ABSTRACT

This study sought to explore the process of disclosure among a group black South African homosexuals. Specifically, the study investigated the factors that inhibit and/or facilitate disclosure, how obstacles to disclosure are dealt with, as well as consequences of disclosure. Snowballing sampling method was used to select appropriate participants. A sample was drawn from ACTIVATE; a Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Club from University of the Witwatersrand. The sample comprised of six male participants, between the ages of eighteen (18) and twenty-five (25), who are living openly, either partially or fully, as homosexuals. Data was gathered using a semi-structured interview schedule. The face-to-face individual interviews were audio taped. The interviews were transcribed and data was analysed using the thematic content analysis method. The results of the study indicated that disclosure is a significant process that most homosexuals are bound to face or at least consider. Among the factors identified as playing a role in facilitating disclosure are self-acceptance and identification of self with the homosexual identity. Acceptance by family and society also proved to be important in facilitating the process of disclosure. Inability to acceptance one's sexual orientation and lack of social support are among the factors that tend to hamper the process of disclosure. Difficulties faced with during the process of disclosure include rejection by family and society which is accompanied by discrimination based on sexual orientation. As much as disclosure brings about a sense of relief and the freedom to express one's sexuality, it can also bring about feelings of ambivalence. An individual has to now reject the heterosexual orientation which is considered "normal" to pursue a homosexual identity that corresponds with one's feelings but is considered "immoral". Disclosure is a difficult process and individuals who wish to disclose often anticipate negative responses from their next of kin and society. Subsequently, it becomes undesirable to disclose under such circumstances. If society were more accepting towards homosexuality, homosexuals would be encouraged to disclose their sexual orientation without the fear of being rejected and discriminated against.