men await dinner cooked by the wives. In the case of *Uthando Nes'thembu*, Mseleku is a polygamist, it is therefore important to look at how the different genders in this programme are represented or misrepresented.

2.12 Framing of Jacob Zuma's Polygamy

In South Africa, prior to *Uthando Nes'thembu*, there has never been a programme about polygamy on television, such as *Sister Wives*. Instead, the topic of polygamy only received media coverage, and this caused a heated debate when the former president, Jacob Zuma married his fourth wife, Thobeka Madiba in 2010 (Davies-Laubscher, 2014). Prior to this, King Goodwill Zwelithini and King Mswati's polygamous marriages had been under media scrutiny, however, the researcher

chose to focus on Zuma's case, as it drew a great deal of attention for a country to have a polygamous president (Smith, 2010). Therefore, it will be amiss to conduct a study on polygamy and not touch on how the media framed Zuma's polygamy and the debates that ensued.

According to Geertsema-Sligh (2015), Zuma's polygamy and promiscuity gained media attention and this created different viewpoints, as some people supported him saying it was his culture, while others stated that it was an obsolete custom and not fit for a president of a country. Gender activists, Geertsema-Sligh continues, were more critical of his polygamous relationships, as during his rape trial he admitted that he had unprotected sex with his rape accuser, Fezekile 'Khwezi' Kuzwayo. He went on to have children with his other wife Nompumelelo Ntuli and a 'love child' (i.e. out of wedlock) with Sonono Khoza.

Nwoye (2007) writes that there are two forms of polygamy, namely, affluent and interventive. Affluent polygamy, Nwoye argues, has to do with someone seeking social prestige and economic ambitions. Historically, this would be through harvesting more crops and having more livestock, for example, than monogamists, as the more people in the family, the more manpower to produce crops. In some cultures, especially in the Zulu culture, a man with many wives commands more respect than a monogamist (Mthembu, 2000; Nyathikazi, 2013). The Zulu culture further allows a man who has sired a child out of wedlock to marry the mother of their child. Zungu (2019) argues that polygamy benefits the husband in having numerous partners and sexual gratification, whereas the women's sexual needs are often ignored.

Jacob Zuma's polygamy is both affluent and interventive, as he did not have a child with his first wife (Sizakele Khumalo) and subsequently married Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma in 1975 (Davies-Laubscher, 2014; Geertsema-Sligh, 2015). Zuma then went on to marry more wives after Dlamini-Zuma, whom he divorced in 1998. If Nwoye's definition is taken into account, Zuma's polygamy was more about affluence than interventive in nature. When Zuma's polygamy become news when he married his fifth wife, Thobeka Madiba, other commentators voiced their opinion that his polygamy was more about his promiscuity. They had argued that despite having many wives, Zuma went ahead to have a love child with Sonono Khoza, which could not be supported by his culture or polygamy (Zille, 2010; Kadalie, 2010). Kadalie went on to say that

Zuma's polygamy was about his failure to keep his zip up: 'Polygamy is one thing; sleeping around is altogether different' (Kadalie, 2010).

Although Zuma is far from the first person to practice polygamy, his promiscuity and his serial polygamist tendencies brought the debate on polygamy to the media's attention (Geertsema-Sligh, 2015). Zuma was defined as a person who likes to make babies and as a womaniser: 'Zuma likes women a great deal and he likes making babies; he is the proverbial family man. He is also an unabashed polygamist' (Gordin, 2008: 27). In his defence, Zuma argued that many of the critics or opponents of his polygamy were disingenuous as they had mistresses, yet he preferred to be open about it as he loved his children and wives, which is what he told a television interviewer in 2007 (Geertsema-Sligh, 2015). Not only did Zuma's polygamist lifestyle draw media attention locally, but also overseas where even cartoonists ridiculed him and may have made inferences about South Africa breeding polygamists by its people looking up to their president.

2.13 Framing of Polygamy on Television

There are few programmes that cover the topic of culture, let alone polygamy, which is frowned upon in many segments of society. This is the reality even in the first world countries. Fourie (2001) emphasised that through the integrated communication technologies, media globalisation has become far more of a possibility than the media scholars had predicted. With these technologies, satellite television, among other things, enables the viewing of local content by global audiences, i.e., South Africans can view British programmes and vice versa, and this enables other cultures to learn about things that happen in South Africa, such as through watching the *Uthando Nes'thembu* television series, to use just one example. This is a reality television series that has divided the views of many people, including whether or not it should be aired on television, with some people decrying the oppression of women and the spread of STIs, for example, which they believe polygamy to entail.

However, this is not the first of its kind globally, as America's *Sister Wives* was a subject of scrutiny when it was premiered in 2010. Despite the topic of polygamy having been under much scrutiny, the question about reality television shows in general has drawn a huge amount of criticism. According to Bennett (2011), reality television has been professed as 'fake', as characters would know well in advance

what to do and say, and there is a possibility of editing 'unwanted scenes' so as not to offend viewers; however, he also argues that it should not be shunned by theorists, as there is much that could be learnt from such programmes in the same way that theorists do with films and documentaries.

Bennett (2011) argues that *Sister Wives,* despite being a reality television show, still offers a good perspective about polygamy, although this could also be scripted by the producers of the show. As discussed in the Uses and Gratifications Theory, whereby audiences consume mass media for various reasons, ratings indicate that *Sister Wives* had higher ratings when compared to many other reality television series, as people wanted to know how the characters were living a polygamous life. For a show that featured women of the ages between 25 and 54, it had the highest ratings between December 2013 and 2016 (Richter, 2017).

Richter (2017) argues that often, when polygamous marriage enjoys coverage in the media, it will be about the abuses or risks of spreading STDs. It is therefore important to investigate what takes place in *Uthando Nes'thembu* with this background in mind, and to look at whether these assertions are confirmed or dismissed by studying the programme as portrayed on television and not from tabloid newspapers or the commentary of others.

Campbell (2016) posits that little is known about the life in a polygamous marriage, as such information is not widely circulated and people will therefore make up their minds about how life is in a plural marriage through programmes such as *Sister Wives*, and in so doing, a different perspective might be created to help with a better understanding of such a marital situation. Following the lives of polygamists may help to 'un-teach' certain beliefs and dismantle a school of thoughts that polygamy is all about the abuse and oppression of women (Campbell, 2016). In some instances, what may appear to others as a case of deplorable passivity and docility from a progressivist point of view, may not necessarily be the case to the people practising that custom (Mahmood as cited in Richter, 2017).

However, in her study, Richter (2017) concedes that there may be some challenges in a polygamous setup should the sister wives fail to have one vision for the family. In studying the lives of the Mselekus, it would be prudent to look into how they live their polygamous lives in their luxurious homes. The show itself might give credence to the

argument that polygamy is for those with deep pockets so as to avert the possible psychological effects as discussed above.

As noted by Davies-Laubscher (2014) and Geertsema-Sligh (2015), polygamy in South Africa is only written about or covered on television when there is a news element to it. Zuma's polygamy brought a spotlight to the debate, as it was now practised by a sitting president. Zuma aside, there were few other incidents whereby ordinary citizens were featured in news segments or newspaper articles. For example, Mr Milton Mbele made news in 2009 when he married four wives at the same time (Mboto, 2009). With programmes such as *Uthando Nes'thembu* and, most recently, *Umnakwethu,* being the only two of their kind in the South African television sphere, polygamous families are now shown in a reality television setting indicating all possible negatives and positives of the practice. This was therefore an opportune moment to explore the topic of polygamy and how it has been portrayed on television. While the topic of polygamy is often discussed scholarly in South Africa in anthropology, Zulu studies or legal studies, there is far less focus in the media, and specifically, from the television angle.

Of late, the discourse of polygamy has become increasingly visible and promoted through various public platforms including different forms of media, such as television, newspapers, novels, and so on. For instance, books about polygamy mushroomed in mainstream bookstores with titles such as *The Beauty of Polygamy*, *The Wives of the Prophet* and *Polygamy from the Perspective of Islam*. One can deduce that the media, through books on polygamy, might have motivated politicians to more openly discuss their polygamous marriages, and such behaviour in turn reflects people's attitudes towards the practice. In this way, books also play a role in conveying messages, just like television.

Drama series as portrayed in various media are also a means of communication to convey ideas. Utami and Mawarpury (2019) argue that in the polygamous drama series entitled *Zahra*, gender issues have been packaged to reveal the social reality of polygamous married life. This drama series also raises a discussion on sensitive issues such as social relations between women and men, as well as patriarchal culture, which seems to add spice to the story, as further cited by Yazid *et al.* (2022). Social relations promote gender stereotypes, and through polygamous drama series,

the message being conveyed promotes such gender stereotypes to a greater or lesser extent. For example, stereotypes portray women in modern polygamous marriages as receptionists, secretaries, or women with odd jobs, whereas men are portrayed as decision-makers, managers, business owners, and so on. According to certain scholars, women are often used as objects as portrayed by the media spotlight, while women's lives are still dominated by men (Suwastini, 2019; Zungu, 2019a; Zungu, 2019b).

In the same vein, messages conveyed through media can influence the social life of individuals in communities. Suwastini (2019) further states that drama series on polygamy that are deliberately shown on television are more or less influenced by the social life of the community, which also implies that people would follow the acts and negative behaviour that is played in the drama series scene. There are many cases involving violence against children and women which are depicted in such drama series (Ibid, 2019).

The Legal Aid Institute (LBH), as of March 30, 2020, in a women's journal showed that in South Africa there were 59 cases of domestic violence, rape, and sexual violence, while 17 out of 59 of these were cases of domestic violence committed by family members (Yazid *et al.*, 2022). From this description, it is appropriate to ask why women are often the object of propaganda by the media. It could be that the image constructed around women and the entrenched stereotypes about women are the reasons for this to happen (Yazid *et al.*, 2022). Media plays a huge role in conveying messages to individuals which can either promote good or bad behaviour.

Secular feminists are also against polygamy, which often emanates from the way such marriages are portrayed in media. The secular feminist discourse against polygamy was dominant when the debates around polygamy were articulated in newspapers, magazines or in talk shows on television and radio (Wichelin, 2009). For example, the secular feminists argued that polygamy should be seen as a form of discrimination, which goes against laws of gender equality in the national constitutions of most countries and international agreements such as the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). They also argued that polygamy is a form of domestic violence, pointing out the physical, psychological, sexual, and economic violence of the women and children involved (LBH-APIK,

2003:119). Based on the arguments brought about by secular feminists, their viewpoints on the polygamy practices were very likely influenced by the way media depicted polygamy.

2.14 Conclusion

This chapter dealt with literature relating to media and polygamy. It dissected some of the important and crucial aspects about the relationship that exists between the media and polygamy. It further explored the way the media has dealt with the issue of polygamy in South Africa over the past few years, especially with regard to the debates around former president and polygamist, Jacob Zuma. This brought a new dimension to the debate of polygamy, with some politicians weighing in on Zuma's polygamy and judging it to be inappropriate for a head of state, and others defending his right to practice what is essentially a part of his culture. Having a television series about the life of a polygamist (Mseleku) aired in South Africa has helped to take the debate further about the relevance of polygamy in the 21st century, and the way it has been framed by the media has built an interesting case study. Finally, the chapter investigated the way the topic of polygamy has been debated along gender parameters and whether the media plays a role in framing it as a positive or negative practice.

CHAPTER 3:   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1   Introduction

The term 'theory', as defined by Kawulich (2016), refers to a guiding principle which assists in explaining a phenomenon that predicts future occurrences and makes observations According to Thomas (2017), understanding theory and its practical application often presents challenges for novice researchers. Understanding theory is of utmost importance, as it teaches researchers and scholars how to describe, interpret, understand, evaluate, and predict phenomena (Fourie, 2007).

Fourie (2007) further posits that theories help to arm people with the right skills to deal with the realities of daily lives. This study employs the Media Framing Theory and Cultural Imperialist Theory. These theories are used to establish the role of the television series, *Uthando Nes'thembu*, in how polygamy is portrayed and perceived and the media's role in influencing people's beliefs – particularly in the way the series frames the subject of polygamy. Although this chapter focusses more on media theory, it is prudent to explore cultural imperialism as a theory, as the subject of polygamy has been a subject of debate, with some supporting it as an accepted cultural practice and other dismissing it as an obsolete practice that has no place in the 20th century (Sesanti, 2008; Zeitzen, 2010; Khumalo, 2010; Gevisser, 2010; Mbatha, 2011; Maclean, 2012). These debates will be further discussed in the sections below.

3.2   Media Framing Theory

Framing is defined as a way in which media practitioners shape news content within a particular frame of reference, with audiences adopting these frames and viewing the world in the way media practitioners do (Van Gorp, 2007). According to Jansen (2014), frames would not make any sense when information is presented in silos, and it therefore needs to be placed in the context of other information. Essentially, framing is dependent on selection and salience, which entails selecting aspects of a perceived reality and making them more glaring and obvious (Jansen, 2014; Entman, 1993). It is said that framing has its roots in both psychology and sociology, however, it also has elements of linguists and discourse analysis and political science (Benford & Snow, 2000; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Van Gorp 2007). From a psychological perspective, frames were visible in Kahneman and Tversky's study in 1973, which

investigated how different presentations of identical decision-making scenarios influence people's evaluations of the different options they had and consequently their choices (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). In 1974, a sociologist, Erving Goffman established how frame analysis could be used in organising and making sense out of people's daily experiences by using frames. The frames assisted in locating, perceiving, identifying and labelling a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences (Goffman, 1974). In the context of this project, framing theory is utilised to assess how *Uthando Nes'thembu* is portrayed and may be influencing the viewer through the frames decided by writers and producers of the show.

Weaver (2007) argues that although framing became popular in the 1980s among communication scholars, it appears as though this theory is not well defined. Takeshita (1997) states that many scholars during the '80s investigated how the media frames were used in covering various issues. For the purposes of this study on polygamy, framing may be defined as a process of selecting and highlighting certain aspects of polygamy and downplaying others (see Borah, 2011; D'Angelo, 2002; Domke *et al.,* 1997; Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). The programme is directed, shot and edited with a particular outcome in mind. Although this may be a reality television show, there is a great deal of expectations to feed a particular narrative decided by producers.

Other theorists view the framing theory as an extension of agenda-setting theory, which became popular in the early 1970s when media theorists, Shaw and McCombs were investigating how selection of news by news outlets had a bearing on the outcome of the US presidential elections. However, the proponents of this framing theory argue that the dearth of inclusivity, specificity, and failure to drill down to specific issues by the agenda-setting theory justified the need for the former (Takeshita, 1997).

As much as there is consensus between agenda-setting scholars and framing theorists, the latter have also accused the former of 'revamping' their theory and, as a result, imitating the framing concept – which had been missing from the inception of agenda-setting theory. The fathers of agenda-setting theory, McCombs and Shaw, argue that their study on the US presidential candidates in 1976 taught them that there was a need for a second level of the agenda-setting concept, but dispute that it was a

replica of framing theory (Weaver, 2007; McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar & Rey, 1997).

Framing theory enables the researcher to understand and describe frames or themes as organising principles or ideas, and to construct meaning and influence debate on the issue that is depicted in the medium being used (Tankard, 2001; Scheufele & Iyengur, 2012). These frames come in both the micro and macro level. In the micro level, framing may describe how audiences use the information and how it is presented to form a particular perception (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). For this programme, the producers of the show have an idea as to how polygamy should be depicted – and they focus on exactly that so paint a picture they want.

On the other hand, the macro construct is about presenting information in the manner that audiences are able to relate to the already existing schemas (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). For instance, this theory enables the researcher to unpack how a television series portrays polygamy while looking at various angles, for example, about how the roles of women and men are framed in this show, which also assists to reduces any biasness the researcher may hold as to whether he is for or against polygamy. With the reference to Zuma's polygamy which revived the debate on the subject, Sesanti (2008) decries the media's ignorance of African culture, which results in the media taking a biased stance on this subject.

According to Davies-Laubscher (2014:103), 'much of the media framing of Zuma's exploits can be explained by media practitioners' general ignorance of African culture'. These sentiments were echoed by Khumalo (2010) who accused reporters, and consequently the media, of lacking knowledge and understanding of the 'finer nuances' of Zulu culture.

Information is gathered by the media using different means and is then presented to its various audiences. Different mediums can cover a single event, but the way in which they present this information to their respective audiences depends more on what they are trying to achieve. The theorist, Erving Goffman concentrates on framing theory as a form of communication and defined it as a schema of interpretation that enables individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences or life experiences (Goffman, 1974). According to Jensen (2002), a frame suggests that a

stand-alone piece of information may not be sufficient to make sense of it, unless it is put in the context of related information.

Entman (1993) and Van Gorp (2007) echo Jensen's view and elaborate that through framing, certain information is emphasised, which leads people to remember it, and has the potential to influence them. The polygamy programme, *Uthando Nes'thembu* emphasises a certain message about polygamy, be it in a positive or negative way. According to Entman (1993), frames assist in defining problems, to diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and often to propose solutions. In assessing how *Uthando Nes'thembu* represents and frames polygamy, it is worth noting that the producers, editors and actors on the show are briefed and must appear in a certain way – including how they dress, speak, and so forth.

In his academic article on African culture in journalism curricula, Sesanti (2009) argued that there was much misrepresentation when it came to African cultures, including with regard to polygamy, in local media and abroad. However, Sesanti (2009) notes that the misrepresentation of African cultures does not always border on the issue of malicious intent, as some of it is based on pure ignorance. According to Davies-Laubscher (2014:103), 'much of the media's framing of Zuma's sexual exploits can be explained by media practitioners' general ignorance of African culture'. Sesanti (2010), writing about Zuma's polygamous lifestyle, argued that sometimes the media and its commentators had failed to recognise that Zuma could represent himself as both a traditionalist and a modern-day revolutionary. In the context of this study, Mseleku is a businessman and a polygamist at the same time and leads a modern lifestyle, having built homes for his wives, driving luxurious cars, and factoring in the lifestyle of his four wives, i.e., wearing modern clothing, applying make-up and with no headscarves, etc.

According to Cissel (2012), writers for different programmes use media frames to present information to people in a certain way. On the most fundamental level, framing is the combination of words that form a sentence, phrase or story which consequently provides a message to its recipient. This message, whether it is provided by the mass or alternative media, is being framed in some way (Van Gorp, 2007; Cissel, 2012). As much as *Uthando Nes'thembu* is a 'reality' series, there are certain components or aspects that are omitted during the editing process in order to paint a certain picture

that the producers of the show want to depict about Mseleku's polygamy, which may detract from the realism of the programme.

3.3　Framing as the Construction of Social Reality

As discussed in the previous chapter, the mass media has effects on the attitudes of its audiences. The mass media construct frames of reference which viewers use to interpret and discuss public events (Tuchman, 1978). According to Neuman *et al.* (1992), frames have the potential of giving a certain spin to a storyline and event. Considering the organisational modality constraints, professional judgments, and certain judgments about the audiences, it is important for the media organisation to have a better understanding of the living standard measures for its audiences so that the frames used are in line with its needs. The show follows a businessman, Musa Mseleku and his four wives as they navigate a polygamous relationship, staying true to tradition in a modern world. For the most part, younger people in the 21st century would not want to engage or be involved in polygamy, but the programme seems to have lured even such audiences to have a particular understanding of polygamy, and not to only read about it in magazines but to follow their actual lifestyle.

When trying to construct reality, it is important to understand the roles that audiences and mass media play in constructivist approaches. When doing so, it should not be understood in isolation to other disciplines such as sociology (Coleman, 1987; Luhmann, 1995), social psychology (e.g., Doise, 1986) and political psychology (e.g., Eulau, 1977, 1986), as these approaches have a bearing on how people interpret those events. One of the scholars of framing analysis, Goffman (1974) posits that the media has many ways in which it creates contexts of the events in which the audience may 'locate, perceive, identify and label' those events. As early as the '80s, research on media's effects have been characterised by social constructivism. This led audiences to hold a version of reality based on their personal experiences, interaction with peers, and interpreted selections from the media (Scheufele, 1999).

Although it is difficult to source statistics on the number of people in polygamous families, the reality is that their experiences may be a major factor in accepting or rejecting polygamy. Some of the viewers of *Uthando Nes'thembu* grew up in families with absent fathers or a father who hardly spent time with his children as a result of polygamy, which might in turn have led them to have a jaundiced view on polygamy.

Some of the fathers could have gone to work in the cities where they found another wife and never returned, as with many families who were dismembered by migration (see Tyali, 2018; Gevisser, 2007; Gordimer, 2005). However, the reality show *Uthando Nes'thembu* might present a different picture of a polygamous family – whether real or scripted. Just like a news bulletin, a television programme depends greatly on what message the producers of the show want to convey and how they want to convey it.

As stated by Scheufele (2004:407), the media often use 'priming', whereby certain content is repeated for a certain effect, and that content tops the public agenda. As discussed in the previous sections, polygamy, especially in South Africa, has been a subject of great debate, and it enjoyed much media attention when Jacob Zuma ascended to the presidency (Davies-Laubscher, 2014). As such, the priming of polygamy could have been expected – which might in turn have been a springboard to the programme, *Uthando Nes'thembu*. This programme was aired every week for about 24 minutes on Thursdays and would have repeats on Saturdays. In relation to Scheufele's argument on priming, this is a classic example where a certain topic is repeated to achieve a particular goal in reaching out to audiences. Furthermore, with regard to *Uthando Nes'thembu*, this is not just a once-off 'story', but had eight episodes in season one alone in which its audiences were able to discuss the topic of polygamy. It also resulted in greater agenda-setting for other media like newspapers and social media.

3.4   Different Forms of Media Frames

Another framing scholar, Reese (2001) argues that there are different purposes of frames in the media, namely, organising principles, and the fact that they can be shared, can be persistent, can be symbolic and can be structured.

3.4.1 Organising principle

The first purpose of a frame is to organise information. This may occur or play out on a cognitive or cultural level, with the former focusing on how much a piece of information would be emphasised and the latter indicating a broader, deeper sense of accepting reality (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Reese (2001) argues that when frames are used to describe the actual stance without a supporting apparatus, they gain organising power. In theorising cognitive frames, Miller (2002) argues that

individuals draw on their cultural understanding to construct their frames of a situation as depicted in the media. Their various communications result in a debate whereby their understanding clashes, thereby creating a conflict or dissonance (Miller, 2002). Reese (2001) warns, however, that media texts should not be taken at face value, as certain aspects may not be as they seem. Reese continues to suggest that frames must not be viewed in isolation but contextually by answering the following questions:

- In the representation of reality, how much framing is occurring?

- How adequate is the frame to contain the elements it proposes to embrace?

- How close is the frame to containing the elements it proposes to embrace?

- How close is the frame to that promoted by sources or indicated by an event?

- Is the frame convincing in accountability for reality?

For example, viewers may develop a particular viewpoint about polygamy if they do not have a deeper understanding of what the programme, *Uthando Nes'thembu* is depicting. Furthermore, emphasising a particular aspect of polygamy or a particular behaviour may tell a particular story or convey a particular message, which may give rise to certain frames consequently.

3.4.2 Frames can be shared

Another important aspect of frames is that they can be shared. The strength of a frame can be measured by how a particular message is shared across different mediums and how it is shared between culture, communicator, text, and the receiver (Entman, 1993). When frames are shared, they become powerful. Different cultures, tribes and social groups have certain assumptions that are shared amongst them and the way they interpret them could be based on their common beliefs and attitudes (Hertog & McLeod, 2001). According to Neuman *et al.* (1992), the media has the ability to use tactical frames for 'conflict' and 'powerlessness' and the viewers would rely on human impact and moral values to makes sense of the content. The reality is that audiences approach different television programmes with their preconceived moral values and their religious convictions – and the way the programme is framed may result in cognitive dissonance for the viewers, which may cause feelings of unease and tension, and people attempt to relieve this discomfort in different ways. In order

for the viewers to accept and share the media frame is greatly dependent on their understanding and attitudes prior to the viewing thereof (Reese, 2001:8). This infers that different groups of people may have different attitudes towards polygamy and the way it is portrayed on *Uthando Nes'thembu* – this may be gender groups, religious groups, age groups and so forth. This simply means that viewers of the show, with their various schools of thought, may have various and distinct takeaways about polygamy as shown in the series.

3.4.3 Frames can be persistent

If frames are persistent, they become powerful. If a particular message is repeated in the media for a long time, people are inclined to believe that message over other messages that are not as repeated in the media. Frames persist and are inherently stable because they perform a stabilising function, in that they offer dependable mental shortcuts for members of society. They are also associated with organisations and institutions that are themselves stable (Hertog & McLeod, 2001). Reese (2001) argues that it is only when the frames become persistent that they are worth analysing. The frame in this instance becomes persistent, but this is largely dependent on what is already entrenched in viewers' minds. Gitlin (1980) posits that a frame may be a persistent and routine way of handling the information and pin-pointing stubborn tendencies which resist change.

In the case of *Uthando Nes'thembu*, the programme played for eight weeks (weekly) in season 1, showcasing the life of polygamy for the Mselekus and it also had repeats for viewers in case they had missed an episode. When it premiered, people might have been interested in the programme, and made them to come back for more in the weeks that followed - showing different dynamics in polygamous setup and illustrate a polygamy programme which pushes a persistent portrayal of polygamy as theorised by Reese above.

3.4.4 Frames can be symbolic

Frames also manifest through symbols such as words and images. These framing devices come in the form of metaphors, catchphrases, exemplars, depictions and visual images (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Reese (2001) posits that the most powerful frames may suppress the actual content through language use, sentence structure, jargon and selection of images. For frames to be regarded as symbolic, they

need to manifest and be communicated through various forms. When these are combined, they form a symbolic frame.

According to Pan and Kosicki (1993), these symbolic devices may manifest in the following forms: syntactical, script, thematic and rhetorical. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) note that when examining these and measuring the presence of these frames, one should focus on metaphors, catchphrases, exemplars, depictions, and visual images. Of late, reality television has become one of the most watched television genres, with a belief that it is more attractive and real compared to soap operas and movies, for example (McDermott, 2012). Reality shows can clearly be pre-planned, but mostly entail unscripted programming with non-professional actors in non-fictional scenarios (Corner, 2002).

According to Hill (2005), reality television is premised on providing entertainment and follows predefined scripts to create, recreate and stage realistic situations. Such shows often dramatise the actual event for a 'wow factor'. However, Klug (2017) questions whether reality shows are in fact real, as there are instances whereby actors have posted some behind the scenes images which clearly indicate that the scene in question has been scripted. He concedes, however, that some producers may cast experts for certain situations to act out a fictional story in order to give plausible information. In *Uthando Nes'thembu*, it has been verified that Mseleku is not just an actor but a real polygamist; however, the question remains as to how much reality exists in the programme. When looking at the visuals, for example, is that truly the kind of life that they live, or it is scripted to paint a particular picture about polygamy? Another symbolic question could be around the interaction between the husband and wives and the interaction among sister wives. For example, in most large polygamous families, there would likely be at least some animosity among the children and wives. Then, the question would be around the symbolism on this television relating to symbolic frame when it comes reality television.

3.4.5 Frames provide structure

A frame provides a pattern to social issues through any number of symbolic devices. The structure of these frames may be manifest and explicit or embedded and implicit (Reese, 2001; Hertog & McLeod, 2001). According to Gamson (1992), the structure plays a pivotal role in how the principles of organisation create a logical and consistent

argument. This is done through a combination of symbols, giving them relative emphasis, and attaching them to a larger cultural idea. However, according to Reese (2001), a structure may take the form of manifestation and be explicit or embedded and implicit.

McCombs *et al.* (1997) posit that in the variety of frames that affect details of what is shown in the news or television programmes there may be a slip between agenda objective and a picture in the head of the viewers. Reese (2001) argues that the mass media – television in this context – requires that they do not only show a balanced viewpoint or coverage of an issue but must also be able to make meaning of the coverage shown. According to Reese (2001:11), 'The inclusion of a revisionist position in coverage shifts the frame to a "two sides to every story", "the truth must lie somewhere in between" kind of judgement'. In relation to *Uthando Nes'thembu*, the structure of these frames may be an open statement for the viewers to make sense of what is happening, or may not be as obvious in meaning.

3.5 Cultural Imperialism Theory

Cultural imperialism refers to the dominance of one culture over another, especially when it comes to an alien (foreign) culture (Tomlinson, 2012). Cultural imperialist theorist, Herbert Schiller (1973) argues that Western countries have the dominant media, which is then emulated in many third world countries. Schiller continues to posit that people react to what they see on television and compare it to their lives, which they generally perceive to be inferior.

Viewers may support or not support polygamy due to how they relate it to their culture. In some Africa cultures, especially in rural areas, men feel proud of their polygamy and increasing number of children to ensure their social and economic positions, as they consider polygamy as a reproductive strategy by men to increase their offspring (Dissa, 2016). However, globalisation has brought about international treaties and declarations on children and women's protection and rights, which in turn conflicts with culture. There is a conflict between the desire to protect African cultural traditions and increasing pressure to recognise women's rights (Thobejane & Flora, 2014; Leoba *et al.*, 2020).

With respect to Africa, Western cultures have dominated the African cultures in the 20th century through religion and, at a later stage, the media, which resulted in African

countries emulating Western cultures and being dependent on Western media (Cardoso & Faletto, 1979). Cultural imperialism has its roots in dependency theory, where developed countries directly and indirectly impose what is good and bad upon the dependent or underdeveloped countries; in essence, causing their cultural practices to start to diminish, or resulting in a hybrid of coexisting cultures (Beltran, 1978; Cardoso & Faletto, 1979; Salwen, 1991). It is a cultural practice for many African women to put on a headscarf, however, Mseleku's wives are depicted in modern clothing without headscarves. This particular framing is therefore highlighting modern lifestyles. Dalhatu and Shehu (2020) aver that through media framing, media practitioners are able to highlight a particular aspect of an issue and have the audience's attention focus on it but ignoring the other aspects.

According to Acholonu (2011), the intrusion into African culture by colonial masters gave birth to what he refers to as culture transfers and culture imposition. He argues that through various programmes, especially on television, the media regularly distorts people's perception of values and holds in high regard Western ways of doing things – and in the process, denouncing African ways of life. In line with this, it is noted that the mass media has had mostly negative impacts on the African culture, which prior to this had their own ways of communication (Chinweizu, 1999). It is argued that the new communication systems that were introduced by colonialists brought about change to certain cultural perspectives, as the media now showcased, in the main, Western culture, while undermining the way of life of the indigenous people (ibid.).

Deegan (2008) decries the Western imperialism in the continent, with media and religion at the forefront of enforced modernisation of Africa, leading to 'de-Africanisation'. However, Bullard (2008), in his controversial column titled 'Uncolonised Africa wouldn't know what it was missing', argues that colonisation had to happen for Africa to be fully part of the global community in terms of development and civilisation, among other things. Bullard continues to argue that Africans were praying to ancestors at the time, which did not help as they could not hear or see them and were instead dead and decomposing in their graves. This begs the question about whether Bullard had written this from an informed perspective or was just making assumptions. Television in this era is one of the tools of conveying messages. Airing polygamous programmes on television is thus a form of communication to individuals and society at large.

Sesanti (2009) debunks similar sentiments by the likes of Bullard, contending that more often than not, the media and, by implication, writers and producers, report about Africa from an ignorance point of view. Acculturation as defined by Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2013) is problematic, as the African cultures are barely practised by Europeans or Americans, while many Africans have adopted theirs. Acholonu (2011) contends, however, that as much as acculturation presented some problems for African people, it had to happen for globalisation purposes, and that the indigenous people of the continent would have not expedited development had they practised strict cultural insularism. In the same vein, it could be argued that the Westerners through colonisation, religion and media had imposed their ways of life but remained insular to the African cultures, indicating a lack of acculturation from their part.

Despite cultural imperialism theory being likened to dependency theory, it also promotes positive agendas such as equal rights. Micah (2018) cites that cultural imperialism theory can promote equal rights and improve the quality of life for many people. Some of Mseleku's wives are portrayed as business and working women, unlike in the past, where women were expected to work in the fields. Having women participating in economic activities promotes and improve their quality of life as well and resonates with modernity. Thus, cultural imperialism promotes the right to work for women, as depicted in the polygamy programme of Mseleku and his wives (Zungu, 2019a; Zungu, 2019b).

3.6   Media's Role in De-Africanisation and Colonisation

While the relationship between media and colonisation is undisputed in the African continent, reviewing the historical literature on the media industry could prove to be a mammoth and daunting task for any researcher owing to the size of the continent and different dynamics in many African countries (Banda, 2007; Ziegler & Asante, 1992). Former Democratic Alliance leader, Helen Zille once tweeted that colonisation was not a 'bad thing' but rather a tool to expedite civilisation of the 'uncivilised' (ENCA, 2017). These sentiments are echoed in David Bullard's 2008 *Sunday Times* article – as articulated briefly above – where he glorifies colonisation. The editor of *Sunday Times* at the time, Mondli Makhanya said it was troubling that the writer held such myopic views that belonged to the 19th century (News 24, 2008). In response, critics asked why the article had been allowed in the first place by Makhanya if this was not in line

with the values of the weekend paper (News 24, 2008). At the time, Bullard said his article was just an imagination not a true narration of history.

Thiong'o (1986) postulates about the importance of decolonising the mind of an African, having been brainwashed by colonisers to despise their heritage and cultural norms. According to Thiong'o (1986:4), 'The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their name, in their language, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as a wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from the wasteland'. It is therefore critical in problematising polygamy to assess the media's role diminishing or promoting certain practises that existed before colonialists' media.

Polygamy was one of many such cultures that existed previously before colonisation and Moosa (2009) and Mwambene (2017) both contest that religion, especially Christianity, and later the Western influenced media as well denigrated polygamy and thus portrayed it in a negative light. It is worth noting that the colonial mediums were propagated for settlers' interests and in essence shunned the interests of Africans, whether it be social, economic, cultural and/or political (Ziegler & Asante, 1992). The dearth of such a platform for Africans undermined the efforts to fight colonisation and de-Africanisation head-on. As such, the idea to Africanise the media was born with the establishment of black press, which was a catalyst in making sure that Africans had a voice (Ziegler & Asante, 1992; Sesanti, 2007). Although there were publications that were established for black people such as *Indaba, Ikhwezi* and *Isigijimi samaXhosa,* the voice of an African was still missing, as they were merely preaching the gospel of religion and remained apolitical. Political writings were discouraged, which encouraged the editor of *Isigijimi samaXhosa*, John Tengo Jabavu, to form his publication *Imvo Zabantsundu* in 1884, which represented the views of Africans (Moropa, 2010). This was a game-changer, as this is acknowledged as the first black-owned publication (ibid.). Later on, radio stations for *bantus* were established in the early '60s, but again they were merely tools to pacify the Africans from uprising. They discouraged people from discussing politics and instead pushed for radio drama, among other programmes, that were meant to keep them glued to the radio rather than being involved in activism against apartheid (Lekgoathi, 2012; Caplan, 2011).

3.7 Television in South Africa

Although film existed in South Africa as early as the late 1800s and radio in the 1920s, television as a medium arrived late in South Africa in 1976. This was meant to broaden the scope of broadcasting to supplement what the already existing platforms were designed to achieve (Tomaselli & Tomaselli, 1989). Evans (2014) notes that the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) television services were introduced almost 20 years later than most countries as the regime wanted to first ensure their veil of secrecy was intact. They believed that television had the ability to 'connect' nations through which news is broadcast. As argued in the previous sections, the media, alike to religion, played a vital role in de-Africanisation. The introduction of television affirms these arguments because, as a precursor to the introduction of television in the country, staff had to be trained in European countries – in essence admitting the media and cultural imperialist tendencies of the Western countries in Africa (SABC Annual Report, 1974).

The theory of cultural imperialism is premised on the fact that the cultures of first world countries become dominant over those of third world countries, as the former's ways of doing things are emphasised and repeated, whether through religion or the media, thus influencing the consumers through the information or doctrine that is thereby presented (Schiller, 1973). And television, plays a huge role in 'importing' certain cultures and lifestyles from America through its programmes, and this may result in audiences adopting those lifestyles.

3.8 Americanisation and Cultural Imperialism on SA Television

In theorising about cultural imperialism, Schiller concluded that imperial hegemonies in today's era are largely as a result of the mass media, especially television, which is laden with imported foreign news and Western cultural and television genre formats, i.e., talk shows, sitcoms, music and movies (Tomlinson, 2012). Studies on the above have shown that these programmes have provided a springboard for the birth of media imperialism. The 'offspring' in this case is that which could determine whether cultural imperialism thrives or not, as the mass media has enormous influence on the decisions that people take depending on the medium in question. This also vindicates McLuhan (1964), who stated that the medium is the message, as well as

Chomsky (1989), who noted that the media's influence is immense and therefore can change the thinking of society.

According to O'Meara (1996), the white regime under the National Party had refused to let black people produce their own television content without their approval, as they regarded them as 'cultural infants'. Even in the channels that were meant for blacks, some content and programmes were outsourced from other countries – especially Hollywood in the USA, including music programmes, movies and comedy shows. This may have resulted in what Tomlinson (1991:3) states as 'to exalt and spread the values of a foreign culture at the expense of the native culture'. As such, programmes on African cultures hardly feature in television, if it does it often through the eye of a western media.

According to Pritchard (2009), cultural imperialism, especially American dominance could be identified in various ways and not only through television, but also through Hollywood films, the likes of the McDonald's franchise and hip-hop music, among other things. Bennet (1999) argues that a more dominant culture may overwhelm the other, the result being that the other is destroyed. Based on the definitions of cultural imperialism, it may be argued that this may not only be caused by 'importing' programmes from America, for example, but could also be a result of copying ideas and content from the dominant country, including series such as *Idols*, *X-Factor*, *American's Got Talent* and *The Voice*. South Africa has its own versions of these programmes with the same rules. The same could be said about *Uthando Nes'thembu,* which is a South African version of America's *Sister Wives*. This shows that television producers and production companies have a tendency of importing their ideas from shows that exist elsewhere – especially in America and Europe.

Marshall McLuhan (1964) envisioned that television would create a global village, which rings true to an extent; however, the challenge is the lack of acculturation, as this has essentially become a one-way street – with American content and ideas emulated in South Africa and throughout much of the rest of the world, and not the other way round.

3.9 Polygamy on Television – *Uthando Nes'thembu*

As a result of colonisation, South Africa has become a predominantly Christian state, although government has taken a secular stance (Paas, 2013; Schoeman, 2017). By

implication, the majority of television viewers have allegiance with Christianity, and this may present a dilemma for the producers of *Uthando Nes'thembu* in the way they frame the show, such as conveying a particular message about Mseleku's polygamy, but not offending the viewers in terms of their cultural and religious beliefs in the process.

Based on the viewers' understanding of polygamy, they are likely to have different attitudes towards polygamy. This research study investigates how polygamy is portrayed on this television series by analysing how the husband communicates with and treat his wives and his children, and vice versa. The study also investigates the relationship between the wives, including whether or not they are getting along and are happy or unhappy with this marital setup. Other aspects investigated include whether or not one needs to be wealthy to afford a polygamous marriage, and why it is that men opt for polygamy and why women agree to be in this kind of marriage.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter looked at two theories – the Media Framing and Cultural Imperialist theories, as they play a critical part in unpacking the role of *Uthando Nes'thembu* in the portrayal of polygamy in South Africa. Clearly, this is also tied to the issue of culture and the effects of television in the way that polygamy is portrayed. As discussed above, culture, beliefs and religion create many debates which have the potential of dividing viewers of this programme, depending on which views are strongly held by them. The influence of television in shaping people's perceptions is immense, hence this section looked at whether this is the case with this television programme or not. From a media or television perspective, there are approaches that media practitioners use to obtain a particular outcome. It is on this basis that this chapter also investigated the frames utilised in *Uthando Nes'thembu* and whether these might have had a bearing on how people view polygamy.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 Introduction

This chapter expands on the research methods and approaches that are used to collect data, analyse it, and arrive at findings of the research study. With that in mind, the research methodology further explores the methods that are utilised in this research study in understanding the *Uthando Nes'thembu* programme in so far as its influence on the viewers is concerned. Research methodology is the decision and selection of a process that is suitable for the research project, which involves analysis of the assumptions, principles and procedure (Schwandt, 2007).

Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) write that it is important for the researcher to first understand what problems are being investigated in the study; what are the testable hypotheses; and how they are going to frame the problem using certain procedures in collecting and collating data. However, over the years, scientific researchers have held different opinions on what methodology consists of, but all agree that it has to do with the process of collecting data in a research study. Perri and Bellamy (2012) posit that methodology has its roots in understanding the requisite skills that researchers utilise in creating, collecting, coding, organising, and analysing data. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) and Brynard and Hanekom (2006) state that the methodology focusses on how data is collected and processed during the research process framework. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) further elaborated on this point, stating that there are three methods in which data can be collected in a research study, namely: quantitative research, which helps with numerical data and analysis; the qualitative method, which helps researchers in narrative data and analysis; and a mixed method, which is a hybrid of the two (qualitative and quantitative) approaches. This study used the mixed method.

Tashakkori and Creswell (2007:4) define mixed methods as 'research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study'. The researcher opted for a mixed method to assist in the sampling process through which eight episodes of season one of *Uthando Nes'thembu* are described and analysed. Taking into account that the programme has impacted the attitudes of its audiences

after viewing it, a sample of 30 viewers and their perceptions is therefore included through a survey questionnaire on how the programme was received and perceived by different gender and different age groups.

Salomon (1991), Firestone (1987) and Yin (2004) contend that quantitative research informs the reader through de-emphasising individual's judgment and putting more emphasis on the established procedures which lead to results that can be generalised to populations. Qualitative research, on the other hand, emphasises descriptions and strategic comparisons across cases, filling the vacuum left by the quantitative approach. In essence, the qualitative approach assists the researcher to answer the 'how' and 'why' questions and the quantitative method addresses 'how often' and 'how many'. This method helps the researcher to unpack the actions of the characters in the episodes of this television series and further assess how many or how often certain things or phrases are done or said. The researcher opted to obtain people's reaction to the reality show through a survey questionnaire. This was done to reduce the researcher's bias by acquiring the perspective of other people who watched the television show.

4.2   Research Design

Creswell and Clark (2007:58) define research design as the 'procedures for collecting, analysing, interpreting and reporting data in research studies'. It is the research design that helps the researcher to conceptualise the research problem and link it with the empirical research. It sets the tone for the study on the procedure that must be employed to achieve the required data through collection of the necessary data, the analysis thereof and how it addresses the research question (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Neuman and Robson (2014) posit that there are three possible forms or shapes that a research design can take: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. For instance, the purpose of a descriptive study is to provide a picture of a situation (visual appeal), person or event to show how things are related to each other and as it naturally occurs (Blumberg *et al.,* 2014). However, in situations whereby descriptive studies fall short in answering the research questions, such as failing to explain why an event occurred, an explanatory or exploratory approach could be advisable (Punch, 2005).

In instances whereby nothing or little is known about the phenomenon and problem under investigation, the exploratory method becomes useful in clearly defining such

for readers to understand that issue better. Such a study goes much deeper into the research topic and allays any possible confusion by tackling the topic and providing more insights into the issue (Saunders *et al.,* 2007; Brown, 2006). As noted by Babbie (1992), researchers should be very clear on what the research problem is in order to be clearer on what they want to discover and how they would do that. The chosen research design assisted the researcher to minimise the bias in both the collection of data (transcribing episodes) and through the survey questionnaire responses from the viewers of the show. The intention for this design is to make sure that the research itself is neutral, valid and reliable, and that at the end, one can draw a fair and generalisable conclusion.

4.3 Target and Sampling Process

This section unpacks the population parameters for the study, the sampling process employed, and the identification of the unit of analysis.

4.3.1 Population

According to Brynard and Hanekom (2006), a population in a research study could be defined as objects, subjects, events, phenomena, or cases which form part of the research. Bless and Higson-Smith (1995) corroborate this point, arguing that population is the grouping of all the above in a research study. The population of the study is made up of the entire aggregation of cases on which the inquirer is focusing (Polit & Beck, 2012). A sampled population comprise the individuals or elements which form part of the study (Burns & Grove, 2009). In respect of this research, the target population comprised 30 respondents, purposively sampled.

Although there were five seasons of *Uthando Nes'thembu*, a sample of only the first season, which consisted of eight episodes of about 24 minutes each was utilised. Season one was chosen, as it was the first of its kind on South African television and elicited the most debate. It also shaped the thinking of many viewers with regard to how they pictured polygamy, or any questions they may have had. The selection of only one season was also convenient for the researcher, as it proved to be impossible to conduct such a study on all the seasons due to the time it would have taken. The number of episodes was also reasonable, as it consists of only eight episodes, whereas in other seasons, there are more than ten. The researcher also involved the viewers of the programme to acquire their views of the first season of *Uthando*

Nes'thembu through a survey questionnaire which was given to 30 respondents. Although the show had thousands of viewers, it would not have been possible to sample all of them.

4.3.2 Sampling techniques

As stated above, it would be impossible for any researcher to study all seasons of *Uthando Nes'thembu*. In September 2021, the Mzansi Magic show returned to the small screens with season five of the show that follows the lives of the polygamous Mselekus. Brynard and Hanekom (2006:54) define sampling as 'a technique employed to select a small group with a purpose of determining the characteristics of a larger group'. Miles and Huberman (1994:27) assert that the sample size plays a substantial role in making sense of the analysed data, but that the size is not as important as obtaining enough information to prove or disprove the hypothesis.

Mason (2017) emphasises that studying the entire population may be tiresome and even end up confusing the researcher; it is therefore strongly recommended that a sampling procedure be undertaken. This must be done with careful consideration and one needs to choose the best instrumentation that underpins the validity and reliability of the collected data. Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.* (2014) note that there are two types of sampling methods: probability and non-probability. With the former, each unit (whether an individual or social unit) in the population of the study should be considered and be part of the sample, whereas the latter is useful when involving all units proves to be impossible. This study employed non-probability sampling, as it will sample season one of the programme and include a sample survey of 30 viewers.

Bless *et al.* (2006) outline the advantages of using a sampling procedure in a study:

- Collection of data may be very costly, especially when using all units and individuals in a study of a broader population. Selecting only a representative few to achieve the same results is a far more cost-effective undertaking.
- Time constraints – sampling assists the researcher to spend less time in gathering data. With regard to *Uthando Nes'thembu,* with five seasons in total, it would be a mammoth task to include all the seasons of the series in a study such as this. Choosing to include only the eight episodes of the first season was therefore far more practical. Furthermore, surveying only 30 viewers was

a feasible undertaking, as opposed to the more than half a million viewers of season one.

- Taking the above into account, a well-defined sample which represents the population allows for reaching a generalised outcome or findings.

Brynard and Hanekom (2006) contend that the findings of a study should be valid if the sample is a representation of a larger group's characteristics. The researcher opted for season one among many seasons because it is the season that opened the public debate on the relevance and appropriateness of polygamy in the 21st century, with some supporting the idea of polygamy and others rejecting it. In essence, the first season re-ignited the debate that existed when Jacob Zuma married his fourth wife, except that this time it was a private citizen and not a public figure who sponsored his lifestyle with taxpayers' money[5]. This study also elicits the reaction of the viewers through a sample of 30 respondents to obtain their understanding of the programme and their stances on polygamy after watching this season.

4.3.3 Area of focus

4.3.3.1 Why Uthando Nes'thembu?

For many years in South Africa the focus on polygamy has been on former president, Jacob Zuma's polygamy (Gouws, 2010; Geertsema-Sligh, 2015). Some argued that Zuma as head of state at the time had to lead by example – especially in the fight against HIV/AIDS, as having multiple partners increased the chances of contracting HIV/AIDS and STIs exponentially (Davies-Laubscher, 2014; Geertsema-Sligh, 2015). With the airing of *Uthando Nes'thembu* showcasing an individual who at the time was not a public figure and who did not rely on taxpayers' money to sponsor his habits, this changed the debate and added a new perspective to the issue. While the element of questioning his lifestyle was still present, it was far less than towards that of Zuma, as Mr Mseleku was not a public figure (Nemakonde, 2017). This show is the first of its kind in South Africa, and the debate about polygamy took another turn accordingly,

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[5] Zuma's polygamous lifestyle had caused a stir in the media after marrying Thobeka Madiba (Gouws 2010; 12). However, for Zuma, it was not just polygamy but his promiscuity that drew attention to him after fathering a child with Sonono Khoza. This resulted in questioning whether it is about his culture (polygamy), or it is just about his propensity of having multiple sexual partners (Davies-Laubscher 2014)

some changing their stance about it after seeing the lifestyle of the Mselekus, not all of which was positive (Ibid, 2017).

Furthermore, the medium of television plays a substantial role in the way in which it portrays polygamy. As much as the show is a reality show, it must be noted that it is also scripted. As such, there are aspects or scenes that were likely omitted in the final version that the producers may have deemed unnecessary or inappropriate. The producers and the writers play a major role in portraying polygamy the way it is portrayed, which in turn is the message or perspective that the viewers receive. The medium is the message (McLuhan, 1964). Here, thousands of viewers got to see the lifestyle of a polygamous family, which is something that few people who grew up in monogamous families had previously seen or experienced. It is for this reason that the researcher wanted to unpack and analyse the visuals, text and communication portrayed in this series, and to determine the effects thereof on the perception of the viewers and the way that polygamy was portrayed.

4.4   Data Collection Method

Data collection and gathering is crucial in any study, as it assists in making sense of the theories on which the study is premised. The onus is on the researcher to ensure that correct and relevant data is collected in order to obtain meaningful results (Creswell, 2011; Bernard, 2002; Patton, 2002).

In this study, the collection of data was through watching season one of *Uthando Nes'thembu* and by means of a survey questionnaire issued to a sample of 30 people who watched this season. Kothari (1985) states that information that the researcher collects for the first time and which has not been utilised in another study is referred to as primary data, and when data that has been through the statistical process is classified as secondary data. Therefore, the content analysis of the programme equated to primary data for the study, and the questionnaire with viewers of season one of the programmes also entailed primary data.

Drew (1980) and Kothrani (1985) assert that questionnaires are a critical part of collecting data, and that this becomes even more important in the field of the humanities and social sciences, as involving humans in a research study is vital.

Questionnaires can be defined as a text-based instrument that gives respondents a chance to answer a set of questions that have been set out by the researcher, and the respondents then provide responses (long questions) or tick or select from provided responses (short questions) in order to reach a particular conclusion based on how they respond (Brown, 2001). Among the advantages of this method is that survey questionnaires are less costly than face-to-face interviews and are easy to do online (Fife-Schaw, 2006). In this case, the researcher opted for a web-based survey questionnaire, the link to which was emailed to 30 participants from various places and provinces.

According to Pascoe (2014), researchers have an option to choose from different forms of sampling, namely probability and non-probability. Probability sampling is suitable for studies whereby the researcher may not generalise the outcomes from the participants, whereas non-probability sampling assists in situations where it is not feasible to access all relevant people for the study (Pascoe, 2014). In this instance, season one of *Uthando Nes'thembu* had more than 400 000 viewers, which would have made it impossible to gain access to all of them (BRCSA, 2019). The researcher therefore chose to use purposive sampling in identifying and selecting the respondents. Pascoe (2014) notes that with purposive sampling the researcher carefully chooses the participants by looking for certain characteristics. In this study, the researcher chose people based on their availability who had watched the show (season one), people of different genders and sexual orientation, different age group (but only adults), and Africans of different tribes.

When conducting a study using a survey questionnaire, Mulder (1989) regards this as a more 'purposeful, structured set of questions set out to obtain opinions of a large number of respondents in writing, without necessarily making contact with the target group'. In this study, the researcher set out a list of questions for 30 participants who watched season one of the series. These questions emanated from the research question and sub-questions, as outlined in Chapter 1. The questionnaire was designed to look at the age and gender disparities in terms of how polygamy is perceived, and how a certain gender and age group respond to the set-out questions.

4.4.1 Selection of episodes and survey questionnaire

Owing to the fact that the sampled season one of *Uthando Nes'thembu* only has eight episodes, the researcher opted to include the entire season in the content analysis. According to Burger (1992), the researcher needs to make sure that only questions that will assist the researcher to answer the research questions are posed. Below are some factors that a researcher needs to consider in this regard:

- **The order of the questions** – do you start off with an interesting question, or do you first ask about the person's social demographics?

- **The logic of the question order** – how the questions follow on from each other.

- **The utility of the questions** – you only have a limited number of questions that you can ask, so you must ask questions that will give you the information you need.

- **How many questions to ask** – each question must be limited to one topic.

- **The respondent's ability to answer** – will the respondent have the knowledge to answer the questions?

- **The content of the questions** – are any of the questions biased?

- **The language used** – are the questions worded clearly?

- **The form of the questions** – are you asking open questions that require lengthy answers, or are they closed questions that will be answered with a 'yes' or 'no'?

- **The purpose of the questions** – what exactly is it that you want to find out?

The researcher sought to establish the respondents' opinions based on what they observed while watching *Uthando Nes'thembu*. Among other things, this included the way polygamy is portrayed – looking at the interaction among the various members of the family on the show and its nuances*.*

4.4.2 Analysis of the selected episodes

For credibility of a research study, De Vos *et al.* (2011) emphasise the importance of the transcription of interviews and that these must be analysed while they are still fresh in the researcher's mind. However, in this study there are no interviews; instead, a survey questionnaire was employed for the 30 respondents. The episodes could be watched over and over again on Showmax – a subsidiary of Multichoice. According to Davidson and Halcomb (2006), transcribing means taking written notes of all spoken words. However, owing to the length and the number of episodes, these were not transcribed but simply analysed, and notes taken accordingly. For accuracy purposes, the researcher watched them on several occasions.

4.5 Data analysis methods and process

According to De Vos *et al.* (2011:397), qualitative data analysis is defined as 'the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of data'. There are various ways in which researchers' collected data can be analysed, which in turn is dependent on the research purposes. De Vos *et al.* (2011) state that it is important to make sense of the collected data so that a hypothesis can be confirmed or dismissed. De Vos *et al.* (2011) continue to state that data analysis often entails qualitative analysis methods, namely, reduction, organisation, interpretation, and substantiation of the collected data. Bezuidenhout and Cronje (2014:233) state that content analysis may involve the analysis of the text (words, images, pictures, sculptures, paintings, documents movies, videos and so on) to make sense of it, depending on the research questions one is trying to answer. In the context of this study, the researcher analyses the behaviour, interactions, possessions and aesthetics of all characters in the show. Part of qualitative content analysis is through coding where data collected is scrutinised by taking note of all the relevant and meaningful sections and items. The data may be highlighted with symbols, descriptive words or codes that orders the information into areas that the researcher can refer to when analysing it (Bezuidenhout & Cronje, 2014). Coding of data is defined as a process of identifying and organising themes in qualitative data in order to review the different types of codes and their uses. These codes assist the researcher to make sense of the collected data. Coding of data may take the form of breaking down information in terms of text, images, discussion and interactions, among other things (Cope, 2014; Jackson, 2001). This enables the

researcher to handle large chunks of data and ensure that there are different themes with which to make the information 'digestible'. According to Charmaz (2014) and Linneberg and Koorsgaard (2019), through coding the researcher gets to interact with the empirical data from the research population. Figure 4.1 shows the three stages of coding.

Stage One - Themes from derived theory	• **Gender bias** • **Dependence of women** • **Hegemonic Masculanity v feminity** • **Polygamy on women** • **Culture on television**
Stage two Opening Coding	• **Codes identified for each theme and labelled** • **codes defined** • **Characteristics for codes described** • **Flag specified for identification of code in text** • **Example given for each code**
Stage three Examples of codes for each theme	• **AXIAL CODING** • **Codes redefined and connections identified** • **SELECTIVE CODING** • **Final go through of the data, Codes and in-data examples identified**

Figure 4.1: The three stages of coding

Source: Hsieh and Shannon (2005)

According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), three stages of coding are advisable in a study that uses content analysis so as to reduce the possible biases of the researcher. Neuman (2007) argues that coding helps reduce the risk of bias and assist to put all collected data into manageable pieces. The three columns in Figure 4.1 represent the three stages of a qualitative directed content analysis. This helps the researcher to analyse the behaviour, interactions, possessions and aesthetics of the male lead characters versus that of the women in the programme (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In addition, uncoded data will not be discarded, but will instead be mentioned to emphasise the credibility of the study.

In addition to the qualitative data analysis, data from the survey questionnaire from the 30 participants is analysed and presented through quantitative analysis. As stated in the above sections, for the researcher to relinquish any bias in the data gathering

process, he opted to make use of the survey questionnaire. In line with this, Bryman and Cramer (2005) recommend that such questionnaires be self-administered in order to eliminate any influence from the researcher. An advantage of self-administered surveys is that the respondents take part in the research without being told what to say and write. The researcher's role is to come up with the questions and select the type of respondents.

4.6 Qualitative Criteria

Although this study employed a mixed method, it primarily makes use of the qualitative method as the major aspect of this study leans towards this, both in terms of the collection and analysis of data. In unpacking the qualitative criteria, Sempik *et al.* (2007) argue that the researcher has an obligation to ensure that the findings are credible, dependable, confirmed, and transferable. In addition, the findings should not necessary be restricted to the conducted study, but should further the debate and contribute to the body of knowledge on that topic. The researcher should make sure that the data collected is as authentic as can be so that correct and credible findings are achieved (Zohrabi, 2013).

4.6.1 Credibility

Credibility is one of the important tenets of any research. Credibility has to do with the truth value of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In essence, this pertains to ensuring that the findings are plausible and emanate from the data collected, without any manipulation. It further places great emphasis on the correct interpretation of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Shenton (2004) corroborates this point by emphasising the importance of accuracy, as this might have a bearing on studies yet to be conducted by scholars who will rely on and could be misled by 'manipulated' findings.

Rubin and Babbie (2011) argue that the researcher has a responsibility to understand the respondents' intentions or motives before the data thereby acquired can be used to inform the findings. In this case, the biggest portion of the data is derived from the episodes of *Uthando Nes'thembu,* which can be accessed by anyone who may want to verify the analysed data. In other words, not only the researcher has access to this data, as opposed to interviews which can be accessed or manipulated by the researcher. Furthermore, the self-administered surveys serve to ensure credibility, as the researcher has no control over how the respondents answer the questions.

4.6.2 Dependability

As discussed above, studies or research do not exist in a vacuum, as there are other scholars or researchers who may want to conduct similar studies. Therefore, the consistency of findings over time becomes crucial (Lincoln & Guba 1985). Dependability also means that should other researchers conduct the same study, with the same collection methods and population, they will derive similar results to prove and confirm that the researcher had no influence on the outcome or findings (Maree, 2007). Merriam (1998) explains that dependability relates to the researcher's ability to investigate the question: How do the findings align with reality as constructed by the researcher and the research participants? The researcher can only arrive at a conclusion depending on what data he or she derived from the research respondents.

4.6.3 Confirmability

This aspect has to do with verifiable information. In other words, if someone were to go back to the population, the data said to be collected from them would be verified. The collected and analysed data should be traceable to where it came from (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). If the data collection processes are compromised, however, the findings of the study will be questionable, hence the importance of confirmability. Cope (2014) emphasises the importance of outlining the collection and analysis process for the entire research to be transparent. Confirmability entails that a researcher uses methods to ensure that the study was directed by the participants and not by the bias or preference of the researcher. Confirmability, according to Ames *et al.* (2020:10), is the degree to which the results of a study reflect the focus of exploration. In this case, the researcher focuses on exploring data analytics with regard to the portrayal and influence of polygamy in a television series. The process of collecting and analysing data is outlined in the methodology chapter.

4.6.4 Transferability

Transferability has to do with the study being useful in other studies of similar approaches or similar topics (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In studying polygamy, the researcher utilised other studies on the topic of television, polygamy, and culture. Cope (2014) defines transferability as the degree to which the study can be used elsewhere, and not necessarily in the same topic or same field. It is therefore important for the researcher to understand the objectives of the study being conducted, and this

should be shared with respondents to help ensure that their responses remain unscripted or unrehearsed.

4.7 Ethical Consideration

Ethics is defined as a set of systematic beliefs that are held by a group of people in a particular cluster or sector that governs how they live or operate (Singer, 2011). Researchers are regarded as professionals who are expected to conduct themselves in an acceptable way. Fouka and Mantzorou (2011) posit that researchers are required to protect the dignity of their research respondents (i.e., to minimise harm, if applicable) and to publish data that is well researched and truthful.

According to Babbie (1992), the three important tenets of ethical considerations are: voluntary participation, no harm to participants, and anonymity and confidentiality. In addition to these, the researcher was also granted ethical clearance as proof that the study conforms to the UNISA ethical standards as required by the Council of Higher Education (CHE) (see Appendix 2).

4.7.1 Voluntary participation

Ethical research is premised on the voluntary participation of respondents and the researcher has a responsibility to make all participants aware of what he or she is trying to achieve and the potential risks, if any (Babbie, 1992:465). Ethical voluntary participation further requires the researcher to seek the informed consent from the respondents who are eligible to provide such informed consent (Babbie, 1992).

In line with the above, the researcher introduces himself to the participants, states the topic and the purpose of the research, and asks whether they would be interested in partaking in the study. According to Bless *et al.* (2006), good treatment of respondents is important, as is the need to ensure that the research is ethically conducted. In essence, this means that respondents should be protected at all times, and never forced or coerced into participating in research that they may be not comfortable participating in or that will put them, their lives or that of their families at risk.

4.7.2 No harm to participants

Babbie (1992) emphasises the importance of avoiding any possible harm to the respondents as a critical aspect of any ethical research. As a researcher, one has an

obligation to ensure that the respondents feel at ease about taking part in the study (Babbie, 1992). Priest (1996) echoes the importance of following a stringent procedure and exercising care, and bearing in mind the recommendations of the university guidelines with respect to a study such as this. Priest continues to argue that harm may not necessary be physical, and could instead be emotional and/or reputational, and this too needs to be avoided and participants made aware of anything that could lead to such harm.

4.7.3 Anonymity and confidentiality

As there are issues of confidentiality and risks that may be involved in participating in research studies, the onus lies with the researcher to make the respondents fully aware of such, following which it is up to the respondents to willingly take part in such a study or not. As such, the researcher made the respondents for the survey questionnaire completely aware of the objective of the research. Furthermore, to ensure anonymity, their names are not included, only their gender, race and age. Instead of names, each respondent is referred to simply as respondent 1 or participant 1, etc.

4.8 Limitations to the Study

This study entails content analysis research, which therefore requires the researcher to have the requisite skills and abilities to interpret and analyse the data, be it language or visual. This analysis emanates only from season one of *Uthando Nes'thembu*, which is a limiting factor when considering that this programme had five seasons (by 2021). Furthermore, while a survey of 30 viewers/ participants is deemed sufficient for the purposes of this study but there were thousands of viewers who watched the programme – and as such the number of participants could also be considered as a limitation.

In addition to the above, opponents of qualitative methods argue that this approach is too subjective, as the results are expressed in language as opposed to statistics, as per quantitative analysis (Priest, 1996). Furthermore, a purposive approach for the survey questionnaire was employed by the researcher, with a limitation being that this was restricted to people who were easily accessible by the researcher.

4.9   Conclusion

This chapter discussed the methodology employed by the researcher for collecting the necessary data for the study and how it would be analysed. It clearly stated the target population and why the researcher selected the population he chose. It further discussed that data would also be collected through watching the television programme *Uthando Nes'thembu* and through a survey questionnaire sent to the 30 respondents to elicit their views on how the programme influences their perception and portrays the polygamy of the Mselekus. The next chapter discusses the data presentation and analysis.

CHAPTER 5:   DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

5.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the data collected from the eight episodes of the first season of *Uthando Nes'thembu* and from the survey questionnaire replies from the respondents, who stated their opinions about the programme. According to Dabula (2016), the presentation and data analysis chapter provides and allows the researcher the ability to present the collected data and analyse it through qualitative or quantitative analysis, or both. As discussed in Chapter 4, the qualitative analysis aspect takes the form of three stages of coding. The other aspect of presentation takes the form of quantitative data, in an attempt to make sense of the respondents' responses and what it means. The data presentation and analysis will be in two parts, where the first part presents a critique of the show in view of how polygamy promotes gender relations in the media. The second part analyses data from the respondents and then draws a conclusion.

5.2   Gender Bias

The issue of gender roles is a thorny topic, as society has certain expectations about what the different genders are permitted to do. Machel (1998) posits that gender is a social construct rather than being natural or God-given and that the relationship between men and women is created by society in relation to the power relations. Studies have been conducted that point out the biased representation of men and women, whereby the men dominate the television space. For example, a study by Kharroub and Weaver (2014) revealed that women were under-represented, less likely to have recognisable jobs, and more likely than men to be portrayed in stereotypical occupations, activities and settings, with only 26.2% of female characters having recognisable jobs compared to 49.3% of male characters.

There is glaring bias in the way that different genders are represented in various sectors. Global studies and reports as well as national studies show that women are under-represented as news subjects in the news, with only 24% of the people seen, heard or read about in the news being women and 76% being men (GMMP, 2015). Wood (1994) confirms this assertion by stating that media misrepresent actual proportions of men and women in the population and this constant distortion leads people to believe that there are more men than women and, further, that men are the

cultural standard. When audiences view issues brought up on television, the media thereby fulfils one of the theories pertaining to media as an agenda-setter. This theory was derived from the work of Walter Lippman in 1922, who argued that 'the public responds not to actual events in the environment but to the pictures in our heads', and that the news media construct people's view of the world (Wu & Coleman, 2009:147). Based on this theory, gender bias is what is depicted by the television and pictured in the heads of the masses or audiences.

However, bias could also exist because of how people are represented in television shows. Pretorius (2010) contends that television shows have a tendency of anchoring the biases and stereotypes that emanate from socially constructed beliefs which enforce the masculinity of men and femininity of women. Pretorius continues to argue that no one else could change these gendered roles or gender stereotypes other than the same society that constructed what many now believe to be natural. Levant *et al.* (2007) corroborate Machel's stance on masculinity and it being a social construct that society may use to prejudge and use as a yardstick in determining how men and women ought to behave or be treated by society. Some cultural ideals may shift to suit a historical moment, however, there are certain beliefs that remain resistant to change and continue to be ingrained in society for generations, especially on gender roles whereby a man is expected to provide for a woman (Connell, 2005; Levant *et al.,* 2007).

As stated by Machel (1998), the societal expectations are that men are supposed to be leaders, decision-makers and providers for their families, whereas women are expected to be caregivers, supporters, and followers of men. Ingham (1995) bemoans the patriarchal tendencies that are treated as a norm on television soap operas, news, and other television programmes. For example, in the opening scene of episode 1 of *Uthando Nes'thembu*, the main character, Musa Mseleku is seen introducing his wives and their different personalities. He is visiting them in their houses that he has built for them, carrying a bouquet of flowers for each. Certain behaviours in society indicate that it is anathema and uncommon for women to buy flowers for their husbands or partners. According to Bolle (2001), giving a woman (expensive) flowers is a signal by a man that he likes her and, due to the cost of the flowers, a woman would not think of buying such expensive flowers for herself.

The stereotype being perpetuated by Musa Mseleku giving flowers to his wives is that women are receivers. Although there are no written rules about who can do such things, society nevertheless tends to judge as per the social construct ideas dictated, as alluded to by Pretorius (2010), that giving flowers is what a man does and to receive flowers is a woman's privilege. This echoes the gender bias about men being providers. In the series, Musa Mseleku not only bought his wives flowers but also built fully furnished homes for every one of them. Furthermore, he is the one introducing them to the viewers in the opening scenes of the first episodes, when he describes them and explains what kind of people they are. Introducing his wives to the audience or viewers is an indicator of male dominance in society and women's culture of silence which they are socialised into from their early stages in life. Women are disempowered from the time they are young, as they are socialised to be silent in public spaces.

For instance, Wema (2010) cites the practice of 'Ngoma' or 'Unyago', which is a social practice whereby girls aged 14 years and above undergo special cultural training as a transition to adulthood and women are taught ways of caring for family members, the community in the proper manner and to respect males in general. The teachings here discourage women to speak in their community or in public, as demonstrated by Mseleku in introducing his wives.

Sesay (2010) states that the African woman has no real power, only pseudo-power, where she can act as long as she causes no embarrassment to her husband. South Africa's National AIDS Control Council (2002) further adds that in the African culture, male dominance permeates every sphere of the society, where men decide and make most of the decisions in the home and in the community due to their male privilege. The practice of men introducing wives is still happening in communities and the media depicts such, fuelling the stereotypes and accepted norms of society. According to Gramsci (1971), the media has a tendency of using hegemony in the way they represent different groups of people and the media re-enforce stereotypes and the 'accepted' norms of society.

Among other things that indicate the separation of masculinity and femininity with respect to tasks and activities, in episode one the wives get to talk about the interior parts of their houses, as this is commonly regarded as women's forte, while the man provides for the four wives and 10 children and the refurbishment of his homes. In this

episode, Mseleku is also seen with Dumisani Madondo, a man who is a carpenter, discussing how the built-in cupboards should be installed. Through the series under study, the media is presenting stereotype roles which the audiences are able to relate to. The framing of media at the macro level construct presents information in the manner that audiences are able to equate with the already existing schemas (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Again, carpentry is regarded as a manly job as it is physical and requires a lot of strength.

5.3 Improving the Family Economy

Scholars including Kaganas and Murray (1991) argue that the concept of polygamy is often seen as an oppression of women, whereas Thobejane and Flora (2014) and Kasenene (1998) contend that polygamy improves and strengthens the economic and political position of men and the family. To this end, Altman and Ginat state that, 'because families are often holistic, economic units with men, women and children are engaged in fishing, agriculture, animal husbandry or trade, the more hands the better. Wives are central to economic viability of families in traditional culture because they often do a great deal of the work, and they bear children who also contribute to a family's pool' (Altman & Ginat, 1996: 90).

In episode one of *Uthando Nes'thembu* this point is emphasised, as the Mseleku wives not only wait for the support from their husband, but also work to supplement their income and stimulate the economy of the household. The four wives play different roles and contribute to the flourishing of the household economy through working. Two of the wives (MaCele and MaKhumalo) work in the family businesses and the other two (MaNgwabe and MaYeni) work in various organisations. From the episode, one of the wives is a health worker, a nurse and seldom shown at work. Health care is one of the caregiving jobs and women are considered the primary caregivers by society. Depicting women as healthcare givers or nurses further influences the gender stereotypes, whereby women are expected to be caregivers. Another scholar, Kiran (2016), notes that when media portray women who work outside of the home, their career lives typically receive little or no attention, as they are shown predominantly in their roles as homemakers, mothers and wives. Thus, depicting women as nurses serves to affirm the gendered ideas of society.

As stated by Ntshangase cited in Diffin (2010), the bigger the family, the bigger the harvests. This may have been the case in the olden days, but in the present day, having businesses serves a similar purpose, i.e., the profits made in the family business represent the harvest for the family. The main source of the Mselekus' income emanates from the proceeds of Umdlalo Lodge.

Two of the wives are involved in the administrative duties, which may vary from making the bookings to organising events that are held at the lodge. They share the office space, which also leads them to be closer to each other. When defining their roles in the family business, Mseleku states that these two play a crucial role in growing the family business and the family's household income. They do not just work for themselves, but help grow this business which benefits everyone – including the wives who work elsewhere. For the other two who are not involved in the family business, they also play an important role through working for other entities, and thereby also contributing to the family's financial affairs. In addition to their daily work, the wives have to take care of their homes, children and cook for their husband (depending on whose turn it is to have the husband on that day).

5.4　Head of the House or Dictator?

The question that is on many people's lips who are not in polygamous relationships is how much liberty or consultation there is between the husband and the wives. How much say do the wives have in the polygamous setup? (See Ellis, 2014; Crookston, 2015). Studies on African polygamy suggest that there is little freedom, if any, for the wives and that this may have negative effects on the women involved. Studies further postulate that there may be no room for family planning in such families, as procreation may be part of the competition between the wives (Gathumbi, 2007; Ashby & Gupta, 2013; Baschieri *et al.,* 2013; Zungu, 2019b).

As articulated by Mseleku in episode one of the programme, where he stated that he would like to have about 20 children, this may mean that the current wives have no choice but to continue to produce more babies. From the episode, Mseleku is quoted as saying, '*I have 10 children, but personally, I would like to have more than 20 children. That is why I chose polygamy'.* Through the lenses of African culture, the notion of being in a polygamous marriage is to have more children (Mbiti, 1969; Maillu, 1988; Kofon, 1992).

At times, decisions that are motivated by cultural reasons, such as having many children, may be to the detriment of the wife; for example, when she gives birth through caesarean section, but may then have to keep on having more babies for the satisfaction of the husband. According to Caldwell (1993), at the core of African culture are values and customs that promote reproduction, where the number of children is maximised by the system of polygamy. With regard to *Uthando Nes'thembu*, the media to some extent returns women to the traditional roles where they get married to bear children for their husbands. Feldman and Brown (1984) highlight that television also contributes to returning women to their 'traditional roles' where they are expected to heed to the demands of men, including being voiceless on matters of sexual and reproductive health. This may be the case in this television programme whereby the wives might not be keen in having as many babies as the husband would like to have, and this may result in constant conflict.

Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) confirm that at the micro level, media framing may describe how audiences use that information and how they are presented to form a particular perception. The perception therefore is that the sexual and reproductive health issues of women are determined by men. In responding to or reacting to Musa Mseleku's demand of having more children, the wives are worried that one of them is not able to conceive and they employ various strategies to try and help her fall pregnant. All the efforts are made by the wives as a way of supporting their husband.

Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) argue that a socially accepted standards in Africa are that women are to bear more children for their men in a marriage setup. In this season Mseleku articulates that if the current wives cannot give him what he wants – which is 20 children, that would mean he would have to marry other wives to achieve his dream. Having more children may not be that difficult for the two wives who work in the family business, but this could have major consequences for the other wives who would have to put their careers on hold while raising their babies without the flexibility of those who work in the family business. The demand from the husband to grow the family up to 20 children might also induce more anxiety, especially for MaKhumalo who has no children with Mseleku. Although Mseleku has 'assured' her that he loves her even with no children, the demand to have a set number of children may put additional strain on her.

Al-Krenawi and Graham (2006) argue that women in polygamous marriages tend to have less power over their husband than those in monogamous marriages, as the husband in a polygamous setup is more able to do as he pleases from a sexual perspective and make as many children as he desires. When talking about polygamy, the perception seems to exist that the men in question become obsessive with regard to power over their wives. In line with this, Waruta and Kinoti (2000:128) note that 'Men still believe that women are their possession, and that they can do with them what they like. They feel they can take their aggression out on their wives, and no one has the right to tell them they cannot'. This may explain why some men do as they please without considering their wives' feelings.

As the man is regarded through the lens of culture as the head of the house, he may decide to dictate terms for his children and wives, failing which a husband may feel disrespected and that he has to 'reign' in that individual or individuals – be it his wives or children. Sesay (2010) states that the African woman has no real power, and that any power she may think she possesses is an illusion, as the major decisions are made by the man, and she is not in any way involved in them, whether in the public or private spheres. Women and men are portrayed in different and gendered ways by the media industry, and the top decision-making positions in media are still male dominated, with women being under-represented both as actors and subjects in the news media especially (Mannila, 2017). In one of the scenes of episode two, MaNgwabe informed Mseleku that she needed to attend a friend's baby shower, and her request was followed by a question:

> 'A baby shower, for what? What will be happening there?' – Mseleku.

> 'We bring gifts for the mother-to-be like they did for me with Mawande and Zenande. It is a baby shower, we bring gifts for the expectant mother' – MaNgwabe.

> 'When is it?' – Mseleku.

> 'On the twenty-second' – MaNgwabe.

> 'You know what the problem is?' – Mseleku.

> 'No' – MaNgwabe.

'It will be at night?' – Mseleku.

'No, it is during the day' – MaNgwabe.

'Will alcohol be served there?' – Mseleku.

'Whoever chooses to drink, buys their own alcohol' – MaNgwabe.

This is just a snippet of the conversation. Although MaNgwabe intimated that there would not be alcohol except if someone brought their own, her husband was still reticent about it. Mseleku told MaNgwabe that he would think about her request to attend the baby shower and she said she would accept whatever answer she received from her husband. Such a situation or treatment echoes the sentiments of Weedon (1987) that in a patriarchal society, and more so in polygamous marriage, women's interests are secondary to men's demands. Events such as baby showers are places where women often get time to mingle and socialise in the absence of their male counterparts.

With regard to women's health requirements or demands, men often decide and make most of the decisions in the home and in the community due to their male privilege, which transcends to issues of health care (Turshen, 2000), and this subordinate position of women demonstrates a high level of vulnerability to diseases, particularly HIV (Smyke, 1991). Continuing to want more children means that there is no safe sex – and this may expose both the husband and the wives to the dangers of contracting diseases.

5.5 The Pretence and Jealousy

Sabalele (2010) and Mavhina (2010) postulate that in polygamous marriages there is bound to be jealousy and pretence among the wives and children. This could be due to discrepancies in the properties they own, for example, or because the husband spends more time with one wife and not the other(s). As shown in this programme, Mseleku is trying to strike a balance by making sure that in terms of the houses, all the four wives have big houses and cars. By managing to provide such large houses and cars for all his wives, it is clear that Mseleku is financially well off or wealthy.

According to Graham and Al-krenawi (1997), polygamy is common in cultures or societies that allocate social status based on hereditary and inheritance. However,

evidence from numerous studies indicates that polygamy is limited to relatively wealthy men (e.g., in Uganda: Pollet & Nettle, 2009; in Kenya: Borgerhoff & Mulder, 1990; Cronk, 1991; in Tanzania: Lawson *et al.,* 2015; in Ethiopia: Gibson & Mace, 2007). With regard to *Uthando Nes'thembu*, the balancing act becomes important, as what Mseleku does for one wife is done for the others as well. This includes their houses and the furniture in these houses – the wives have a say on how they set it up, but Mseleku must pay for it.

According to Mbiti (1969) as cited in Ngidi (2012), another source of jealousy could stem from a wife being unable to bear children. This may have traumatic consequences for the wife in such a situation, who may end up feeling depressed and as if she is less of a woman than the other wives, especially if the other wives have children. Such feelings may arise regardless of the attitude of the husband, who may be supportive to the wife, but the fact that he opted to seek other wives to bear him children may be the source of the depression and anxiety. According to Sabalele (2010), the birth of a child is not a choice, especially in certain cultures such as the African culture, as there are societal expectations that when someone marries, the woman is expected to bear children to grow the family. Sabalele continues to state that after the birth of a child, celebrations ensue, with some family members believing the child to be the reincarnation of a long dead ancestor. In this series, one of the wives, MaKhumalo (Thobile Mseleku) does not have children of her own, even though she and her husband have tried many things, including consulting doctors in efforts to bear children and find the problem for her infertility.

However, MaKhumalo is raising Mpilwenhle, who is Mseleku's lovechild. While it might appear as if she is enjoying it and has created a strong bond with the child, she could still be wanting children of her own. Although there is no evidence from the sampled episodes that MaKhumalo may be attempting to win the love of her husband by caring for Mseleku's lovechild, this is a possibility. With Mseleku having professed his desire to have more than 20 children, this may have exacerbated MaKhumalo's anxiety, as she is the only wife who cannot bear children. To allay her fears, Mseleku has tried his best (in this show) to show his support to her and has tried to make her see that she is not less of a woman even though she could not bear him children, and consoled her by saying that Mpilo was technically hers.

In episode one, Mseleku concedes that while he always enjoyed the idea of polygamy, he never imagined that it could be this difficult and that he needs such a balancing act in the treatment of his wives and children, as that can be very expensive. He has to do this so as to quell any jealousy or competition among his wives. Mseleku says, 'I didn't think it would be so difficult. I only understood that when I became part of it. The first thing I realised was that each wife had to have a house. Not just any house, but a house of high standard. Then you have to buy furniture and the wife moves in with just a suitcase.' In this episode, a carpenter, Dumisani 'Maduma' Madondo is seen taking measurements in MaNgwabe's kitchen preparing for built-in cupboards. However, Mseleku has already planned to have improvements made in the houses of MaKhumalo, MaCele and MaYeni as well.

In the scene where Mseleku indicates that he might have to marry another wife in order to realise his dream of having 20 children, one of the wives who shows strong dislike or objection to this idea is the third wife, MaKhumalo, which prompted a response from the first wife, MaCele who asked, 'Do you now feel what I felt when you came to marry my husband?' From this and the other examples included in this section, it is clear that at least some jealousy does exist in the relationship.

5.6   Societal Expectations

There are many things that men and women are expected to do, as per what is regarded as the norm. According to Mkhize (2011), in the African culture, the expectation when a woman gets married is to procreate and make as many babies as possible. When Mseleku tells his four wives that if they fail to give him 20 children, he is going to marry other women, he confirms that in his mind at least, women enter into marriage to bear children. In Africa, marriage and childbearing are not only closely linked, but, in fact, marriage is constituted primarily for the purpose of procreation (Mbiti, 1969:132). Mbiti states that in Africa, 'the supreme purpose of marriage is to bear children to build a family [*hence*] if there is not yet a child in the marriage people do not consider it to be a marriage'. Based on this understanding, children seem to complete a marriage.

However, due to modernisation, there have been certain changes in some of the social-cultural factors and how women view marriage. Modernisation has brought about the use of contraceptives as well as calling for the education of a girl child.

Bigombe and Khadiagala (2003) allude that available evidence suggests that there have been changes in these socio-cultural factors over time, as the use of modern contraception has increased and improved the education opportunities for children, especially females, and in this way appears to have gradually eroded some of the traditional values placed on childbearing. Ahmad (2014) adds that the importance of media has extended beyond only providing basic information and knowledge, but that media is also an instrument of social change. With regard to its portrayal of men, especially on television, it is expected that they be wealthy and able to provide for their family no matter how big it is. Vang (2003) notes that, on the other hand, it may also be the man's wealth that draws women to want to become second or third wives. The television programme lived up to this hypothesis, as Mseleku is a well-off businessman with expensive cars and his wives live in luxurious homes that he has built for them.

Mkhize (2011) argues that polygamous men command more respect in society than monogamous men; for instance, in traditional councils, polygamous men are listened to more than the other men. However, not all societies view polygamy the same as Mkhize (2011), and Mthembu (2000) notes that polygamy is typically denounced by Western teachings as an outdated and sexist practice that undermines women's rights, as they are expected to submit to their husbands. In West African societies, on the other hand, when a man marry more than one wife, he becomes highly esteemed, respected and influential compared to other men in monogamous marriages (Kimutu, 1994).

5.7   Promiscuity and Unfaithfulness

One of the arguments from the opponents of polygamy is that polygamous men may hide behind culture, when their intention is more about sex and their sexual prowess. Others argue that a man in a polygamous marriage can continue to have other girlfriends, mistresses, or extramarital affairs, with leaving his wives alone at home. Geertsema-Sligh (2015) wrote in her research paper that feminists are greatly concerned about gender equality or the lack thereof in a polygamous setup, whereby men can do as they please such as having more wives and more babies in the name of their culture, yet the wives are expected to remain faithful to just one man and do as he tells them. In line with this, and in penning Jacob Zuma's biography, Gordin

(2008:27) wrote, 'Zuma likes women a great deal and he likes making babies; he is the proverbial family man. He is also an unabashed polygamist'.

Similar sentiments based on this series could be said about Mseleku, who professed his intentions about having 20 children. At that time, Mseleku had already sired 10 children and made an undertaking that should the four wives fail to give him this number, he would have to marry more wives. He said this fully aware that his third wife, MaKhumalo could not have children at the time. Commenting on Zuma's polygamy after impregnating Sonono Khoza, journalist Mark Gevisser (2010:1) argued that the criticism towards Zuma was less about polygamy than it was about his goatish behaviour in continuing to make more babies, which clearly meant he was having unprotected sex even though a few years beforehand he had conceded that he had sex with an HIV-positive person (in this case, Fezekile 'Khwezi' Kuzwayo had accused him of rape, although Zuma was acquitted). Owing to men's promiscuous behaviour such as this, men could take more wives and the wife or wives could not do anything about it, as they are expected to submit and allow the head of the house to do as he pleases (Mkhize, 2011).

With more men being promiscuous amid STIs, this puts their wives and girlfriends at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and other STDs. With Mseleku wanting to grow the number of his children, no protection (condoms) is used in order for him to realise his dream. Polygamy increases the spread of HIV/AIDS and other STDs (Eaton *et al.,* 2011). According to a study by Reniers and Tfaily (2012), men in a polygynous marriage were 2.6 times more likely to be HIV positive than monogamous men, and 2.9 times more likely to be infected with Herpes Simplex Virus-2 (Halton *et al.,* 2003). Furthermore, Nyathikazi (2013) believes that there may be a link between the prevalence of *ubusoka* (having multiple sex partners for a male) and the HIV infection rate in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, as there are many females in the province who contract the virus within marriage or cohabitation.

Sosale (2008) indicates that, for dialogical communication to happen, someone or something has to articulate the process. Without dialogue, there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education. Peisker (2011) concludes that access to communication for citizens, as recommended by the participatory paradigm, creates a roundabout circle in which citizens can analyse and discuss their

society. In the case of *Intersexions*, an SABC programme that teaches about HIV/AIDS, the combined use of traditional and social media paved a way for effective participation in the communication or debate around HIV/AIDS, as further cited by Peisker (2011). In other words, SABC uses *Intersexions* as a way to solicit dialogue into social factors driving the risks that are related to the HIV/AIDS health problem in South Africa and beyond. In the case of the Mselekus, they need to be well-educated about STIs and to communicate freely about this, as shown on *Intersexions*, in order to avert the possibility of contracting STIs should one of them be infected. On the issue of adultery – whether on the part of Mseleku or one of his wives – that would mean the partners could be at risk, and in this series it is not discussed as to how the family could take precautionary measures to avert such a situation.

5.8   Relationship between Wives

According to Mavhina (2010), competition and opposition are common traits in polygamy, as all the wives want to be a favourite of their husband. They often become enemies and speak ill of their sister wives as a consequence, and this may cause anxiety for the husband who would likely be hoping for a united front. Furthermore, in a polygamous relationship with more than two wives, they sometimes become divided and cluster or associate themselves according to their personalities. If this is the case, the husband must devise strategies to keep them united or at least reduce the animosity between them. With the above in mind, polygamy can be a source of emotional distress and depression for the husband, with negative effects on his mental health (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2006). One may conclude that polygamous marriages are often stressful for men.

In episode four, Mseleku arranges for a family outing with his wives and children, which is something that could assist to strengthen the relationship between the wives. However, not everyone is on board, as MaYeni has a small baby and is reluctant to go on this family trip, but her husband who has booked everything will not take no for an answer. By forcing her to join them on this outing, when she perhaps wanted time to herself and her baby, could also lead to stress amongst the wives, not to mention towards her husband.

On the other hand, for all the wives to spend time together may assist in keeping them happy and united. Considering that they all have their own homes, spending time together could also help in making them understand each other's personalities.

5.9   Hardships in Polygamous Marriages

Many researchers of polygamy, including Thobejane and Flora (2014) and Ozkan *et al.* (2006) agree that this form of marriage often brings hardships and traumatic experience for the wives and children. This is often caused by a husband who struggles to balance his treatment of his wives and offspring. Favouritism, whether real or perceived may be one of the reasons for the hardships experienced in this form of marriage.

In his dissertation on polygamy and trauma, Means (2000) argues that polygamous life often comes with many traumatic experiences, especially for the wives and children. In corroboration with Means (2000), Sabalele (2010) wrote, 'The researcher agrees with Means, because the researcher was born in a polygamous marriage, had a lot of trauma, the way we suffered at home because of the polygamous marriage, where my father could not support both families. As a result I had to go and live with my aunt who was also married in polygamous marriage because my mother could not afford to raise us'. In this television programme the Mselekus seem to be living a lavish lifestyle judging by the material things they own. However, there could be anxiety on the side of the wives and children who could not access their husband and father (respectively) all the times owing to Mseleku's visiting arrangements.

In line with the above, it is critical for polygamists to be cognisant of the potential hardships and trauma due to their actions in polygamous marriages. Both the children and wives need a father and a husband who is aware of these challenges that have the potential of causing their polygamy to fail. As seen on this series, Mseleku is trying to make sure that his wives and children have everything that they might need. As mentioned, the husband has built all of his wives their own homes and has extended them as the family grows, owing to the birth of children and the fact that he still hopes to have at least 20 children in total. He has also sent his children to private schools, including paying a driver to transport them there and back, among many other things. In addition, each wife has her own car that Mseleku has bought for them. From this, it appears as if he is at least making the effort to avert any hardships due to his

polygamous tendencies. However, providing for his family might not be sufficient, as his wives and children also need a husband and father when facing a difficult or challenging situation, and he might not be immediately available or be busy with one of his other wives and/or her children as per the visitation calendar.

5.10 Polygamy and Culture

Critics of polygamy bemoan that patriarchy perpetuates polygyny and male dominance, where women remain inferior (Zondi, 2007; Zungu, 2019a; Zungu, 2019b). There have been questions about the relevance of polygamy in this day and age. In the past decades, the assumption was that polygamy was for backward and uneducated men and women. The elite and educated, on the other hand, would be regarded as people who no longer subscribe to such oppressing cultures and norms. In the case of Mseleku, his polygamy, as broadcast on television, demystifies some of those assumptions, proving that even the wealthy and educated can still observe their cultural beliefs and partake in such a practise. Mseleku is a qualified journalist and a businessperson, his one wife is a nurse, and the other is a radio personality. However, educated or not, seemingly marriage and even more so polygamy echoes the ethos of patriarchy as argued above by various scholars. On this programme, we see one of the wives denied to attend a baby shower of her friend. In essence, women in many marriages – especially polygamous ones – they need a husband's approval to do certain things whereas a man needs no permission.

Mseleku argues that polygamy is part of his culture but also propelled by the desire to have many children – at least 20. And as televised on this season, he would stop at nothing to realise his dream that includes taking a fifth wife.

This show may also echoes the sentiments of the opponents of polygamy who argue that polygamist treat their wives as objects and that their opinion matter as men. This is supported by Mseleku's choice of words

On television, Mseleku voices out that:

> *'I have 10 children and I personally would like to have more than 20 children.'*

> *'Their mothers also take responsibilities as parents, but the basic livelihood of our home is my responsibility.'*

When talking about the number of children, he uses 'I'. When talking about basic or overall responsibility, he uses 'my'. The 'I' and 'my' denote authority. Carter (2004) corroborates this, stating that the media often portrays men as powerful and dominant over women.

Male dominance through media shapes the world view of males over females and cultivate stereotypes. Van Gorp (2007) states that television further communicates the message that men are authorities and women are not. Such a message spreads gender stereotypes. This perpetuates a negative stereotype of men as uncaring, dictatorial, controlling women and uninvolved in family life (Wood, 1994).

In this television programme, it is evident that although they live a polygamous lifestyle which is an ancient practised, but there is modernity in how they do certain things. For example as Zondi (2007) outlined the structure of a Zulu household and the different houses thereof, in the Museleku this is not the case. Instead, each wife has a modern big house with many rooms as opposed to having many houses like iqhugwana (Zulu hut) and different 'ilawu' (the husband's house) but the wife and kids all live together in one big house.

5.10.1 Role of media in framing polygamy

As noted already, Singer (2017) posits that the mass media's influence can either be positive or negative and plays a substantial role in shaping the way that people perceive whatever is portrayed therein. With regard to television, entertainment reporter, Freydkin (2010) notes that there has been an increase in the number of polygamists on small screens. Opinions regarding the portrayal of polygamy in popular entertainment are mixed, with some people of the opinion that media is popularising polygamy. Yusof and Zeiny (2015) argue that television, the internet, and other new media technologies are means of popularising polygamy in communities. On the other side of the spectrum, the religious press often views and portrays polygamy as a threat to conventional cultural norms (Colson & George, 2011). It is therefore important for a television show to portray a reality of polygamy as the framing of the show may (mis)lead viewers to reach a particular understanding which may be false.

In promoting polygamy, television typically portrays positive images of happy polygamous families. In the series, Mseleku's wives are educated people who dress in the modern way (women wearing pants and makeup with no headscarves), but still

honour their husband, referring to him as 'the king'. He also addresses them by their clan names, which is something that many Zulu people are fond of. In the series, Mseleku's wives are quoted as saying:

> MaNgwabe, 4th wife: "I love this guy, he is my king. I do not see myself living without him."

> MaKhumalo, 3rd wife: "When he introduced us to each other, it was like we'd known each other for years. We became great friends with other sister wives, while I was still dating him."

Family holidays and parties together symbolise happiness. In the series, Mseleku takes his family (all four wives and children) for a holiday. Furthermore, the four wives are also shown planning to buy a goat to slaughter at Umdlalo Lodge so as to celebrate their blessings and to thank the ancestors for what they have. The framing of polygamy this way may paint a picture that polygamy is an easy thing to do, whereas they may be other things that are not shown in this series to feed to a narrative that producers intended to portray.

On the other side of the spectrum, Colson and George (2011) take a decidedly negative view of polygamy and its effects, as represented in media, as they claim that polygamy deprives children of the singular devotion of a loving father and mother. Mseleku is seen on television visiting his wives as per the roster, which indicates that there will be times when only his children with one particular wife will see him and get to spend time with him as their father. These mixed feelings or debates about polygamy, as portrayed in the media, have led to some people supporting it as an accepted cultural practice and others dismissing it as an obsolete practice that has no place in the 21st century (Sesanti, 2008; Zeitzen, 2010; Khumalo, 2010; Gevisser, 2010; Mbatha, 2011; Maclean 2012).

5.11 Data from Survey Questionnaire

In addition to the data collected by analysing the eight episodes of *Uthando Nes'thembu,* there were also survey questionnaires shared with the 30 respondents to obtain their opinion on how the television programme portrayed polygamy and to establish its impact on their lives, if any, including looking into any assumptions they might have had about polygamy before the series and their current stance and attitude.

5.11.1 Data presentation and analysis from the survey

This following data and analysis stems from the survey questionnaire and the responses from the 30 respondents, 21 of whom were female and nine of whom were male. These respondents, all of whom had watched the show (season one), were chosen based on their availability and included people of different gender, sexual orientation, age group (only adults), and Africans of different tribes. Figure 5.1 shows the gender representation of the research participants.
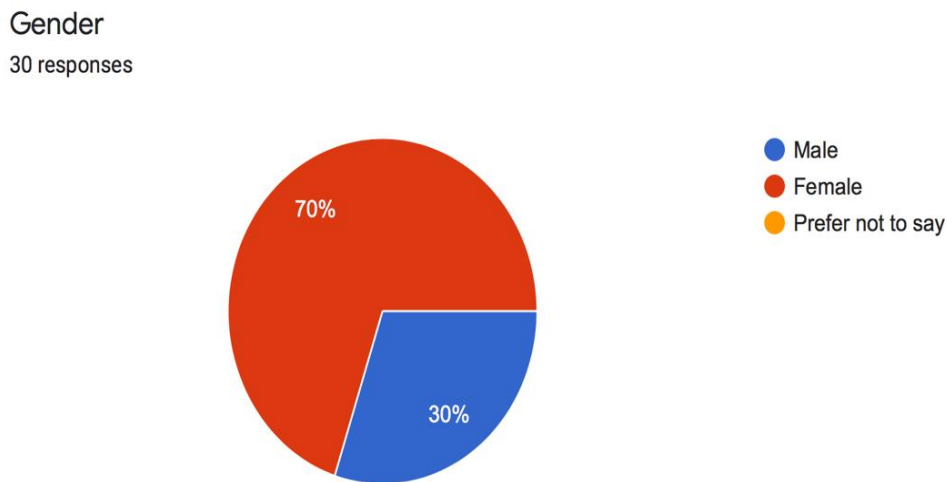
Gender
30 responses

Figure 5.1: Gender representation of participants

5.11.2 Gendered perspective

The researcher identified the respondents for this study based on the people whom he had access to, and it was not by design to have more female respondents than males. From the responses, 70% were females, while 30% were males. One of the criteria used by the researcher to choose the respondents was their availability and whether they had watched the show (season one). Responses from both males and females indicated that both sexes watch television programmes and follow television series, including polygamous programmes for different reasons and/or purposes. People of all walks of life watch television for the purposes of entertainment, identity formation, sensation-seeking, coping, and cultural identification (Stern, 2005).

What was your perception of polygamy (polygyny) before watching the television series, uThando Nes'thembu?
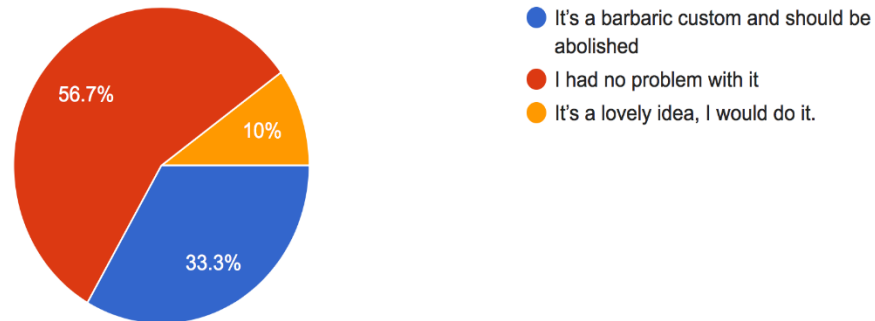
30 responses

- It's a barbaric custom and should be abolished
- I had no problem with it
- It's a lovely idea, I would do it.

56.7%

10%

33.3%

Figure 5.2: Representation of participants' perception of polygamy

When asked about their perception of polygamy before watching the television programme, the majority (56.7%) indicated that they had no problem with it, as shown in Figure 5.2 above. A total of 10% of the respondents stated that it was a lovely idea, and they would do it, and a third (33.3%) believed that polygamy was a barbaric custom which should be abolished. The idea behind this question was to ascertain what the respondents thought about polygamy before watching *Uthando Nes'thembu*.

How many wives should men in polygamous marriages be limited to take?
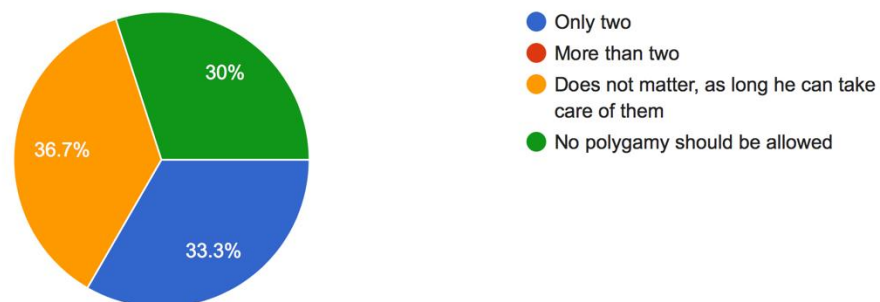
30 responses

- Only two
- More than two
- Does not matter, as long he can take care of them
- No polygamy should be allowed

30%

36.7%

33.3%

Figure 5.3: Representation of participants' views on the number of wives a man may have

For some people polygamy is not necessary a problem, but the number of wives that a man may take could be a problem. It is for this reason that respondents were asked about the 'acceptable' number of wives a man may take. There are people such as the eSwatini King, Makhosetive Dlamini, better known as King Mswati who have more

than 10 wives and this often raises eyebrows with feminists and gender activists (National Human Development Report, 2008). As shown in Figure 5.3 above, a third (33.3%) believed that polygamous marriage should be limited to only two wives, while 36.7% were of the opinion that the number of wives does not matter as long as the husband can take care of them. A total of 30% of respondents believed that no polygamy should be allowed.

What is your take on Musa Mseleku's ambition to double the number of children from 10 to 20?
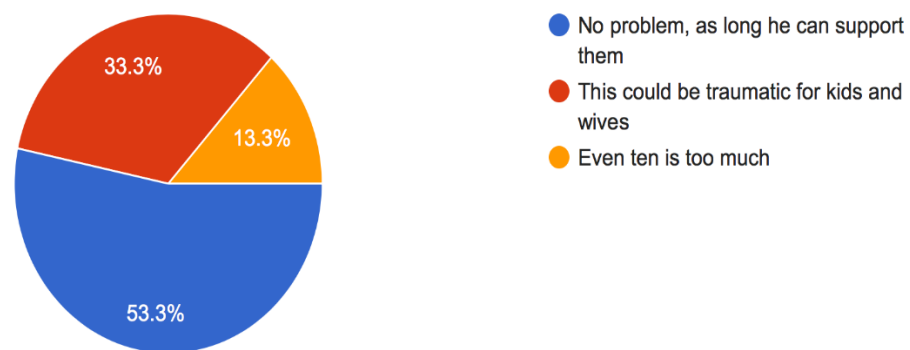30 responses

Figure 5.4: Representation of participants' opinion on Mseleku's ambition for 20 children

In responding to the above question in Figure 5.4 regarding the doubling of the number of children from 10 to 20, 53.3% of the respondents indicated that they had no problem, as long as Mseleku can support the children. One third (33.3%) of the respondents stated that this could be traumatic for the children and wives, while 13.3% highlighted that even 10 children is too much.

What do you make of the portrayal of Mseleku's wives in this television series?
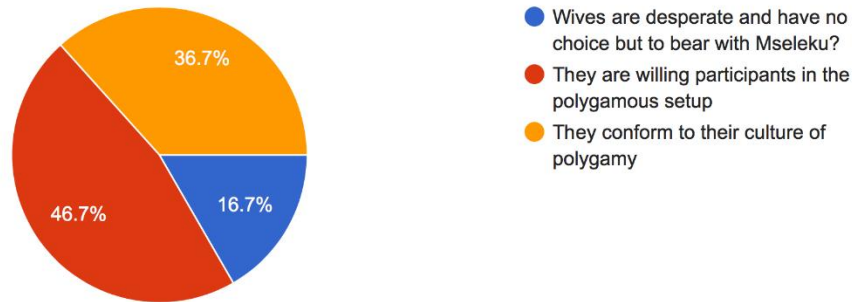30 responses

- Wives are desperate and have no choice but to bear with Mseleku?
- They are willing participants in the polygamous setup
- They conform to their culture of polygamy

Figure 5.5: Representation of participants' views on the portrayal of wives

As shown in Figure 5.5, when asked what they make of the portrayal of Mseleku's wives in the television series, 46.7% of the respondents were of the opinion that Mseleku's wives are willing participants in the polygamous setup. A total of 36.7% of the respondents believed that Mseleku's wives conform to their culture of polygamy with regard to the portrayal on the programme.

Contrary to the above, 16.7% of the respondents cited that Mseleku's wives are desperate and have no choice but to bear with Mseleku.

What is your perception on the portrayal of polygamy in this television series?
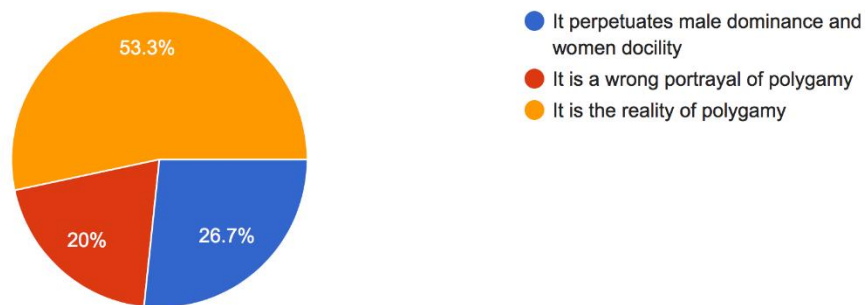30 responses

- It perpetuates male dominance and women docility
- It is a wrong portrayal of polygamy
- It is the reality of polygamy

Figure 5.6: Representation of participants' perception about the portrayal of polygamy

Although there are questions about the 'reality' in reality television shows, the majority of the respondents (53%), when asked about their perception on the portrayal of polygamy in this television series, believe that this is the true reflection of what happens in a polygamous marriage, whereas only 20% believe that it is the wrong portrayal.

The remaining respondents (26.7%) believe that the show perpetuates male dominance based on Mseleku's interaction with his wives and children.

There is a general perception that there is no peace in polygamous marriages, do you think this is the case in this tv show?
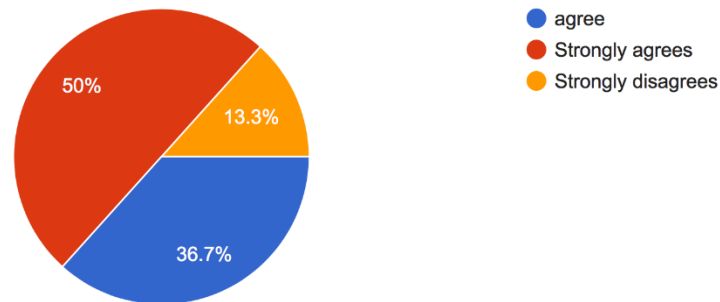30 responses

Figure 5.7: Representation of participants' views of whether there is peace in polygamous marriages.

Figure 5.7 above shows that half (50%) of the respondents strongly believe that there is no peace in the Mseleku's polygamy, irrespective of any pretence to the contrary in the presence of the husband and the cameras, and 36.7% also agree that there is no peace. The following conversations serve to confirm this perception:

> *'She is getting on my nerves. We might be waiting for Mbali (MaNgwabe) and she might be getting her extra things for herself while we think that she is getting the milk.' - MaKhumalo*

During the family vacation, MaNgwabe is filmed alone on her phone and not participating with other family members, and the following conversation is noted:

> *'When my phone rings, they stare at me, and I even struggle to continue with the conversation.' - MaNgwabe*

The audience is able to judge or form an opinion on the merits and demerits of polygamy by the way it is portrayed on television, as this has a bearing on the individual's attitude towards the subject. The media has the power to arouse and influence different attitudes and behaviours of individuals and groups (communities), as it plays a vital role in defining a nation's identity and culture (Saba *et al.,* 2010). A

mere 13.3% stated that they strongly disagree that there is no peace in the polygamous marriage, and are instead of the opinion that there is peace.

Based on this show, would you allow your kids to be in a polygamous relationship?
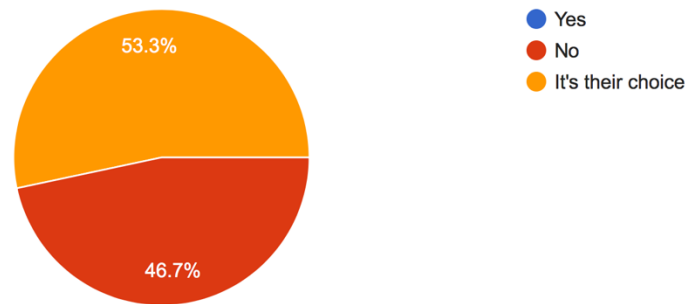30 responses

- Yes
- No
- It's their choice

53.3%

46.7%

Figure 5.8: Representation of the participants' views on their children and polygamy

As per Figure 5.8 above, respondents were asked, based on their experiences of the show, whether they would allow their children to be in a polygamous relationship. Just over 53% of the respondents noted that it is their children's choice to make. The remaining 46.7% noted that they would not allow their children to be in a polygamous relationship. None of the respondents responded yes to the question. From the television series, the following statements portray polygamy as a difficult path:

Mseleku: *'I used to think being a polygamist would be fun and easy. I didn't think it would be so difficult. I understood that when I became part of it.'*

MaYeni, 2nd wife: *'Being in a polygamous marriage is not easy, but you have to get used to the fact that there are other people.'*

Although the quoted statements do not explain why polygamy is not easy, such statements could have affected the audience's responses as noted above.

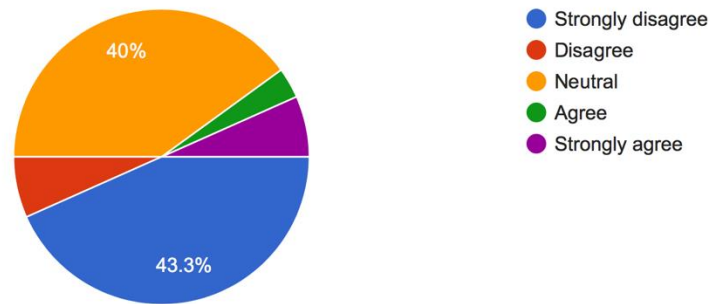Should other men emulate Musa Mseleku in being polygamists?
30 responses

Figure 5.9: Representation of participants' views on men emulating Mseleku

On the question of whether other men should emulate Mseleku in being polygamists, the majority of the respondents strongly disagreed (43.3%), whereas 40% were neutral on the question.

Should this lifestyle be only allowed for affluent people only like Mseleku or anyone may be a polygamist to observe their cultural beliefs?
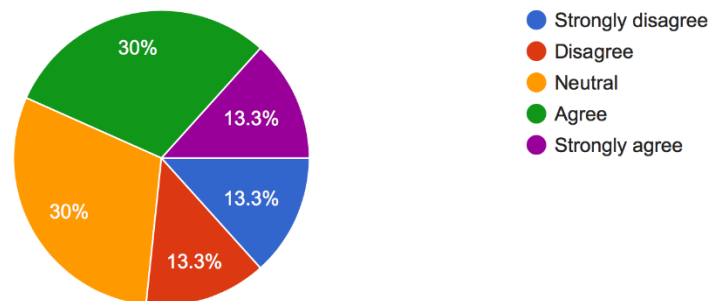30 responses

Figure 5.10: Representation of participants' views on whether only affluent men should be polygamists

When the show premiered in 2017, some women expressed their interest on social media in being in a polygamous marriage as long as the man could provide for their needs, such as the way Mseleku caters for the needs of his wives. This is what motivated the question above (see Figure 5.10), whereby 30% of the respondents agreed and 30% chose to remain neutral. Those who strongly agree, strongly disagree, and disagree amounted to 13.3% each. The respondents' views were likely shaped by how polygamy has been framed on the television show, which in this case

centred on a wealthy individual. Had the show included a less wealthy man and family, with a vastly different lifestyle and family dynamics, it is likely that the responses might have been different.

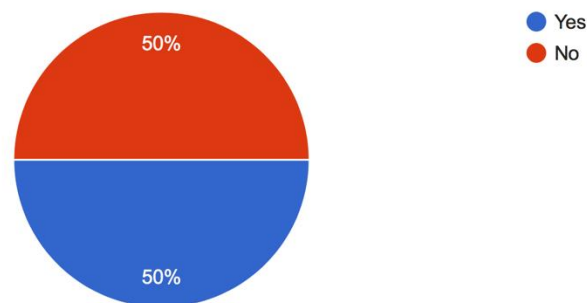In your observation of season 1, do women have a say in Musa's polygamy?
30 responses

Figure 5.11: Representation of participants' views on whether women have a say in Mseleku's polygamy

Many opponents of polygamy believe that this cultural practice perpetuates male dominance and that women in such a relationship often do not have a say. The perception exists that the husband often uses the social construct that he is the head of the house to do as he pleases, and the women must simply abide by his rules. This question was therefore meant to establish the viewers' perspective based on what they saw on season one of this programme. As depicted in Figure 5.11, half of the respondents believe that Mseleku's wives have a voice, whereas the other half believe that Mseleku dictates what happens and does not necessary seek the views of his wives. These statistics show that people are equally divided on the issue and hold completely opposite perspectives, even though they watched the same programme.

Is the first wife afforded her place as a senior wife in the Mseleku household?
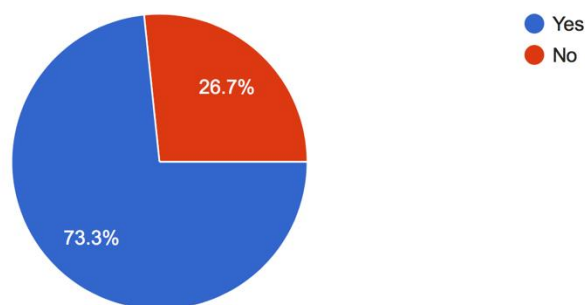
30 responses

Figure 5.12: Representation of participants' views on the role of Mamkhulu in the Mseleku household

In a polygamous marriage, under normal circumstances, the first wife is generally respected by the other wives. This is due to various reasons; among others is that the other wives respect her because she allowed her husband to marry them and, in some instances, the first wife is more senior (based on age), and hence respected by the other wives. In some situations, she even provides advice for the junior wives as she is someone who understands their husband, the household, and the clan rules better than the junior wives. In this television show, MaCele is the first wife of Mseleku, and the researcher wanted to establish from the respondents whether she is afforded her place as the senior wife by the other wives – i.e., whether or not they respect her seniority. As indicated in Figure 5.12, 73% of the respondents believe that MaCele is receiving the recognition she deserves as *Mamkhulu*, while 26.7% believe that this is not the case in this show.

5.12 Does the Show Depict the Reality of Polygamy?

There is a difference of opinion when it comes to Mseleku's polygamy as to whether the show is truly reflective of the reality of polygamy. Some respondents believe that it is indeed the reality, but that this is a modern version of polygamy in that, normally, a man would provide for his wives but would not allow them to work; instead, they would remain housewives taking care of the home and children. On this question, one of the respondents said:

'Firstly, the wives are working and not solely depending on the husband as a "provider". Also, the way they dress – they wear trousers, wigs and makeup which are things that symbolise modern polygamy.'

Other respondents believe that the lifestyle in the Mseleku household depicts a modern society where they practise polygamy, but are also liberal in the sense that they can still do things that would not be considered traditional. Some respondents believe that the wives are simply putting up with the polygamy because of the lavish lifestyle that is afforded to them by their husband. On the other hand, two of the 30 respondents believe that this is not a true depiction of polygamy – it is simply for entertainment and for Mzansi Magic to boost their ratings at the expense of polygamy as a traditional lifestyle.

5.13 Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the presentation of data and its analysis. These discussions emanated from the eight episodes of season one of *uThando Nes'thembu*, and from the views of the 30 respondents who opined about how polygamy is depicted on this television programme. What is noteworthy from the respondents' perspectives is that some have reservations about polygamy, while others are positive towards it or simply neutral on the subject. From the questionnaire responses from the respondents, it can be deduced that the way polygamy has been portrayed by this television series has likely had an influence on the way in which individuals view this practice.

CHAPTER 6:   SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1   Introduction

This chapter concludes the study by summarising the research and presents recommendations based on the findings. The intention of the study was to understand how polygamy is portrayed in the television series, *Uthando Nes'thembu,* and the influence this has on its audiences. The show, especially season one, was the first of its kind on South African television, although there have been stories covered in newspapers, magazines, and television news bulletins on the topic of polygamy prior to this.

The focus of the study was two-pronged: firstly, to look at how the main characters of the show are portrayed in the eight episodes of season one and how they converse and interact; and secondly, to ascertain the perceptions and reactions of the viewers after watching and reading about this show. A summary of the findings is presented below.

6.2   Summary of Findings

Chapter two discussed the literature which informs the study of polygamy. As this study does not only investigate the cultural or anthropological disciplines, but it also finds the link between polygamy as a cultural practice and the study media and communication – television to be specific.

To take it further, chapter three then looked at the theories that inform this study. It was guided by the Entman (1993) Media Framing or Framing Theory and supported by the Schiller (1973) Cultural Imperialist Theory. The former paints a picture of how the media frame certain topics (this is about the angle that the media take on a particular topic) whereas the latter addresses the controversy of how the western or dominant cultures tend to wipe out not-so-strong cultures. This may be because of the emphasis on a particular culture portrayed in a good and or bad way– and the media play a huge in this.

Chapter four discussed the research methods and design under which the study was conducted. This included the discussion of sampling procedures and population where

the data presented came from. It further discussed how the collected data would be presented in chapter five.

6.3   Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

This study's objective was to investigate how the reality television programme, *Uthando Nes'thembu* depicts polygamy as practised by the Mseleku family and to ascertain the viewers' reaction to this show. To achieve this, season one of the series was analysed in depth and a survey questionnaire employed to elicit the views of 30 purposely sampled respondents with regard to the show. In essence, the researcher aimed to establish how the respondents perceive polygamy as portrayed by the series and its influence on them, if any.

This study, in the main addressed the question of the media's role – and more specifically, television – in the portrayal of polygamy; in this case, its portrayal of the polygamous Mselekus in the television series, *Uthando Nes'thembu*. Based on the responses from the participants, polygamy is clearly a divisive topic, with some people believing that the show perpetuates gender stereotypes and patriarchy, with the man dominating his wives and children. Others, however, held a positive view of polygamy, though it could also be argued that the lavish lifestyle of the wealthy Mselekus could possibly have contributed towards this perception. A fair proportion of the participants also remained neutral on the subject.

There are tendencies in society which echoes women disempowerment at a young age and a need to conform to what men have to say. In the show, we see Mseleku being the one introducing his wives, which depicts his power over his wives.

Furthermore, among the assumptions were that there is no peace in polygamy, as the women compete to be the favourite of the husband. In this television series, the wives are seen getting along, but there is an incident that indicated that maybe all is not well in the family among the wives. When Mseleku breaks the news about his prospect of having 20 children, there seem to be objections from the two junior wives – and the first wife seems to be not bothered and says, 'Do you now feel what I felt when you joined/married Mseleku?' This may be the tip of an iceberg of the deeper animosity among the wives although this is not portrayed strongly in the show – perhaps to not embarrass their husband as the show is watched by scores of people. Also, on the

issue of 'taking a fifth', Mseleku is rather showing his prowess in love of women (promiscuity).

As opposed to how Mseleku is portrayed on the show as someone who is a passionate polygamist, he also admits that polygamy is not as not as easy as he thought when deciding to enter into it. It is therefore found based on the show that, as much as people might be entering into it, the husband must have money to sustain such lifestyle. Also, as a husband you must be ready for long-winded arguments wherever you go as jealous from wives may creep in.

In addition to the points above, respondents were divided in half when it comes to whether women in this polygamy have a voice as this is often a justification from the proponents of polygamy that women too have a say. What is noted though is that there is 70% of women who partook in the study. Therefore, they believe that Mseleku does consult his wives when taking decisions. However, just above 43.3% of the respondents do not believe that there should be polygamy at all even if the husband has money such as Mseleku, as this tend to have unfavourable results especially to the wives and children.

6.4 Limitations

This study was aimed at investigating the portrayal and influence of polygamy in a television series, *Uthando Nes'thembu.* When deciding on the topic in 2019, the show was already on the third season, therefore, the researcher had to decide which show would be sampled, which ended up being the first season. The study was only limited to the first season as it is the one that re-ignited the polygamy debate. It would have been difficult to study two or more seasons qualitatively. However, the critical thing was to get a clear picture of what happens in polygamous families and study it thereafter. Furthermore, there was an aspect of survey questionnaire with 30 respondents or participants although the show had thousands of viewers. Also, conducting survey questionnaire, a Google Form was used (web-based survey) which meant that it had to be people who had access to internet and needed to understand English language as they had to answer questions on their own without any assistance or interpretation from the researcher. The number of respondents was not a problem or would produce distorted views as in sampling, a method is used to rationalise the collection of data and help reach a particular conclusion. However, if done correctly

and carefully, results from the smaller group would still reflect the same traits that would be reflected by a larger population or group of participants (Brynard & Hanekom 2006).

6.5 Recommendations for Further Research

The study findings may be promoted to influence government and policy makers, as well community and cultural leaders. In addition, culture and media studies students and academic researchers may use the findings and the recommendations to the body of knowledge in field of communication – and by default in problematising the relationship between polygamy and the media. And this topic seemingly in the small screen has not been covered enough, even scholarly, there is a dearth of information or research in assessing or investigating the relationship between these two.

From the respondents, it shows that media serves different purposes and these influence individuals differently. From the media, gender stereotypes are depicted, and male dominance is dictated by the respondents. It is not easy to rule out polygamy or embrace it as framing of polygamy on television brought about mixed feelings to the respondents. Therefore, it would be ideal that in future, one does not only focus on what is seen on the programme but have interviews with the Mselekus to get deeper insights and establish to what extent do these reality shows are scripted or edited out from what viewers end up seeing.

As the show had introduced other seasons, it would be great to study other seasons to observe how the show develops and how the characters of the show evolve or mature as the show grow and maybe have a comparison study of all these seasons. Furthermore, Mseleku is now presenting a polygamy show – *Umnakwethu (Sister Wife)-* where ordinary men write to him asking him to assist them introduce a second potential wife to their wives. Many argue that they have been 'motivated' by his braveness in how he is open with his wives. These are men of different stature and financial standing unlike Mseleku, which now might great to explore a topic of polygamy which does not involve a wealthy man.

6.6 Conclusion

This study has demonstrated the unlikelihood of consensus ever being reached when it comes to the subject of polygamy, as people's perceptions will always differ, even if

stemming from the same media content – in this case, season one of *Uthando Nes'thembu*. This could be due to preconceived ideas, societal expectations (i.e. the social construct), and the fact that some people may focus only on either the negative or positive aspects of such a relationship. Many of the women surveyed about Mseleku's affluent status argued that affordability should not be used as a justification for men to engage in polygamy. However, they also noted that the women (i.e., wives) were willing participants, but this may be the case as a consequence of their culture. Furthermore, the fact that the show was watched by many people, it may result in some people wanting to practice it as they saw how it is portrayed in *Uthando Nes'thembu*. This study also revealed that in contrast to the belief that polygamy is propagated by men, as some among respondents will not stop their children entering a polygamous marriage if they so wish.

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Appendix 1: Dissertation survey questionnaire

The portrayal and influence of polygamy in a television series, *uThando Nes'thembu* (Season one)

- .Name and surname of the respondent
- Gender
    - Male
    - Female
    - Prefer not to say
- Age
- Level of education
- Did you watch *uThando Nes'thembu* series (season 1)? if yes, why? if no, why not?
- What was your perception of polygamy (polygyny) before watching the television series, uThando Nes'thembu?
    - It's a barbaric custom and should be abolished
    - I had no problem with it
    - It's a lovely idea, I would do it.
- How many wives should men in polygamous marriages be limited to take?
    - Only two
    - More than two
    - Does not matter, as long he can take care of them
    - No polygamy should be allowed
- What is your take on Musa Mseleku's ambition to double the number of children from 10 to 20?
    - No problem, as long he can support them
    - This could be traumatic for kids and wives
    - Even ten is too much
- What do you make of the portrayal of Mseleku's wives in this television series?
    - Wives are desperate and have no choice but to bear with Mseleku?
    - They are willing participants in the polygamous setup
    - They conform to their culture of polygamy
- What is your perception on the portrayal of polygamy in this television series?
    - It perpetuates male dominance and women docility
    - It is a wrong portrayal of polygamy
    - It is the reality of polygamy

- **Does the show depict a modern polygamy in your opinion? Justify your answer**
- **There is a general perception that there is no peace in polygamous marriages, do you think this is the case in this tv show?**
  - **Agree**
  - **Strongly agrees**
  - **Strongly disagrees**
- **With your answer above, briefly elaborate on your response.**
- **Based on this show, would you allow your kids to be in a polygamous relationship?**
  - **Yes**
  - **No**
  - **It's their choice**
- **Should other men emulate Musa Mseleku in being polygamists?**
  - **Strongly disagree**
  - **Disagree**
  - **Neutral**
  - **Agree**
  - **Strongly agree**
- **Should this lifestyle be only allowed for affluent people only like Mseleku or anyone may be a polygamist to observe their cultural beliefs?**
  - **Strongly disagree**
  - **Disagree**
  - **Neutral**
  - **Agree**
  - **Strongly agree**
- **In your observation of season 1, do women have a say in Musa's polygamy?**
  - **Yes**
  - **No**
- **Is the first wife afforded her place as a senior wife in the Mseleku household?**
  - **Yes**
  - **No**
- **What is your overall view of polygamy after watching the last episode of season 1?**
- **Additional comments about season one of _uThando Nes'thembu_.**
- **Thank you for participating in this study**

Appendix 2:   Ethics certificate

UNISA | university of south africa

COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

26 September 2022

Dear Mr Sandile Michael Gumede

NHREC Registration # :
Rec-240816-052
CREC Reference # :
53317947_CREC_CHS_2022

Decision:
Ethics Approval from 26 September
2022 to 26 September 2023

Researcher(s): Name: Mr. S.M Gumede
Contact details: 53317947@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Supervisor(s): Name: Prof S. M. Tyali
Contact details: tyalism@unisa.ac.za

Title: THE PORTRAYAL AND INFLUENCE OF POLYGAMY IN A TELEVISION
SERIES, UTHANDO NES'THEMBU
Degree Purpose: Masters

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa College of Human Science Ethics Committee. Ethics approval is granted for one year.

The *low risk application was reviewed by* College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.

4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.

5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.

6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.

7. No fieldwork activities may continue after the expiry date (26 September 2023). Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number 53317947_CREC_CHS_2022 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Signature:

Prof. KB Khan
CHS Research Ethics Committee Chairperson
Email: khankb@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429 8210

Signature: PP

Prof ZZ Nkosi
Acting-Exécutive Dean: CHS
E-mail: nkosizz@unisa.ac.za
Tel: 012 429 6758

Appendix 3:   Editing Letter

P.R.C

PRO-ACAEMIC RESEARCH CONSULTANCY

"*DIG DEEPER AND MAKE IT HAPPEN*"

29 NOVEMBER 2022

To Whom It May Concern

RE: DISSERTATION EDITING FOR SANDILE MICHAEL GUMEDE (5317947)

Pro-Academic Research team hereby confirm that it is responsible for all editing done on this research dissertation titled **'The portrayal and influence of polygamy in a television series, Uthando Nes'thembu'** for submission of the Master of Arts in Communication Science at University of South Africa. The editing focused on the grammar, tense, spellings, use of language and referencing.

Pro-Academic team is a research institute run by experienced professional researchers who have relevant credentials to do this work. If the student alters the document P.R.C shall not be held accountable for any anomalies.

Yours
Sincerely

k. Nkomo

Khumbulani Nkomo