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GUEST EDITORIAL NOTE

It is heartwarming to announce the publication of the latest issue of *Gender and Behaviour*. The journal has been a platform for the publication of the latest issue on gender and human behaviour as critical aspects of development. Gender is essential to development because it is one of the most crucial markers of development goals and targets, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Gender issues also intersect with contemporary problems facing humanity, such as climate change. Climate change as a threat multiplier exacerbates existing gender crises across nations, turning them into greater monsters that rob women, girls and children of their dignity by eroding their resilience. Recent climate events across the world, especially in developing countries, demonstrate the grave situation of women as extant social, economic, political, religious, cultural and other gender barriers are brought into greater relief as they impede the ability of women to adapt to climate change.

This issue of *Gender and Behaviour* contains articles that carry on the foregoing analysis through well-nuanced lenses. It treats topics and issues involving gender equity, inclusive education, financial inclusion, women entrepreneurship, feminism, mental health, substance abuse, patriarchy, women's empowerment, parenting, indigenous knowledge system, human rights, media access, climate action, family, forced migration, reformation and rehabilitation and youth, among other critical issues. These have been well-researched and made to go through a best-practice-compliant publication process. Thus, the findings and recommendations of the articles featured in this issue of the journal are valid and reliable. Hence, we invite gender stakeholders, including policymakers, researchers, activists, civil society, students and international organisations to consult them for insights into their respective efforts at making the world a gender-balanced, sensitive and inclusive space.

We want to extend our appreciation to members of our team, including the reviewers, for their commitment to the publication of issues. Their painstaking review of each article constitutes the most critical aspect of the process. The authors of successful papers featured in the issue are also appreciated for their commitment to quality, as they took the pain to attend to each comment in their article's reviewer's report. We believe that this issue of *Gender and Behaviour* will advance the knowledge of gender and as such, readers are encouraged to avail themselves of the well-researched articles to update their knowledge of the gender and its dynamics in contemporary society.

Prof. Kayode Eesuola,
Institute of African and Diaspora Studies,
University of Lagos, Nigeria

EDITORIAL NOTE

Gender issues are among the most pressing concerns in the world today. While some commendable progress has been made in ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment, there is still a lot to be done to achieve more results in this regard. In some aspects of the quest for economic, social and political equality, the results are not encouraging, as issues such as gender-motivated unequal payment, lack of access to resources and low representation of women, all ossified by the cultural and religious structure of society. This reality is more apparent in developing countries, as not much is being done to address these gender issues. In Africa, for example, gender issues are at a crisis level, as many countries have largely failed to address the drivers of the gender gap. This sobering commentary resonates deeply because the continent is running out of time to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, which aims to achieve equality for women and girls by 2030.

Gender and Behaviour, which has become arguably Africa's foremost journal on gender and its dynamics, has demonstrated a serious commitment to the discourse of the issues over the years. Each volume and issue of the journal has featured well-researched articles that contribute to knowledge of gender in Africa and beyond. The articles have also produced sound suggestions and practical recommendations that are of value to the gender policy process of countries. This issue of the journal continues the excellent academic and publication tradition that commenced years ago. This is because at Ife Psychologia, we treat each article as a legacy to the quest for gender emancipation and the overall development of nations, chiefly Africa. Thus, both the regular and special issues are made to align with this in focus.

We want to thank the Guest Editor and his team for a job well done. They have selected very good papers to feature in this issue and ensured that the articles are not only well-reviewed but also that the comments are well-attended to. We hope that the articles will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on gender in Africa and beyond. Last, we want to ensure the readers of *Gender and Behaviour* and the authors that the editorial team are not relenting in their efforts to ensure that the journal ranks among the best globally. This is a promise we are keeping and intend to continue to keep by adhering to best practices across the publication process of our journals.

Prof TJ Mudau,
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University of Venda,
Thohoyandou,
South Africa

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.1>**SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND GENDER EQUITY: THE ROLE OF SGBS IN FOUNDATION PHASE EDUCATION****Matodzi G Sikhwari****Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, Department of Early Childhood Education.
University of Venda, Private Bag X5050, Thohoyandou, 0950, South Africa.*Email: matodzi.sikhwari@univen.ac.zaORCID: [0009-0000-4434-7338](https://orcid.org/0009-0000-4434-7338)**Abstract**

This article explores the role of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in promoting gender equity in Foundation Phase education within the Vhembe District of Limpopo, South Africa. Although national education policies emphasise gender equity, their implementation at the school level, particularly in rural areas, remains inadequate due to entrenched socio-cultural norms and a lack of awareness among key stakeholders. The core problem identified is the limited understanding and inconsistent application of gender equity principles by SGBs, which negatively impacts girls' access to, participation in, and retention within Foundation Phase education. This research aimed to assess the extent to which SGBs contribute to advancing gender-equitable practices in early schooling. Employing a qualitative research approach and a case study design, the article collected data through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Participants included 16 individuals comprising SGB members, Foundation Phase educators, and school principals from four purposefully selected rural primary schools. Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data, while the article ensured trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Ethical standards were strictly observed, including informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity. Findings revealed that most SGBs lack sufficient training and knowledge of gender equity frameworks, which hampers their capacity to support inclusive practices effectively. Persistent socio-cultural attitudes in communities often influence the priorities and decision-making processes of SGBs, further limiting progress in gender equity. The article recommends that comprehensive gender equity training be integrated into SGB development programmes. Schools should actively engage communities to reshape traditional beliefs that hinder gender-equitable education. While SGBs possess the potential to foster gender equity, achieving this requires coordinated support, ongoing capacity-building, and collaboration with local communities to address deep-rooted cultural barriers.

Keywords: *Gender equity, School Governing Bodies, Foundation Phase, rural education, community involvement*

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Gender equity in education is an essential human right and a cornerstone of quality, inclusive education. In South Africa, despite the establishment of legal frameworks such as the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) and the Gender Equality Strategy for the Basic Education Sector (DBE, 2021), the actual implementation of gender equity policies remains inconsistent, particu-

larly in rural areas. In these settings, socio-cultural norms, entrenched patriarchal values, and limited resources contribute to the marginalization of girls, especially within the Foundation Phase, where the foundations for lifelong learning and development are set (Mahlomaholo & Goba, 2019). School Governing Bodies (SGBs) play a pivotal role in the governance and management of schools, and their potential to drive gender equity lies in their ability to advocate for inclusive policies, monitor school practices, and

engage local communities on gender-sensitive issues (Mestry, 2020).

The effectiveness of SGBs in advancing gender equity is often constrained by factors such as a lack of awareness, insufficient training, and resistance from traditional community structures that may uphold gender biases (Marishane, 2022).

The Foundation Phase, which includes Grades R to 3, is particularly critical in shaping learners' educational and social trajectories. Disparities in this phase, such as unequal access to resources, safety concerns, and limited opportunities for full participation, can have profound and long-lasting effects on learners, particularly girls (Department of Basic Education, 2021). Gender inequities at this stage, such as limited access to quality instruction and learning materials, often contribute to the early dropout of girls, exacerbating existing educational disparities. Understanding the role of SGBs in this phase and how they either address or reinforce gender disparities is essential for advancing gender equity in education.

This article aims to explore the role of SGBs in promoting gender equity in Foundation Phase education in rural schools within the Vhembe District, with the goal of gaining insights into how governance structures can either support or hinder the realization of inclusive and equitable educational practices. The article examines the extent to which SGBs, as key decision-makers within school communities, engage with and influence gender-related policies and practices to ensure that all learners, particularly girls, have equal access to educational opportunities. By addressing these issues, the article contributes to the broader discourse on gender equity in education and highlights critical areas for intervention to improve the educational experiences of girls in rural South Africa.

The following research questions guided this paper:

- What is the understanding of gender equity among SGB members in Foundation Phase schools?
- How do SGBs implement gender-equity policies?
- What challenges do SGBs face in promoting gender equity?
- What strategies can improve SGBs' role in ensuring gender equity?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This article is underpinned by Feminist Theory, specifically drawing on *liberal feminism*, which emphasizes the importance of equal rights and opportunities for women and girls through legal, policy, and institutional reforms (Tong, 2019). Liberal feminism foregrounds the role of education and governance systems, such as School Governing Bodies (SGBs), in either perpetuating or challenging gender-based inequities. Within the South African context, this lens is particularly valuable for critiquing how institutional structures and legal mandates such as the South African Schools Act (1996) are operationalized (Mestry, 2020).

However, to fully contextualise the cultural realities of rural communities like those in the Vhembe District, it is essential to engage with African feminist perspectives, particularly Nnaemeka's (2004) *Nego-feminism*, which offers a culturally grounded and relationally sensitive approach to gender equity. *Nego-feminism*, short for "negotiation feminism," is rooted in African values and practices. It emphasizes negotiation, compromise, and non-confrontation, especially within familial and community structures, to challenge patriarchy without fracturing communal bonds.

Unlike liberal feminism's more confrontational stance toward institutions and traditional norms, *Nego-feminism* recognizes the interdependence of men and women in African societies and seeks to work within communal frameworks to renegotiate women's roles and autonomy (Nnaemeka, 2004). This approach is particularly relevant in rural South Africa, where communal decision-making and cultural traditions play a significant role in shaping parental attitudes, gender roles,

and educational outcomes.

For example, while liberal feminism critiques SGBs for failing to implement gender-sensitive policies, *Nego-feminism* would propose engaging with SGB members through culturally resonant dialogue, storytelling, and communal consensus-building that aligns gender equity with shared community values. It suggests that change must be both strategic and culturally legitimate, rather than imposed externally.

By comparing liberal feminism with *Nego-feminism*, this research highlights the balance between promoting equal rights and respecting cultural values. It also offers a hybrid lens through which to understand how gender equity can be pursued in a way that is both structurally empowering and culturally grounded. This dual-theoretical approach enhances the study's ability to generate insights into how SGBs can function not only as institutional agents of change but also as community negotiators in the quest for inclusive education.

CONCEPTUALIZATION

Gender Equity in education refers to the process of being fair to learners of all genders by ensuring that policies, practices, and resource distributions do not disadvantage any group, while actively addressing historical and social imbalances (UNESCO, 2020). Unlike gender equality, which implies treating all genders the same, gender equity acknowledges that different groups may require different support to reach equivalent outcomes. In the context of South African schools, particularly in rural areas, gender equity involves removing barriers that prevent girls from fully participating in and benefiting from education in the same way as boys.

In Foundation Phase education, gender equity is critical because this early stage lays the groundwork for future learning and development. If disparities are not addressed early, they often persist or worsen over time, limiting educational and social outcomes, particularly for girls (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2021). Gender equity

in this phase involves ensuring that learning environments are free from bias, that girls have equal access to resources and opportunities, and that teaching practices do not reinforce traditional gender roles (Mahlomaholo & Goba, 2019).

School Governing Bodies (SGBs) play a vital role in promoting gender equity by shaping school policies, managing budgets, and engaging with communities. Their understanding of gender equity concepts directly influences how inclusive and supportive the school environment is for all learners. In rural districts such as Vhembe, deeply rooted patriarchal norms can influence SGB decisions, sometimes reinforcing gender disparities rather than mitigating them (Marishane, 2022). Thus, conceptual clarity and capacity-building among SGB members are essential for the effective promotion of gender-equitable practices.

This article uses gender equity as a foundational concept to assess how SGBs function as governance agents, and how their actions or inactions contribute to either narrowing or widening gender gaps in Foundation Phase education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reviewed in this article highlights the multifaceted challenges and opportunities surrounding gender equity in education, with particular attention to the governance role of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in the Foundation Phase, especially within rural South African contexts.

The role of SGBs in school

School Governing Bodies (SGBs) are statutory structures established under the South African Schools Act (1996) to decentralise school governance and foster democratic participation in the education system. Their roles encompass policy formulation, financial management, resource allocation, and promoting the welfare of learners and educators (Mestry, 2020). SGBs are particularly crucial in rural areas, where schools often

face systemic challenges related to infrastructure, staffing, and community involvement. In these contexts, the SGB becomes a critical interface between the school and the broader community, with the potential to influence educational outcomes significantly.

One of the primary responsibilities of SGBs is to develop and implement policies that reflect the diverse needs of learners, including policies on inclusivity and gender equity (Marishane, 2022). This policy-making role positions SGBs as key agents in transforming school environments into spaces that promote equality and justice. Their ability to perform this role effectively often hinges on the capacity and training of members, many of whom are parents with limited formal education or exposure to issues of gender equity (Xaba, 2019).

Research by Ncontsa and Shumba (2021) highlights that SGBs in rural schools frequently lack awareness of their responsibilities related to equity and inclusion. As a result, they may unintentionally perpetuate gender-biased practices, such as unequal access to extracurricular activities, gender-stereotyped subject streaming, or inadequate responses to gender-based violence. Traditional cultural norms prevalent in many communities can hinder the efforts of SGBs to adopt progressive gender equity policies, thereby reinforcing patriarchal values within the school system (Mahlomaholo & Goba, 2019).

Thus, while SGBs hold the legislative mandate and structural position to promote gender equity in Foundation Phase education, their effectiveness is often compromised by contextual limitations. Empowering SGBs through targeted training and continuous support is essential for transforming their governance role into one that actively fosters inclusive and gender-sensitive education.

Gender disparities in Foundation Phase education

Gender disparities in Foundation Phase education in South Africa persist despite a robust policy framework advocating for equality. The Foundation Phase, encompassing Grades R to 3,

is critical in shaping learners' cognitive, social, and emotional development. In many rural areas such as the Vhembe District, gender biases rooted in socio-cultural norms often influence access to and experiences within early education (Mahlomaholo & Goba, 2019). Girls, in particular, are frequently disadvantaged due to expectations surrounding domestic roles, early caregiving responsibilities, and entrenched patriarchal attitudes that deprioritize their education (Marishane, 2022).

The Department of Basic Education (2021) notes that while national enrolment figures show near parity between boys and girls in early grades, disparities emerge in classroom participation, teacher expectations, and access to learning resources. These subtle yet persistent biases can undermine girls' confidence, limit their academic engagement, and negatively affect long-term educational outcomes. For instance, educators may unconsciously reinforce gender roles by assigning tasks based on traditional perceptions of masculinity and femininity (Moloi & Ndlovu, 2020).

Gender-based violence and safety concerns further exacerbate gender disparities in the Foundation Phase. In some communities, fears of sexual harassment or abuse deter parents from sending girls to school regularly (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2021). Menstrual health challenges and lack of facilities in schools can also lead to absenteeism among older Foundation Phase girls. These challenges illustrate how structural and societal issues converge to produce inequitable learning environments.

School Governing Bodies (SGBs), as key actors in shaping school policy and culture, are positioned to challenge or reinforce these disparities. Their limited understanding of gender equity often results in missed opportunities to advocate for inclusive practices. Addressing gender disparities in the Foundation Phase thus requires equipping SGBs with the knowledge and tools to identify and counteract gender biases from the earliest stages of schooling.

Policy frameworks for gender equity in education

South Africa's commitment to gender equity in education is embedded in a variety of legal and policy instruments aimed at eliminating discrimination and promoting inclusive schooling environments. The South African Schools Act (1996) establishes School Governing Bodies (SGBs) as critical governance structures mandated to ensure that education is democratic and accessible. SGBs are entrusted with adopting school policies, overseeing resource allocation, and creating safe and inclusive spaces, thereby positioning them as key agents for promoting gender equity (Mestry, 2020).

Complementing the Act is the Gender Equality Strategy for the Basic Education Sector (Department of Basic Education, 2021), which outlines measures for mainstreaming gender equality across all educational levels. This strategy emphasises the integration of gender-sensitive curricula, teacher training, and institutional accountability mechanisms to address the specific barriers faced by girls and other marginalized groups. Importantly, it calls for the active involvement of SGBs in promoting gender awareness and equity at the school level.

The National Policy on Gender in Education (DBE, 2019) also reaffirms the right of every child to quality education free from gender bias, violence, or stereotyping. It provides actionable guidelines for schools and their governing bodies, including the development of gender-responsive codes of conduct, learner protection protocols, and gender-disaggregated data analysis for monitoring progress. Implementation remains a challenge, especially in rural schools, due to limited capacity, prevailing socio-cultural norms, and insufficient training for SGB members (Marishane, 2022; Mahlomaholo & Goba, 2019).

Despite these frameworks, there is often a disconnect between policy and practice. The success of these policies largely depends on whether SGBs have the knowledge, tools, and commitment to enforce them effectively. Strengthening

the capacity of SGBs to interpret and apply gender equity policies is therefore essential for narrowing the gap between legislative intent and on-the-ground realities in Foundation Phase education.

Socio-cultural influences on gender equity in rural schools

Socio-cultural norms play a profound role in shaping perceptions of gender roles and significantly influence educational practices in rural South African schools. In the Vhembe District and similar rural contexts, deeply entrenched patriarchal values continue to affect the attitudes of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and the broader community toward gender equity (Mahlomaholo & Goba, 2019). These norms often position boys as future breadwinners and leaders, while girls are associated with domestic responsibilities and early marriage, which can lead to reduced investment in girls' education (Marishane, 2022).

Research indicates that such cultural ideologies not only influence parental expectations but also affect how SGBs prioritize and interpret their governance roles. For instance, some SGB members may view gender equity initiatives as contradictory to traditional values or unnecessary, especially when they conflict with community norms (Mahlomaholo & Goba, 2019). This resistance can manifest in school-level decisions, such as unequal resource allocation, tolerance of gender-based violence, and the absence of girl-friendly policies.

The composition of SGBs in rural schools often mirrors community power dynamics, where leadership roles are dominated by men, and women's voices are marginalized (Mestry, 2020). As a result, the potential of SGBs to challenge gender disparities is diminished when their governance practices are shaped more by cultural compliance than by equity-oriented policies.

Addressing these socio-cultural influences requires deliberate efforts to engage communities in gender awareness and transformation initiatives. Capacity-building workshops, gender-sensitivity training, and inclusive leadership practices can empower SGBs to act as agents of

change rather than as passive enforcers of discriminatory norms (DBE, 2021). By transforming underlying beliefs about gender, rural school communities can become more receptive to equity-based governance, particularly in the formative Foundation Phase.

Capacity building for SGBs on gender equity

Capacity building for School Governing Bodies (SGBs) is essential to promote gender equity in schools, particularly in rural areas where traditional norms may perpetuate gender disparities. Effective SGBs are crucial in implementing gender-sensitive policies and practices, yet many rural SGBs lack the necessary knowledge and skills to address gender inequality in education. Studies indicate that targeted training programmes are necessary to equip SGB members with the tools needed to advocate for and implement gender equity initiatives (Mestry, 2020).

SGBs are tasked with overseeing school governance, resource allocation, and policy implementation. Without adequate training on gender issues, their decisions may inadvertently perpetuate gender bias or overlook the specific needs of girls (Marishane, 2022). In rural schools, where gender stereotypes and patriarchal values are deeply entrenched, SGBs may be unaware of their roles in challenging these inequities, particularly in the early stages of education, such as the Foundation Phase (Mahlomaholo & Goba, 2019). Training that incorporates gender awareness, legal frameworks for gender equity, and strategies for fostering an inclusive school environment is essential for transforming these governance structures.

Research by the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2021) highlights the importance of involving SGBs in gender equity training to create awareness about the barriers girls face, such as early dropout rates, limited access to learning materials, and gender-based violence. Capacity-building programmes should focus on building the confidence and leadership skills of SGB members, particularly women, to ensure that they can champion gender-sensitive policies within their schools.

Training initiatives that focus on gender-responsive budgeting, developing inclusive curricula, and engaging with the local community to shift socio-cultural attitudes can empower SGBs to become effective agents of change (Marishane, 2022). When SGBs are adequately trained, they can help foster an environment that promotes equal opportunities for boys and girls, ensuring that the Foundation Phase education provides a strong and equitable foundation for all learners.

Together, these strands of literature highlight the importance of empowering SGBs through targeted training, supportive policies, and community engagement to transform schools into gender-equitable spaces that promote inclusive and quality education for all learners.

METHODOLOGY

This article employed a qualitative research paradigm to explore the experiences and perceptions of School Governing Body (SGB) members, principals, and Foundation Phase educators regarding gender equity practices in rural primary schools in the Vhembe District, Limpopo. The qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of the participants' views and the contextual factors influencing gender equity in education. A case study design was adopted to examine the specific practices of SGBs in selected schools, providing a detailed exploration of their roles and the challenges they face in promoting gender equity.

Data collection involved two methods: semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with SGB members, principals, and Foundation Phase educators to gather rich, descriptive data on their experiences and perceptions. The interviews provided insights into how gender equity policies are implemented and the barriers to achieving gender parity in education. Document analysis was carried out on relevant school records, policies, and reports to understand the formal practices and procedures related to gender equity within the schools.

The article employed purposive sampling to select participants in positions to provide valuable insights based on their roles and experiences. The sample consisted of 16 participants from four rural primary schools in the Vhembe District. This targeted approach ensured that the sample was relevant to the research objectives.

Data analysis was done using thematic analysis. This involved carefully reading the data, coding it, and grouping similar ideas together to find common patterns and themes. This method helped the researcher understand the views of participants more clearly and showed how gender equity is seen, applied, and sometimes limited in rural school settings. The process included several steps: reading the interview transcripts multiple times to understand the content, creating initial codes, organising these codes into themes, checking and refining the themes, and then linking the themes to the research questions. This helped the researcher gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and practices related to gender equity in Foundation Phase education.

The article was delimited to the Vhembe District in Limpopo, focusing on rural primary schools to address these communities' unique challenges. Trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation, member checks, and an audit trail to enhance the credibility and reliability of the findings. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, were strictly adhered to throughout the study.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings of the study, focusing on five key themes: the limited knowledge of gender equity policies among School Governing Bodies (SGBs), socio-cultural beliefs influencing SGB decisions, the lack of training and resources, instances of positive deviance where SGBs successfully promoted gender equity, and the challenges and opportunities in community-school collaboration, all of which reveal the intricate ways in which institutional and socio-cultural factors intersect

to either reinforce or challenge gender-based barriers in education.

Theme 1: Inadequate knowledge, training, and resources to implement gender equity policies

A key finding of this study is the combined challenge of limited knowledge, insufficient training, and a lack of resources among School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in rural schools of the Vhembe District. Although national policies such as the South African Schools Act (1996) and the National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality (2000) advocate for gender equality in education, these policies are not well understood or effectively applied at the school level. Participants, including SGB members, teachers, and principals, reported that they had not received formal training or adequate support to help them implement gender equity practices.

Many participants expressed that, while they were aware that gender equity policies existed, they lacked clarity on how to apply them in daily school governance. One teacher remarked, *"I know there are policies that say girls should be treated the same as boys, but I don't know exactly what they say or how we are supposed to apply them in the classroom or school."* This confusion is worsened by the absence of targeted training sessions or workshops. As a result, SGBs are often unable to address gender-based disparities, especially those affecting girls in rural areas.

The lack of resources further hampers the capacity of SGBs to drive change. Without funding for professional development or access to gender-sensitive materials, SGBs remain ill-equipped to promote inclusive school environments. A parent on the SGB stated, *"We don't have enough resources to hold workshops or get the kind of training we need to understand gender policies. Without that, it's difficult to make a real difference."* These findings suggest a critical gap between policy intentions and practical implementation on the ground.

From a liberal feminist perspective, which

stresses institutional reform and equal access to opportunities, the situation reflects a structural weakness. Policies alone are not enough; real change depends on equipping school governance bodies with the necessary tools and knowledge. As one education official put it, *“Without proper training, the policies remain just words on paper.”* This theme highlights the urgent need for comprehensive training programmes and better resource allocation to enable SGBs to understand, advocate for, and apply gender equity policies effectively in rural schools.

Theme 2: Socio-cultural beliefs influencing SGB decisions

A significant finding in this article was the influence of socio-cultural beliefs on the decisions made by School Governing Bodies (SGBs) regarding gender equality in education. In the Vhembe District, deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and traditional gender roles appear to shape the actions and perceptions of SGB members, leading to gendered decision-making processes that often disadvantage girls. The influence of cultural norms in shaping attitudes toward girls' education was repeatedly highlighted by the participants in this article. These norms were particularly evident in rural communities, where expectations around women's roles in society are often more rigidly defined, limiting the agency of girls in both their educational and personal lives.

For example, one teacher from a rural school noted, *“In our community, girls are expected to get married at a young age, so it's hard to change the perception that education is important for them.”* Similarly, a parent shared, *“I believe girls should be educated, but there's always the pressure for them to stay at home and help with chores. It's hard to convince other parents to prioritize education over marriage.”* These statements reflect how deeply ingrained cultural beliefs about gender roles can affect SGB decisions, particularly in rural areas where traditional values are stronger. These beliefs can lead to the marginalization of girls in education, as their roles are often seen as secondary to the roles of boys.

From a feminist perspective, particularly through the lens of liberal feminism, these findings suggest that socio-cultural beliefs act as a barrier to achieving gender equality in education. Liberal feminists argue that gender equality requires both legal reforms and the dismantling of traditional gender norms, which can perpetuate inequality despite the existence of formal laws or policies (Tong, 2021). In this case, the influence of patriarchal cultural norms within the community contributes to the reluctance of SGB members to fully embrace policies that advocate for gender equality in education.

One education official further explained, *“Some members of the governing body are very traditional. They don't see the value of educating girls beyond primary school. Their mindset is that girls should be prepared for marriage and family life, not careers.”* This statement points to the generational transmission of gender roles within families and communities, which ultimately shapes the governance structures of schools. Despite the South African government's legal commitment to gender equality in education, these socio-cultural beliefs present a significant challenge to implementing and enforcing such policies at the local level.

Liberal feminist theory underscores the importance of both institutional and cultural transformation in achieving true gender equality. In the context of this article, the findings indicate that while SGBs may be legally mandated to support gender equality in education, the persistence of socio-cultural beliefs undermines their capacity to enact meaningful change. The views expressed by participants show that without challenging these cultural norms, gender equity in education will remain elusive, as these beliefs limit the scope of action within the governance structures of schools.

Socio-cultural beliefs play a critical role in shaping the decisions of SGBs regarding gender equality in education. These beliefs often conflict with the legal frameworks intended to promote gender equity, as evidenced by the reluctance of

SGB members to fully support girls' education. To address these challenges, the article highlights the need for comprehensive training programmes for SGB members, as well as community engagement initiatives aimed at transforming harmful cultural norms that perpetuate gender inequality in education. One SGB member emphasised, *"We need to change the way we think about girls. If we don't, we won't see any progress in their education."* This sentiment underscores the urgency of challenging the socio-cultural beliefs that hinder gender equality in education and emphasises the importance of shifting societal attitudes to ensure that all children, regardless of gender, have equal opportunities to succeed.

Theme 3: Positive deviance in SGBs successfully promoting gender equity

A noteworthy finding of this article was the emergence of positive deviance, where certain School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in rural schools were able to successfully promote gender equity despite the widespread challenges faced by others. These SGBs demonstrated how, even within the constraints of limited resources and knowledge, proactive efforts and commitment to gender equality could lead to tangible improvements in girls' educational experiences. This theme highlights examples of SGBs that, through innovative and adaptive practices, were able to challenge traditional gender norms and improve educational access and outcomes for girls.

One participant, a teacher from a rural school, shared, *"Even though we don't have all the resources we need, we have made efforts to involve parents more in discussions about the importance of educating girls. This has really helped change attitudes within the community."* Another SGB member noted, *"We have tried to create a gender-sensitive school environment by encouraging girls to take part in leadership roles and extracurricular activities, even though our budget is very limited."* These statements reflect the resilience and resourcefulness of certain SGBs in navigating the socio-cultural and insti-

tutional barriers to gender equality. Their initiatives demonstrate that positive changes can occur even without formal training or abundant resources, provided there is a shared commitment to challenging gender inequalities.

Liberal feminist theory, particularly its focus on the importance of legal and institutional reforms to guarantee equal opportunities, provides a framework for understanding how these SGBs were able to create such positive outcomes. According to liberal feminist scholars, achieving gender equality requires more than just policy implementation, it requires a culture of inclusion that is fostered through institutional reforms and grassroots efforts (Gillian, 2019). The success stories identified in this article highlight how, in some cases, SGBs can overcome structural limitations and positively influence the school environment by making gender equality a priority.

While these examples of positive deviance are promising, they also highlight the disparities between SGBs that are able to promote gender equity and those that are not. As one education official reflected, *"It's frustrating that some schools are doing well, but others are still struggling to understand the importance of gender equality. It shows that we need a more systematic approach to ensure all schools can make progress."* This comment points to the inconsistency in how gender equity is being addressed at the school level, which can perpetuate inequalities within the broader education system.

Liberal feminists argue that institutional reforms must go hand-in-hand with local efforts to challenge gender stereotypes and promote equal opportunities for all (Ridgeway, 2020). In the case of the SGBs that successfully promoted gender equity, these local efforts were essential in creating a more inclusive educational environment. These positive deviant practices demonstrate the potential for institutional reforms to be more effectively implemented when there is both a top-down policy framework and a bottom-up commitment to change.

The instances of positive deviance identified in

this article reveal that, despite challenges, some

SGBs have been able to successfully promote gender equity in education. These successes are not widespread and are dependent on the initiative, commitment, and resourcefulness of the individuals involved. As one teacher summarized, *“It’s about being creative and making the most of what we have. But we need more support and training so that every school can do this.”* This reinforces the need for a more structured and consistent approach to ensuring gender equity across all schools, supported by targeted training and resources for SGBs to bridge the gap between policy and practice.

Theme 4: Community-school collaboration challenges and opportunities

One of the critical themes emerging from this article is the complex relationship between schools and their surrounding communities, which significantly impacts efforts to promote gender equity in education. While community involvement is widely regarded as essential for the success of educational policies, the findings indicate that both challenges and opportunities exist in fostering effective community-school collaboration. These dynamics are particularly relevant in rural areas, where deeply entrenched socio-cultural norms often influence educational practices and policies.

Participants highlighted that community support for gender equity in education was often limited due to traditional gender roles and societal expectations that prioritize male education over female education. As one SGB member explained, *“In our community, many people still believe that educating boys is more important than educating girls. It’s hard to change that mentality, especially when parents are not fully on board with the idea of girls attending school regularly.”* This sentiment reflects the socio-cultural barriers to educational equity that can hinder efforts to involve the broader community in gender-sensitive initiatives.

Despite these challenges, there were also instances of positive community involvement that

enabled some schools to make strides in gender equity. For example, a teacher shared, *“We’ve had success in organising community events where parents and local leaders discuss the importance of education for girls. It’s a slow process, but we’ve seen some changes in attitudes.”* This reflects the potential for community-school collaboration to positively influence gender equity, especially when there is targeted effort to engage with community leaders and parents.

From a feminist perspective, particularly through the lens of liberal feminism, the community’s role in supporting educational policies is crucial in ensuring that these policies lead to real change. Liberal feminist theory advocates for the dismantling of gender-based barriers through both legal reforms and social change. Feminist scholars argue that while legal frameworks, such as those ensuring gender equity in education, are necessary, they must be complemented by changes in social and cultural attitudes (Pateman, 2021). This article’s findings reveal that while the formal policies may exist, the actual practice of gender equity is heavily influenced by local community norms, which can either support or undermine these policies.

The importance of community-school collaboration in addressing gender inequalities aligns with the argument made by feminist scholars that institutions alone cannot drive change without broader social support (Acker, 2020). The gap between policy implementation and community support underscores the necessity of fostering dialogue and engagement with local communities to shift gendered perceptions and practices. For example, one community leader shared, *“When the school and the community work together, there’s a better understanding of what needs to be done. But it’s difficult when some parents don’t understand the policies or see the value in educating girls.”*

Although these challenges were significant, they also provided opportunities for intervention. By fostering stronger ties between schools and communities, SGBs could potentially mitigate the effects of socio-cultural barriers to gender equity.

As one participant noted, *“We need more support from the government to bridge the gap between the school and the community. If we work together, we can ensure that gender equality is prioritized and upheld in all areas of the community.”*

While community-school collaboration presents both challenges and opportunities, it is clear that the success of gender equity policies depends not

Theme 5: Structural and cultural barriers to gender equity in school governance

This merged theme explores how the interplay of limited policy knowledge, lack of capacity, and deeply embedded socio-cultural norms hinders the effective promotion of gender equity by School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in rural schools. The findings reveal that while national gender equity frameworks exist, the lack of training and support, coupled with patriarchal community attitudes, constrain SGBs' ability to implement these policies effectively. Participants repeatedly emphasised the absence of formal training and clear guidance on applying gender equity policies such as the South African Schools Act (1996) and the National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality (2000). One SGB parent stated, *“We don't have enough resources to hold workshops or get the kind of training we need to understand gender policies. Without that, it's difficult to make a real difference.”* This reflects a structural gap between policy intentions and practical capacity on the ground.

These findings call for a dual strategy: strengthening institutional capacity through targeted training, accessible resources, and clearer policy dissemination, while also engaging in community-based educational initiatives that confront and transform harmful gender norms. As one SGB member aptly put it, *“We need to change the way we think about girls. If we don't, we won't see any progress in their education.”*

The findings highlight both the significant challenges and promising opportunities that exist

only on institutional reforms but also on the active participation of local communities. As one teacher concluded, *“Community involvement is key, but it's going to take time and education to change people's views about the importance of girls' education.”* This statement emphasises the need for sustained efforts to engage communities, ensuring that gender equality in education becomes a shared value at both the institutional and community levels.

Simultaneously, the influence of entrenched cultural norms emerged as a major impediment to gender-responsive governance. A teacher observed, *“In our community, girls are expected to get married at a young age, so it's hard to change the perception that education is important for them.”* These norms, embedded in the community, also shape the attitudes of SGB members themselves. An education official noted, *“Some members of the governing body are very traditional. They don't see the value of educating girls beyond primary school.”*

From the perspective of liberal feminist theory, these barriers illustrate how institutional reforms alone are insufficient without parallel efforts to challenge the cultural foundations of gender inequality (Tong, 2021; Ridgeway, 2020). Structural barriers such as underfunded training programs, lack of policy communication, and poor resourcing converge with normative beliefs to restrict progress. A teacher summarised, *“I know there are policies that say girls should be treated the same as boys, but I don't know exactly what they say or how we are supposed to apply them.”*

within the governance structures of schools and their surrounding communities in promoting gender equity, with the need for comprehensive training, community engagement, and policy awareness being crucial in addressing these barriers, while also showcasing the potential for transformative change through positive deviance and effective collaboration between schools and communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

This article recommends two key actions to address gender equity challenges in rural schools.

First, the Department of Education should integrate gender equity training into School Governing Body (SGB) capacity-building programmes to enhance SGB members' understanding of gender policies and their role in promoting gender equality. Second, schools should implement community engagement programmes to address

socio-cultural barriers to girls' education, focusing on educating parents and local stakeholders about the importance of supporting gender equality. These efforts should be part of broader institutional reforms to create an environment where both schools and communities work together to support girls' educational success.

CONCLUSION

School Governing Bodies (SGBs) play a pivotal role in fostering gender-equitable educational environments within Foundation Phase schools. Their effectiveness in this role is hindered by a lack of knowledge, training, and sufficient community support. By addressing these gaps through targeted training programmes, community engagement, and institutional reforms,

SGBs can be better equipped to promote gender equality and contribute to creating an inclusive educational system. This would significantly advance the goals of equitable education in South Africa's rural areas, ensuring that all children, especially girls, have equal opportunities to succeed.

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.2>**WOMEN INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE OF NO-FEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS AS A VEHICLE FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL CHANGE****Zwane Thembinkosi Trevor***Department of Educational leadership and management (D.E.L.M)**University of Johannesburg**South Africa*zwanetrevor01@gmail.com**Abstract**

This study analyses the experiences and perceptions of women stakeholders involved in school governing bodies (SGBs) of no-fee public schools located in the southwestern townships of Gauteng Province. Their roles as primary caregivers and essential community and family anchors are significant; however, their involvement in school governance is often undervalued, especially in marginalized educational settings. This study is founded on empowerment theory and aims to examine how women navigate structural barriers, such as rising illiteracy rates, neglect in educational institutions, and the expectation to operate in male-dominated settings. The objective is to highlight the potential advantages of integrating their perspectives to improve school systems. A qualitative phenomenological design was employed to collect data through in-depth one-on-one interviews with women principals, current and former SGB members, and women teacher representatives who are part of SGB. A comprehensive analysis of relevant documents, including governance reports and meeting minutes was also done. The findings reveal diverse experiences, highlighting a sense of empowerment from participation, whereas some individuals expressed feelings of exclusion due to high illiteracy rates, tokenistic involvement, and inadequate training opportunities. In all six schools, female stakeholders demonstrated significant contributions to school improvement initiatives through learner support, the establishment and maintenance of home-school connections, community mobilization, and the management of discipline. This indicates that the persistent marginalization of women in SGBs reflects a broader governance failure to recognize the essential care work and informal leadership roles performed by women especially in their homes. It is crucial to promote policies that acknowledge women as active stakeholders in the improvement of educational institutions, rather than merely as beneficiaries. Homes deteriorate without maternal presence, resulting in an atmosphere that is cold and uninviting. Schools that neglect the importance of maternal leadership in governance structures encounter comparable challenges.

Keywords: *education and inclusion; gender equity; maternal leadership; school governance; women empowerment*

Introduction and background to the study

The essential question, “what is a home without a mother?” addresses both the emotional foundation of the household and the considerable socio-cultural significance ascribed to women in nurturing, sustaining life, and offering protection (Bimpson et al, 2022). This inquiry is significant when studied within the context of the educational environment, raising the question: “*What is school governance without a mother?*” This article analyses the suppression of women in the

decision-making frameworks of no-fee public schools in South Africa, focusing on School Governing Bodies (SGBs), and investigates the consequences of this exclusion for the reform of inclusive education. Although the South African Schools Act 86 of 1996 (hereafter referred to as the Schools Act) advocates for democratic participation via SGBs, empirical evidence reveals that individuals, especially from working-class and under-resourced communities, remain underrepresented in key leadership positions and

are frequently marginalized in significant decision-making processes (Duma et al, 2021; Mestry & Naidoo, 2022).

The inclusion of women, while superficially mandated by policy, frequently serves a symbolic rather than a substantive role, reflecting broader patterns of gendered exclusion that persist within post-apartheid institutions (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2020). This study investigates no-fee public schools situated in the southwestern townships (Soweto) of the Gauteng province, an area historically shaped by apartheid-era segregation and persistent structural inequities. Certain educational institutions serve economically disadvantaged communities marked by high illiteracy rates. In these contexts, female-headed households, typically led by mothers or grandmothers, are instrumental in supporting learners, promoting community cohesion, and ensuring household survival (Makunga et al., 2017). Unfortunately, some families are headed by children, making them susceptible to the influence of males who do not commit to supporting their educational progress. Despite this, the role of women in formal school governance remains considerably constrained (Dhlamini, 2023). This research aims to examine the perceptions and lived experiences of female stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and principals, involved in or having experiences with the governance of no-fee public schools. The objective is to not only emphasize their exclusion but also to consider their potential as catalysts for inclusive educational change, which can enhance school improvement when backed by participatory frameworks, suitable training, and institutional acknowledgment. The governance of schools in post-apartheid South Africa is exemplified by democratic participation, equity, and accountability (RSA, 1996). SGBs were established to delegate authority, promote community engagement, and ensure that educational institutions meet the specific needs of their local contexts. Parents, as essential stakeholders in SGB, are en-

couraged to take an active role in promoting leadership accountability, shaping the school's vision, and ensuring equitable resource distribution (Mestry, 2018).

Being a democratic and open participant involves more than just occupying a position within the SGB executive; it also requires the confidence, capacity, and support from the school to effectively influence decision-making (Mohapi & Chombo, 2021). Mncube and Harber (2018) note that many SGBs in township schools face structural imbalances, with male individuals primarily influencing budgetary and policy decisions, while women are assigned to marginal tasks. The situation is worsened by high illiteracy rates, language barriers, insufficient training, and the maternal responsibilities taken on in their homes (Mohlakwana, 2013). Consequently, they are unable to perform effectively in their roles within the SGB, which ultimately impedes their capacity to exhibit the professional expertise anticipated of them (Sethlodi, 2020). Thus, the gap between policy intentions and the practices observed in public schools is apparent. Women, typically the first to identify and address the needs of learners because of their caregiving roles, are often excluded from strategic decision-making processes where their insights could greatly enhance the response to these needs (Basson & Mestry, 2019).

The marginalization of women in school governance hinders the separation from broader patriarchal frameworks that depict women as supporters rather than leaders. Research indicates that in numerous South African communities, school governance is predominantly linked to male figures, while women are often discouraged from voicing their opinions or asserting themselves in meetings (Mosoge & Mataboge, 2021). Women's contributions are frequently disregarded when they are given the chance to express themselves, regardless of their intrinsic value and importance, especially in instances where they lack formal education or knowledge of standard

professional language (Dhlamini, 2023). This study demonstrates the utility of the concept of “*institutionalised patriarchy*” in understanding the reproduction of gendered power dynamics within seemingly neutral governance structures (Gouws, 2020).

The executives of SGBs may demonstrate gender balance due to policies promoting such representation; however, the internal cultures within these structures often reflect observable inequalities present in the broader society (Moodly & Toni, 2019). As a result, women's voices are often disregarded and confined to roles associated with traditional domestic duties, such as childcare, cleaning, and catering. In specific contexts, women's roles are linked to domestic responsibilities and childbearing (Potokri, 2011). This study recognizes the constraints of formal inclusion when genuine and observable empowerment is lacking. A blurred representation does not effectively translate into meaningful influence, especially when participation is hindered by insufficient support, lack of institutional responsiveness, and inadequate recognition. Consequently, empowerment theory is employed to investigate whether women's participation in leadership enhances both individual and collective agency, or if it is obstructed by enduring social and institutional barriers (Kabeer, 1999; Stromquist, 2015).

In the global context, there is growing acknowledgment that inclusive governance is essential for the sustainable improvement of education. Sustainable Development Goal 5, endorsed by over 193 nations, underscores the significance of equitable, inclusive, and participatory systems in education, gender equality, and particularly women's empowerment (UNESCO, 2023). In the South African educational context, schools encounter challenges including governance instability, financial mismanagement, low performance, and insufficient empowerment of their constituents. In contrast, other countries are advancing towards a significant shift in recognizing women and placing them in appropriate roles.

The strategic empowerment of women in governance structures is an underutilized solution (Mohapi & Chombo, 2021). Women provide distinct and frequently overlooked viewpoints in the realm of school governance. They often recognize the needs of learners and systemic issues in their roles as primary caregivers, informal educators, and community leaders. Their essential function in building trust between schools and communities is important, especially in situations where schools face challenges like poverty, resource limitations, and violence (Magadla & Diko, 2019; Van der Voort & Wood, 2021).

Nevertheless, these insights frequently remain hidden within traditional governance metrics and the procedures of policy revision and evaluation. This study examines how women participate in and contribute to SGBs, aiming to present an alternative narrative of leadership and accountability rooted in relational care, community trust, and informal governance. Additionally, it can be posited that maternal leadership and women's relational agency offer important, yet frequently neglected, frameworks for promoting inclusive and transformative school improvement (Odell, 2023). This study addresses notable gaps in the literature and practice of educational governance, while also examining the disconnection between women's lived experiences and their roles in school governance structures. It is crucial to critically explore traditional views on educational leadership and to investigate how schools can redefine strategies that empower women instead of marginalizing them within the central framework of school communities.

Thus, the metaphorical expressions “*What is a home without a mother?*” and “*What is school governance with a mother?*” prompts readers to reflect on the symbolic loss linked to gendered exclusion and the structural shortcomings that undermine the effectiveness of educational institutions. Schools that exclude women from governance violate gender equity principles and undermine their potential for resilience, care, and community-based innovation (Alves, 2022).

This article aims to portray women not merely as victims of patriarchal norms or passive participants, but as active stakeholders in transformation. Their inclusion in governance structures is essential for both democratic integrity and developmental progress (Milazzo & Goldstein, 2019). The objective is to create a comprehensive framework for school governance that is inclusive, based on the authentic experiences of individuals frequently disregarded from formal authority, and promotes empowerment.

Aim and objectives of the study

Aim of the study

This study aims to examine the dynamics, challenges, and opportunities influencing women's involvement in the governance of no-fee public schools, highlighting their capacity to foster inclusive and transformative educational leadership.

Objectives of the study

- To examine the perceptions and lived experiences of women stakeholders involved in the governance of no-fee public schools.
- To study the leadership roles and distinct contributions of women in advancing inclusive and effective school governance within under-resourced public schools.

Main research question and sub-research questions

Main research question

What are the dynamics, challenges, and opportunities that influence women's involvement in the governance of no-fee public schools, and how does their participation contribute to commendable educational inclusiveness and transformation?

Sub-research questions

1. What are the perceptions and experiences of women stakeholders involved in the governance of no-fee public schools?
2. What are the leadership roles and unique contributions of women in school governance in promoting inclusiveness and effective governance in under-resourced public schools?

Literature Review: Women participation in school governance as catalyst for inclusive education.

This literature review is organized around five key lenses: (1) the depiction of women and their participation in school governance, (2) the disjunction in women representation in school governance in other African counties (3) gendered power relations and patriarchal systems within educational environments, (4) informal leadership roles and contributions of women to school improvement and (5) Empowering women through capacity building and training in the realm of school governance. These themes constituted an important backdrop for the empirical exploration of the experiences of women in no-fee public schools, particularly in under-resourced areas.

The depiction of women and their involvement in educational governance

The formal participation of women in educational decision-making processes is a major theme in post-apartheid education debate (Mbukanma, 2021). The Schools Act established SGBs to institutionalize participation and involve parents, educators, non-teaching staff, and students in this major change. Despite these democratic ideals, women are underrepresented in SGBs, especially in places where socio-cultural norms determine school governance eligibility (Mncube & Harber, 2018; Duma et al, 2021). Many studies, like Basson and Mestry (2019) and Mestry and Naidoo (2022), show that women are underrepresented in SGB executive

positions and often have minimal roles. These include feeding system supervision, learner discipline, and event coordination, which extend democratic labour. These responsibilities are important in school operations, but they do not give them strategic authority or decision-making power (Davids, 2022).

This reflects what Fraser (2009) describes as the “misrecognition” of women's ability to participate actively in the public sphere, where their labour is visible yet undervalued. In the context of international landscapes, similar patterns are evident, where in low to middle-income countries, the representation of women in school governance tends to remain tokenistic unless it is supported by empowerment, the activation of voice, and the authority to make decisions. In the context of South African education, the disparity between policy discourse and actual experiences is particularly evident in no-fee schools, where gender inequality is exacerbated by spatial marginalization and visible levels of poverty (Sayed et al, 2020).

The disjunction in women representation in school governance in other African counties

The South African Schools Act 108 of 1996 mandates parental involvement in SGBs; yet, the execution of these provisions frequently reveals entrenched gender disparities, a concern not exclusive to South Africa. In Kenya, despite the implementation of gender quotas in school management boards, existing studies consistently indicate male dominance in governance cultures, primarily due to socio-cultural norms and ineffective enforcement mechanisms (Wanjala & Simiyi, 2021). Similarly, in Ghana, legal frameworks requiring women's participation in school governance have had no impact on challenging informal power hierarchies that frequently marginalize women from significant involvement (Agyeman & Osei-Poku, 2020).

These examples undoubtedly illustrate a wider trend in Africa, where policy documents articulate progressive commitments, yet practices are

shaped by ongoing structural and cultural constraints; consequently, they mirror the difficulties faced by numerous countries in achieving an equitable balance between policy and practice. In South Africa, this is evidenced by the dichotomy between formal equality and substantive empowerment, particularly in contexts characterized by low literacy levels and the intersection of patriarchal norms and poverty (Dladla, 2020). Consequently, in the absence of context-specific interventions such as gender-responsive training, community responsiveness, and frameworks for intersectional responsibility, policy ambitions are likely to remain predominantly metaphorical.

Gendered power relations and patriarchal systems in educational contexts.

Social context and gendered power dynamics determine school governance. The institutionalization of male domination, known as patriarchy, is firmly ingrained in school administration and governance, often marginalizing women (Dhlamini, 2023; Mosoge & Mataboge, 2021). Women in formal SGB positions often endure soft oppression, including silencing, devaluation, and relegation. Van der Westhuizen et al. (2020) and Mahlangu (2023) found that male School SGB members often lead talks and set agenda priorities. Women's recommendations are often ignored or deflected, and long held cultural views about their responsibilities undercut their confidence.

The dynamics outlined contribute to Gouws' (2020) characterization of institutional patriarchy, where policies appear gender-neutral but are implemented in ways that reinforce and sustain male privilege. Furthermore, this intersectionality elucidates the ways in which racism, language, class, and educational attainment intersect with gender, influencing women's participation in SGBs (Crenshaw, 1991; Van der Westhuizen et al., 2020). Women from working-class backgrounds with low literacy levels encounter structural disadvantages and may also internalize feel-

ings of inferiority. This may lead to self-censorship and withdrawal from the governance process. This illustrates the need for a thorough revaluation of the true meaning and scope of inclusive governance.

The role of informal leadership and its impact on enhancing school improvement for women

A substantial body of literature critiques the relegation of women in formal governance structures, while increasingly recognizing the essential informal leadership roles women play in school development (Alves, 2022). These roles frequently go unrecognized in governance reports; however, they are essential to the functioning and wellbeing of school communities, especially in no-fee public schools where resources are scarce, and state support is unreliable. Research by Magadla and Diko (2019) and Mahlangu (2023) highlights how women leverage community networks to obtain funding, support educators, advocate for learner safety, and mediate conflicts between parents and schools. In many instances, these women take on the role of community leaders, employing their relational knowledge to address issues affecting the formal school governance structure that are frequently overlooked.

This indicates that the current framework for effective governance is inadequate, overlooking the significance of care work, community mobilization, and emotional labour. This type of leadership diminishes the contributions of women parents in advancing communal school improvement. Gouws (2020) contend that reinterpreting leadership from a feminist perspective requires recognizing informal contributions as legitimate and crucial. This corresponds with the broader movement supporting transformative educational leadership, which encourages responsive, inclusive, and relational methods for school reform. Van der Voort and Wood (2021) assert that sustainable school transformation in marginalized communities can be realized through governance structures that effectively utilize the

complete range of leadership.

This literature highlights that women's participation in school governance occurs at the intersection of policy, culture, and power. While legislation has created a framework for formal inclusion, the notion of meaningful participation continues to be unclear for many women in no-fee public schools (Dhakal, 2021).

Empowering women through capacity building and training in the realm of school governance

Comparable studies reveal a notable deficiency in training and support for women promoted to SGB positions, especially in no-fee public schools (Basson & Mestry, 2019; Mohapi & Chombo, 2021; Setlhodi, 2020). Women in influential positions frequently possess a limited comprehension of their rights, roles, and responsibilities, along with the overarching financial and legal framework that underpins school governance. Despite the implementation of the capacity-building initiative, women's participation remains passive and procedural. The Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2019) indicates a need for workshops to orient newly elected members. These workshops are predominantly delivered in a foreign language for parents, frequently at inconvenient times and locations, and lack adequate follow-up or contextual adaptation. As a result, many women inform feeling overwhelmed and sidelined in financial discussions, especially in section 21 schools, where financial independence is assigned to the school level (Cole, 2022).

Nuraini et al (2024) argue that capacity building should go beyond technical skills to include transformational aspects that enable women to cultivate confidence, leadership identity, and critical consciousness. Empowerment functions as both a process and an outcome, requiring sustained commitment, mentorship, and support from diverse stakeholders within the educational system and organized civil society. Moreover,

the current literature underscores the importance of developing models that are attuned to gender, specifically designed to reflect the experiences of women in marginalized communities and those living in poverty (Maïtrot et al, 2021). Models should incorporate strategies to tackle literacy barriers, time constraints, cultural dynamics, and other factors that disproportionately affect women balancing formal governance roles with domestic responsibilities (Van der Voort & Wood, 2021).

This literature review identifies several interconnected barriers, including cultural patriarchy, capacity deficits, structural inequality, and the suppression of informal leadership, which women primarily demonstrate within their households. Furthermore, it highlights the significant and frequently underappreciated roles that women play in improving educational institutions and supporting the welfare of learners. For governance to achieve true inclusivity and transformation, it must go beyond procedural representation and focus on substantive empowerment, grounded in recognition, training, and structured support (Rubio-Marín, 2022). This study contributes to the project by emphasizing women's voices and experiences, identifying the barriers they face and the potential they hold for fostering inclusive educational change.

Theoretical framework: *Empowerment theory*

This research is based on empowerment theory, providing insights into the relational, systemic, and psychological aspects of women's participation in school governance. Empowerment theory, as defined by Kabeer (1999), frames empowerment as the improvement and deeper comprehension of assessing an individual's ability to make strategic life choices in situations where perceived power was formerly limited. Empowerment theory includes the allocation of resources, the development of agency, and the acknowledgment of achievements that alter an individual's social status (Joseph, 2020). In the context of school governance, empowerment extends beyond simply occupying a role within the SGB. It

involves the enhancement of capacity, the fostering of confidence, and the achievement of institutional recognition essential for influencing decisions that affect school improvement.

Empowerment theory highlights the importance of improving individual capacities in conjunction with the alteration of institutional frameworks. Stromquist (2015) discusses this framework, highlighting four dimensions of empowerment in education: psychological, economic, political, and cognitive development. The interdependence of these dimensions is essential for empowering women in marginalized communities to become effective leaders in governance structures (Emon & Nipa, 2024). The application of empowerment theory allows for a detailed analysis of the extent to which women's participation in SGBs leads to significant change or simply reinforces tokenistic involvement (Mestry & Naidoo, 2022). Empowerment theory underscores the significance of capacity-building and the deconstruction of institutional patriarchy to attain inclusive governance and relational trust (Mohapi & Chombo, 2021).

Research Methodology

Research design: This study employed a qualitative research design, informed by a phenomenological framework. This study aimed to examine the perceptions and experiences of women involved in the governance of no-fee public schools in Soweto. A phenomenological approach was deemed suitable as it enabled researchers to investigate women's interpretations of their lived experiences in SGBs and the importance they ascribe to their roles in educational governance (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Sampling techniques: Purposeful sampling was applied to select participants who were particularly well-suited to provide detailed and relevant data aligned with the research objectives. Sixteen participants were intentionally chosen from two primary and two secondary schools. The sample comprised four school principals, four teacher representatives on the SGB panel, four current

SGB parents involved in school governance, and four former SGB parents who were all women, with measures taken to ensure diversity in roles and literacy levels. The number was considered adequate as thematic saturation was achieved. No new codes or insights emerged after a substantial number of interviews, and subsequent responses corresponded to the already established patterns. The selection adhered to the principles of information-rich cases derived from participants with direct experiences in school governance and gendered dynamics within decision-making processes. The sample's diversity facilitated a comprehensive understanding of women's governance experiences by incorporating multiple stakeholders (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Data collection: involved the use of semi-structured interviews in conjunction with document analysis. The interviews adhered to a structured protocol featuring open-ended questions designed to investigate experiences, perceptions, challenges, and contributions associated with empowerment in the realm of school governance. The documents reviewed included school policies and the minutes from the SGB meetings. The incorporation of these elements enabled data triangulation, enhancing the depth and credibility of the findings (Bowen, 2009).

Ethical consideration: ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Johannesburg and the ethics committee. Approval was obtained from the relevant division within the GDE that oversees the authorization of research activities in public ordinary schools. Participants were provided with informed consent forms and guaranteed confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to

withdraw from the study at any time without facing repercussions. Pseudonyms were utilized to maintain individual confidentiality (BERA, 2018).

Data Analysis: Thematic analysis was utilized to interpret the data effectively. Transcripts were subjected to multiple readings to identify recurring patterns, which were then coded and categorized into themes and sub-themes. Responses from participants were quoted directly to accurately represent their perspectives. Themes were systematically refined through iterative comparison and aligned with the empowerment theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Trustworthiness of the study: The study's trustworthiness was established by following the criteria outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which encompass credibility, transferability, conformability, and dependability, thus ensuring its validity. Credibility was established via member checking to ensure triangulation. The research context was described in detail to enhance transferability. Confirmability was attained by maintaining a reflective journal that documented essential notes during the research process, while dependability was established through comprehensive descriptions of the research context (Shenton, 2004).

Limitations: The study offers significant insights; however, its findings are limited by a particular geographic and socio-economic context, specifically Soweto, Gauteng. The findings may not be generalizable to all no-fee schools across South Africa. The research relied on data collected for a specific purpose, which may be influenced by social desirability bias (Maxwell, 2013).

Participants

The study involved 16 participants from whom data was collected. The subsequent table analyses the composition of participants in greater detail

.

Table 1: Participants table and codes

No	Occupation/Post	Code	Gender	Age	Qualification	School level	Experience
1	Principal	PSCH-A	Female	56	ACE	Secondary	15
2	Educator	SGB-A	Female	35	B.Ed (Hons)	Secondary	9
3	Parent	CSG-A	Female	48	B.A (logistics)	Secondary	4
4	Parent	FSG-A	Female	43	No formal	Secondary	5
5	Principal	PSCH-B	Female	51	Bed (Hons)	Primary	13
6	Educator	SGB-B	Female	43	B.Ed (Hons)	Primary	12
7	Parent	CSG-B	Female	54	Matric	Primary	5
8	Parent	FSG-B	Female	46	No Formal	Primary	4
9	Principal	PSCH-C	Female	48	B.Ed (Masters)	Secondary	14
10	Educator	SGB-C	Female	54	B.Ed	Secondary	16
11	Parent	CSG-C	Female	48	Matric	Secondary	4
12	Parent	FSG-C	Female	49	No formal	Secondary	3
13	Principal	PSCH-D	Female	42	Advanced Diploma	Primary	10
14	Educator	SGB-D	Female	29	B.Ed.	Primary	5
15	Parent	CSG-D	Female	57	No formal	Primary	5
16	Parent	FSG-D	Female	52	No formal	Primary	4

Discussion of findings

Table 2 shows the study's main findings arranged into four themes. Kabeer (1999)'s empowerment theory provides a framework for this examination of women SGB stakeholders' experiences

and perceptions as educational inclusion catalysts.

Table 2: Themes for the study

Themes
1. The procedural participation of women, tokenism, gatekeeping, and the suppression of women's voices in decision-making
2. The increased illiteracy levels among parents resulting from a lack of training, language barriers, and exclusion from financial management
3. The role of women as primary caregivers and advocates for nurturing children's lives.
4. Empowerment strategies aimed at including women in school governance

Theme 1: The procedural participation of women, tokenism, gatekeeping, and the suppression of women's voices in decision-making

The Schools Act mandates democratic governance and gender inclusivity in school decision-making, but women's involvement in SGB is often procedural and symbolic rather than meaningful and transformative (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2020; Mestry & Naidoo, 2022). This theme confirms findings in existing literature that women are disregarded in strategic decision-making. It shows that governance tasks are generally reduced to childbearing, cleaning, and punishment monitoring (Basson & Mestry, 2019; Davids, 2022). Through partial dominance, institutions engage in both subtle and overt gatekeeping, resulting in a situation where certain individuals dominate executive positions and control crucial decision-making processes, particularly in finance and policy implementation (Gouws, 2020; Mosoge & Mataboge, 2021).

Despite this, women are often sidelined, and their contributions are met with suspicion and even dismissal. This suppression undermined confidence and restricted their capacity to engage fully in leadership roles. The CSG-A highlighted that *"Whenever we express concerns, the men do not take us seriously until they voice the same concern... our communities have not recognized our role as significant in school governance."* This unequal treatment is evident not only in perception but also in the active exclusion of women from significant decision-making processes. Another participant articulated the antagonism present during SGB meetings, stating, *"It ends up being a fight... especially men not wanting to accept our (women) views... sometimes you would be scared to raise a valid point because you fear conflict."* [CSG-A]. This confirms that empowerment does not automatically lead to empowerment when disparities in power continue to exist. Even when participating in leadership forums, women must navigate an environment that penalizes assertiveness and discourages dissent. The principal of School D articulates her frustrations and sadness. *"The SGB are selecting individuals*

who lack the necessary qualifications... the male demographic predominantly holds power... especially with external pressures from district officials... Therefore, it is challenging to discuss effective governance when individuals are not given the authority to express and execute their own perspectives. "The testimonies further indicate that women are frequently confined to operational roles, with restricted participation in discussions regarding school improvement or curriculum development.

This symbolic anticipation was highlighted the limited role of women in school development, where a teacher in school governance remarked, *"The woman that is active there in the school for some reason is the treasurer... she will be there... if they must release money... but... in terms of enhancing teaching and learning... they are not there."* [CSG-B]. Even with the presence of women in school governance, their decision-making capacity is often sidelined, and major decisions are frequently made without their input. The principal of school B remarked, *"As time has progressed... women have been side-lined... major decisions are made by individuals... particularly men."* [PSCH-B]. Power dynamics within SGB persist, leading to the dismissal and overshadowing of women's contributions. A parent encapsulated this sentiment by stating, *"What women express is often disregarded and lacks significance... men seek to dominate us... they ultimately prevail because they assert that they cannot be instructed by a woman."* [FSG-B]. These insights highlight the critiques of procedural democracy, where women's involvement is merely mandated rather than actualized (Potokri, 2011). Thus, this study illustrates how women are represented as individuals who occupy certain spaces yet lack influence in decision-making processes. There appears to be an institutional patriarchy that perpetuates women's participation in the gender hierarchy under the premise of democratic inclusion (Gouws, 2020; Mahlangu,

2023).

Theme 2: The increased illiteracy levels among parents resulting from a lack of training, language barriers, and exclusion from financial management.

High illiteracy, lack of training, and language hurdles strengthen women's structural exclusion from no-fee public school management. The Schools Act promotes democratic representation and inclusive involvement in SGB, however women in under-resourced schools and communities experience the opposite (Mohlakwana, 2013; Mncube & Harber, 2018). Participants highlighted that women are routinely sidelined from important decisions, especially in the usage of school finances, despite their formal duties. Basic governance knowledge, low literacy, and unfamiliarity with legal and policy frameworks restrict their engagement (DBE, 2019; Maïtrot et al., 2021).

The PSCH-C highlighted the difficulty of anticipating educational leadership from women without committing to their capacity development, stating, *"You don't just take me from raising children and place me into a situation that demands high-level thinking..."* Black parents often lack a comprehensive understanding of the governance structures within educational institutions. The gap between policy intentions and their implementation is exacerbated by the absence of contextualized, ongoing training. Workshops are frequently presented in formats and official languages that are not accessible to low-literacy participants, thereby perpetuating exclusion (DBE, 2019; Cole, 2022). In alignment with this perspective, the respondent articulated, *"Our school SGBs are not even provided with that training, nor are they exposed to those policies... this is why we observe all the conflicts and drama surrounding SGBs." It is essential for individuals to receive proper education. Policies should be simplified and deconstructed rather than presented in extensive documents, as many may not fully grasp the scope of their responsibilities"*

[PSCH-C]. The lack of training does not diminish women's confidence; rather, it exacerbates disengagement, as women struggle to articulate the very instruments they are expected to implement. The CSG-A stated, *"Women lack awareness of policy... there are limited meetings where we convene to discuss the policy framework, enhance the school, and advance its progress."* These narratives support the assertions made by empowerment theorists, indicating that participation building is frequently unnecessary and unsustainable in many instances (Mohapi & Chombo, 2021; Nuraini et al., 2024).

In SGB, the presence of women is primarily physical, as their roles are largely confined to that of passive observers, with formal inclusion in SGB executives being notably absent. The PSCH-B noted that *"This indicates that their educational background is not particularly strong... they can be easily distracted from the fundamental purpose of their presence at the school."* The exclusion of women becomes increasingly evident when adherence to policy and financial accountability are both mandated. Participants expressed apprehensions regarding the challenges women encounter in maneuvering through these environments, attributed to a lack of educational knowledge. *"It appears that their lack of education may hinder their ability to comply with policies, which could present challenges."* [CSG-B]. Furthermore, the impact of COVID-19 has exacerbated the disparities in access to training opportunities. Many schools transitioned to online and non-interactive training sessions, and participants noted that *"The pandemic of COVID... no one-on-one or face-to-face training... the understanding... is not established."* [PSCH-B]. Additionally, the former school governor of School B stated, *"We have not been receiving training... and they are attributing this to COVID-19"* [FSG-B]. This underscores that the systematic exclusion is not merely a consequence of women's lack of education, but also a result of institutional neglect in delivering accessible and inclusive governance support. Despite the presence of willingness, there exists a

lack of substantial training and support mechanisms, which hinders full and unrestricted engagement in financial governance (Mncube & Harber, 2018; Maïtrot et al., 2021).

Theme 3: The role of women as primary caregivers and advocates for nurturing children's lives.

Despite being disregarded in official governance frameworks, women at no-fee public schools typically play key informal leadership roles that improve school community function and growth. These contributions, which are not reflected in governance measurements and performance indicators, reflect a relational leadership style based on caring, emotional labour, and group responsibility (Alves, 2022; Odell, 2023). In underprivileged Soweto, where female-headed households are common, women have broader obligations. They advocate for learner well-being, connecting educational institutions, communities, and informal stakeholders who often lack support during vital moments. These responsibilities are often overlooked in policy and governance conversations, yet they help vulnerable school communities survive.

The concept of leadership through care is clearly illustrated in the contributions of participants, such as the principal of School A, who remarked, *“Most households in our country are run by women... they understand the power that they must change and influence education.”* [PSCH-A]. In addition to their roles as influential figures within the household, their impact does not automatically translate into the domains of formal governance. As another participant noted, *“They are successfully managing households and nurturing children... however, in the realm of governance, the circumstances are markedly different.”* [PSCH-A]. This highlights the wider disconnect between women's informal leadership within communities and their marginalization in school decision-making, a tension influenced by patriarchal norms (Gouws, 2020). Nonetheless, women persist in advancing the school improve-

ment agenda by demonstrating a strong commitment to shared objectives and their capacity to advocate for enhanced stakeholder engagement. The concept of maternal leadership is emphasized in a way that promotes school identity, coherence, and emotional safety. However, their contributions are often limited to logistical functions or transactional involvement. One participant remarked, *“They perceive it as merely a job... if they are required to allocate funds, then they are present... without contributing to the enhancement of teaching and learning.”* [CSG-B]. The decrease in women's contributions to monetary or procedural tasks undermines their commitment to learner development, cultural continuity, and social cohesion. Even within a highly patriarchal context, the presence of women remains both symbolic and socially influential. The CSG-C noted that *“In African cultures... men are regarded as the head of the family... if you are a woman... you tend to be marginalized... only when a woman occupies an executive position can her influence be recognized.”* The ongoing disparity between informal leadership and formal governance highlights the shortcomings within educational institutions in acknowledging and appreciating diverse leadership models. According to Van der Voort and Wood (2021), the sustainability of school improvement in marginalized communities' hinges on the comprehensive integration of community contributions. In particular, the roles of women, along with their relational agency, emotional labour, and caregiving, are often overlooked yet represent valuable resources for educational transformation.

Theme 4: Empowerment strategies aimed at including women in school governance

Empowerment theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the evolution of women's participation in school governance, shifting from tokenism to transformative leadership. Kabeer (1999) and Stromquist (2015) assert that genuine empowerment necessitates more than merely providing women with seats at the governance table; it involves fostering agency

and dismantling the structural barriers that silence women's voices. From this perspective, empowerment should encompass both individual and organizational aspects of transformation. Participants articulated their experiences of empowerment, which were rooted in their lived *experiences of exclusion, suppression, and being undervalued*. For example, PSCH-D stated, *"If women in the SGB can be developed, trained properly, and are provided with a platform, we will remain in that space indefinitely."* It was emphasized that *"Every human being is trainable... even if they are illiterate... when explained in their language, they will comprehend."* These insights highlight the pressing need for a systematic and ongoing approach to development that is both contextually pertinent and readily accessible.

Empowerment should be comprehensive and cultivate the confidence essential for effective leadership within governance frameworks (Mohapi & Chombo, 2021; Emon & Nipa, 2024). These emphasize the possibilities presented by inter-school networks and professional learning committees (PLCs), which exist to promote cross-contextual learning and collaborative capacity building. Engaging with best practices from other schools may provide a valuable alternative to top-down policy training, particularly when such training does not align with the realities faced by under-resourced communities. Empowerment entails democratizing access to information and establishing a policy framework that facilitates women's involvement. Participants conveyed their frustration regarding the inaccessibility of school policies. CSG-A noted that *"Policies ought to be taken and be broken down... they can refer to those things for themselves."* The empowerment of women is closely linked to the development of accessible, language-sensitive resources that not only convey expectations but also enhance interpretive agency. Participants regarded these structural reforms as significant, particularly those that foster collaborative governance and the relationship between the principal and SGBs.

The CSG-D articulated that *"The primary significant role is for governance to comprehend... they are not being endowed with superpowers... they must collaborate with the teachers and learners."* The narratives presented in the literature emphasize that inclusive school governance should progress beyond mere compliance to incorporate relational trust and distributed leadership (Dhakal, 2021; Rubio-Marín, 2022). Furthermore, empowerment indicates that strategies should be developed to be participatory and inclusive, aimed not merely at enhancing numerical representation but also at leveraging the experiential knowledge of women in the decision-making process. Participants similarly reflected on practical empowerment strategies that connect schools with external resources and community networks. The FSG-A noted that *"Public schools have the opportunity to organize sports days... pursue sponsorship... reach out to local businesses... or even inquire with family members about their workplaces."* These strategies illustrate that empowerment transcends mere policy training, encompassing socio-economic mobilization, the cultivation of social capital, and the establishment of community partnerships to improve the functionality of schools.

Conclusion and recommendations

This study examined the intricate experiences of women involved in the governance of no-fee public schools in South Africa, with a focus on Soweto. Women, despite their substantial roles as primary caregivers, informal leaders, and community builders, continue to face structural barriers within formal school governance systems. Factors include restricted access to training, patriarchal norms, and elevated levels of illiteracy. Thus, they provided a robust and rigid analytical framework, highlighting the complex interplay between structural agency and individual agency. Although women hold formal positions, their involvement is frequently symbolic, and their potential to influence school improvement remains underutilized. Findings from analogous studies indicate that genuine empowerment in school governance necessitates not only

policy inclusion but also structural transformation. Women's relational leadership, caregiving skills and ethics, and community advocacy provide significant insights for potential school governance. However, to realize this potential, there must be a shift in policy and practice from mere tokenism to substantive engagement.

Consequently, the subsequent points are presented as recommendations;

1. Governance training programs should be designed and implemented in local languages, specifically tailored for women in under-resourced communities. These should encompass financial literacy, collaborative leadership, and rights education.
2. Schools should translate and deconstruct governance policies into accessible formats for non-literate or semi-literate parents to improve their comprehension of these policies.
3. Schools should collaborate with local women's organizations, particularly in

contexts where cultural norms inhibit women's authority, and integrate caregiving into governance metrics as a legitimate contribution to leadership.

4. School mentorship forums and professional learning committees should be established for women in SGB to exchange best practices and enhance confidence.
5. Policy reviews and accountability should be conducted by GDE through regular sample audits in schools to ensure that SGB compositions promote gender equity beyond quotas and facilitate meaningful participation and influence.

Inclusive school governance must transition from a formal ideal to an actual practice. Schools that acknowledge and enhance leadership potential in women are more effectively equipped to address the developmental, safety, and educational requirements of all leaders. The reimagining of governance structures through empowerment perspectives is both a gender justice imperative and an educational necessity.

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.3>**FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO INEQUALITY AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA: A COMPREHENSIVE POST COVID-19 ANALYSIS.****Dr Juliet C. Kamwendo**

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Centre for Gender and Africa Studies, South Africa.

KamwendoJC@ufs.ac.za**Abstract**

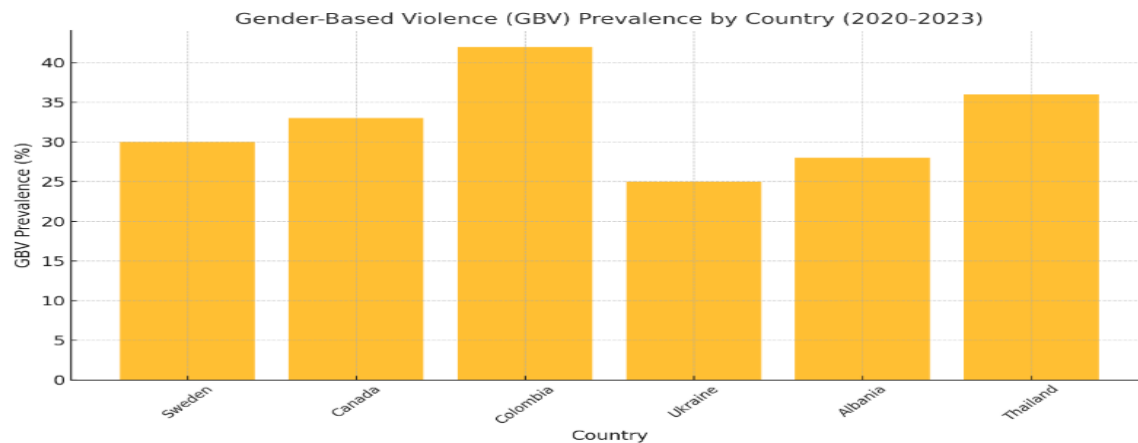
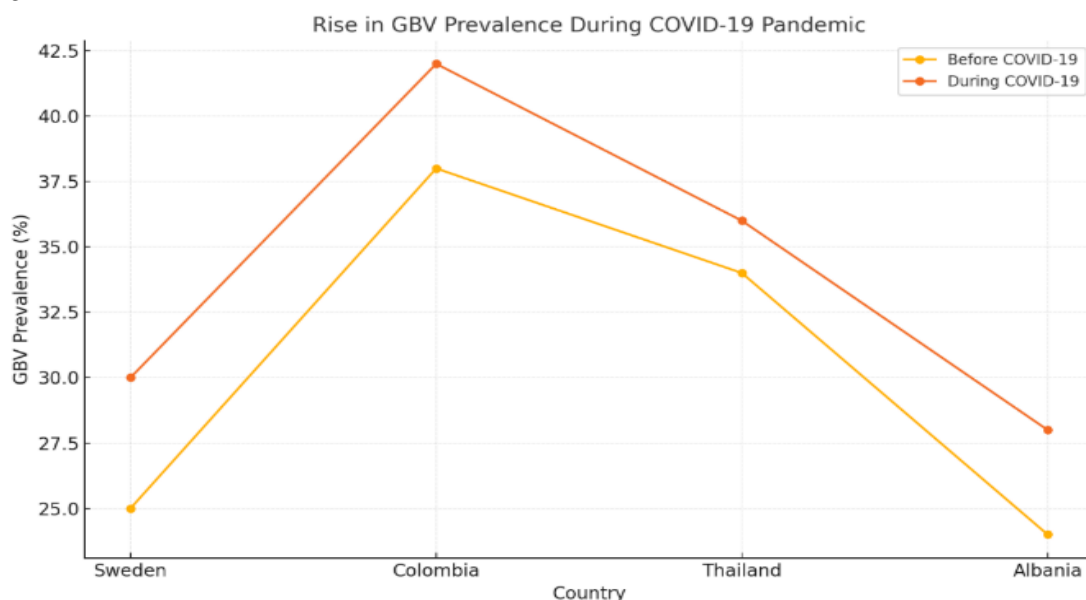
The prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) in South Africa remains a critical challenge that the country is faced with. Recent data highlights that despite interventions, GBV rates continue to rise, particularly in marginalized communities. This mixed model desktop study sought to conduct a post Covid-19 comprehensive analysis to find out the factors contributing to escalation of GBV in South Africa. The findings show the correlation between historical past of South Africa and inequality discrepancies, social-economic challenges that many black people especially black women found themselves, homophobic and hegemonic masculinity tendencies, social normal and women dependence syndrome to be contributing factors to vulnerability of black South Africans. Further, the Covid-19 lockdown and its lockdown exacerbated the situation due to loss of jobs and collapse of businesses since the majority depend on informal businesses. Statistics reported by SAPS in 2020/2021 validate such an increase. This led to frustrations and too many individuals resorting in relieving their frustrations by indulging in alcohol and drug abuse which in turn triggering incidences of GBV in homestead. Tackling GBV in South Africa therefore requires looking beyond the existing human rights articulations but holistic approach while looking at historical legacies, state accountability, repurposing its legislation and inclusiveness where all stakeholders and civil society are involved. The paper also challenges academic researchers to adopt Africanized research methodologies and designs to address the GBV challenges, as well as policy reforms and community-based interventions.

Keywords: *Prevalence, Gender based Violence, Covid-19, South Africa.*

Introduction/Background

Globally, Gender-based violence and Femicide (GBVF) remains a multifaceted social issue in the 21st century. Recent global data from the United Nations shows that between 2020 and 2023, many countries around the global face challenges in addressing this pervasive issue. The magnitude and impact of GBV are disproportionately prevalent in

many countries around the world even those which are considered the shining examples. While men as well as the LGBTQI+ community are also at risk in terms of GBV, a large share of GBV is experienced by women at the hands of men—be it a man or someone they know. Chart 1 & 2 below shows some of the random samples of GBV beyond Africa and how Covid-19 pandemic contributed to high levels of incidences.

Chart 1: Random sample of GBV incidents beyond Africa**Chart 2**

The two charts above illustrate the prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) in countries such as Sweden, Canada, Colombia, Ukraine, Albania, and Thailand, as reported between 2020 and 2023. Showing in chart 1 is that Colombia and Thailand have notably higher GBV prevalence rates, while Ukraine and Albania show lower but still significant percentages. According to studies conducted globally, the reasons for spikes in GBV varies from country to country with some of them as sexual violence as a tactic of war and domestic violence especially in conflict areas. While in some countries the reasons are pandemic driven spike. For instance, in Sweden, according to chart 2 illustrations, before Covid-19

pandemic the GBV was at 25% and it rose to 30% during pandemic period. Similarly, in Colombia, the GBV percentage was 38% before pandemic but it rose to 42%; in Thailand it was 34% before pandemic and it hiked to 36% during Covid-19 pandemic; while Albania was 24% before Covid and hiked to 28%. This indicates that Covid-19 pandemic has contributed to the GBV status in countries across the world due to various reasons such as loss of jobs and collapse of business which contributed to social economic frustrations and stresses that many households experience as well as patriarchal social norms. With the movement restrictions, victims were trapped at home with

abusers. While in other countries, conflict and war zones have contributed to GBV prevalence, particularly in countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo and many other were some of

the reasons for the hike. Chart 3 illustrates the GBV status in some of the African countries in Sub-Saharan.

Chart 3: The status of South Africa GBV in relation to other Sub-Saharan countries

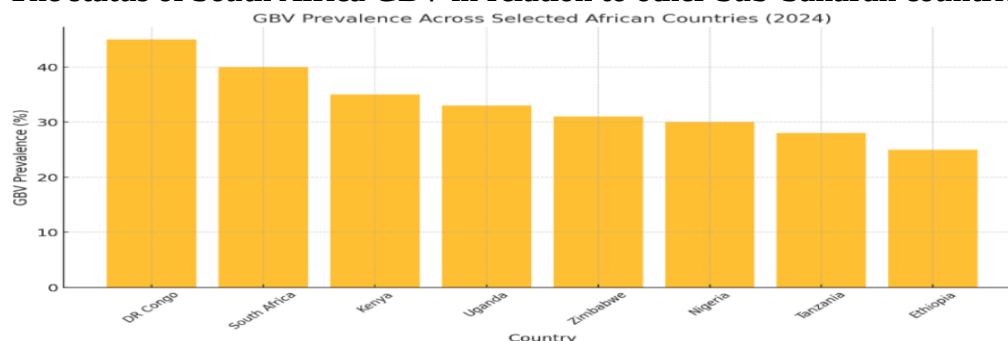


Chart 3 illustrates the prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) across selected African countries, highlighting Democratic Republic of Congo alongside South Africa with the highest prevalence. The chart gives us a clear picture that violence against women is not only limited to one country, region or continent but experienced throughout the world. In Malawi for example, the former Minister of Gender, Patricia Kaliati disclosed in Parliament in 2021 an alarming figure that the country has reported 13,056 of cases in which 1,224 are defilement representing 9.4%; 4051 marital and interpersonal conflicts/violence, 2440 extraordinary abuse perpetrated by men to women. While Zambia police service annual report shows that in 2021 alone the country registered 20,540 GBV cases country wide. Despite the ratification of international treaties and national laws, South Africa continues to have alarming high levels of GBV which were worsened during the Covid-19 national lockdown. GBV is a pervasive issue that transcends socio-economic and cultural boundaries, deeply rooted in systemic inequalities. Gender-based violence does not only causes pain and suffering but also destroys and dehumanizes individuals and families, jeopardizes workplace productivity, erodes national competitiveness, and halts development. The GBV across the global is an indication that GBV is not only an African or a South African

but a global phenomenon. Reports from many research work show that GBV situation was worsened during COVID-19. Similar trends are observed in other Southern Africa countries shown in the chart 1 and 2 and many others. This paper therefore seeks to analyse the current GBV status in South Africa and how Covid-19 has contributed to the hike in statistics as well as possible strategies to mitigate GBV within communities.

Methodology

The paper adopts a mix-model in its design where both qualitative and quantitative data is utilized. The paper adopts desktop approach to source out secondary data which is already in public domain on GBV in South Africa. In this regard, the author conducted a thorough literature review from peer reviewed articles, previous studies, South African Police reports, government departments reports, GBV NGO reports and print media such as Newspapers/articles. The literature review necessitated understanding the current state of knowledge with regard to GBV while identifying gaps existing in situating the current paper.

Theoretical framework

The paper adopts Bronfenbrenner social-ecological framework as seen in Fig 1 to unpack and discuss how various factors some specific to South Africa perpetuate GBV in the community.

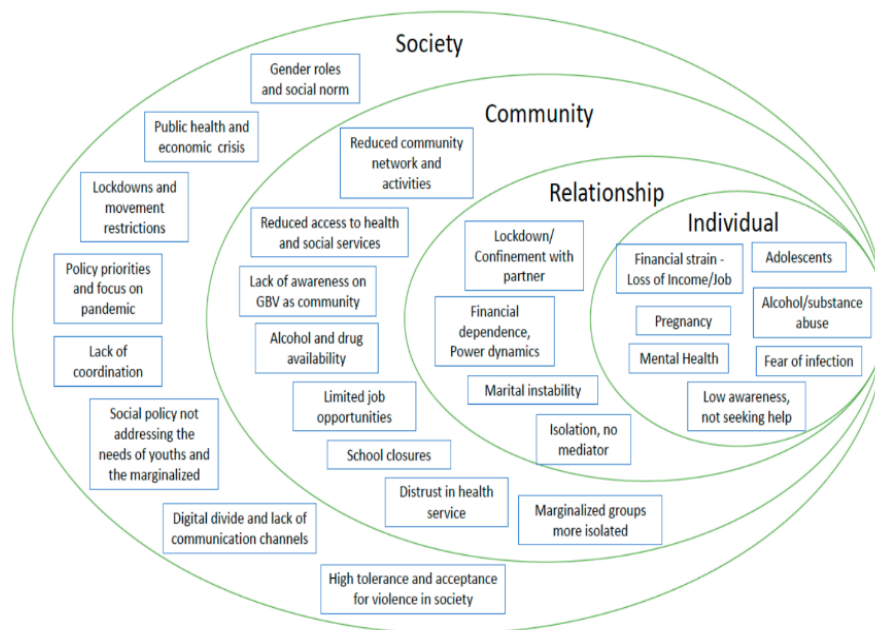


Fig 1: Bronfenbrenner social-ecological framework on some possible factors that perpetuate GBV in society

In addition to Bronfenbrenner framework, Kimberly Crenshaw's intersectionality framework is also used to unpack and describe how identities based on context, gender, class, ethnicity, nationality, and sexual orientation are oppressively and systemically linked in numerous ways to disadvantage and marginalize other groups. The two theories used are in complementary position and they offer a fuller picture of how GBV is shaped, experienced, and perpetuated in South African society. Black woman experiencing GBV, for example, is situated not only within patriarchy but also within other factors as explain by Bronfenbrenner and Kimberley. Bronfenbrenner situate this within the exosystemic and macrosystem, where institutions (e.g., police, health care, schools) societal norms fail to protect or believe survivors. Both Bronfenbrenner and Crenshaw highlight that GBV is not an isolated incident, but a socially embedded and systemically reinforced phenomenon. Bronfenbrenner offers a structural map, while Crenshaw provides a lens for power and identity. Crenshaw, especially in her work on structural intersectionality, shows how legal and social services are often designed for a "universal woman" and fail to accommodate those who sit at multiple margins, such as

poor, Black, immigrant, or LGBTQ+ women. Used together, they support a nuanced, justice-oriented understanding of GBV in South Africa, particularly for marginalized populations. While men and white women may encounter gender-based violence, South African black women encounter GBV more than other.

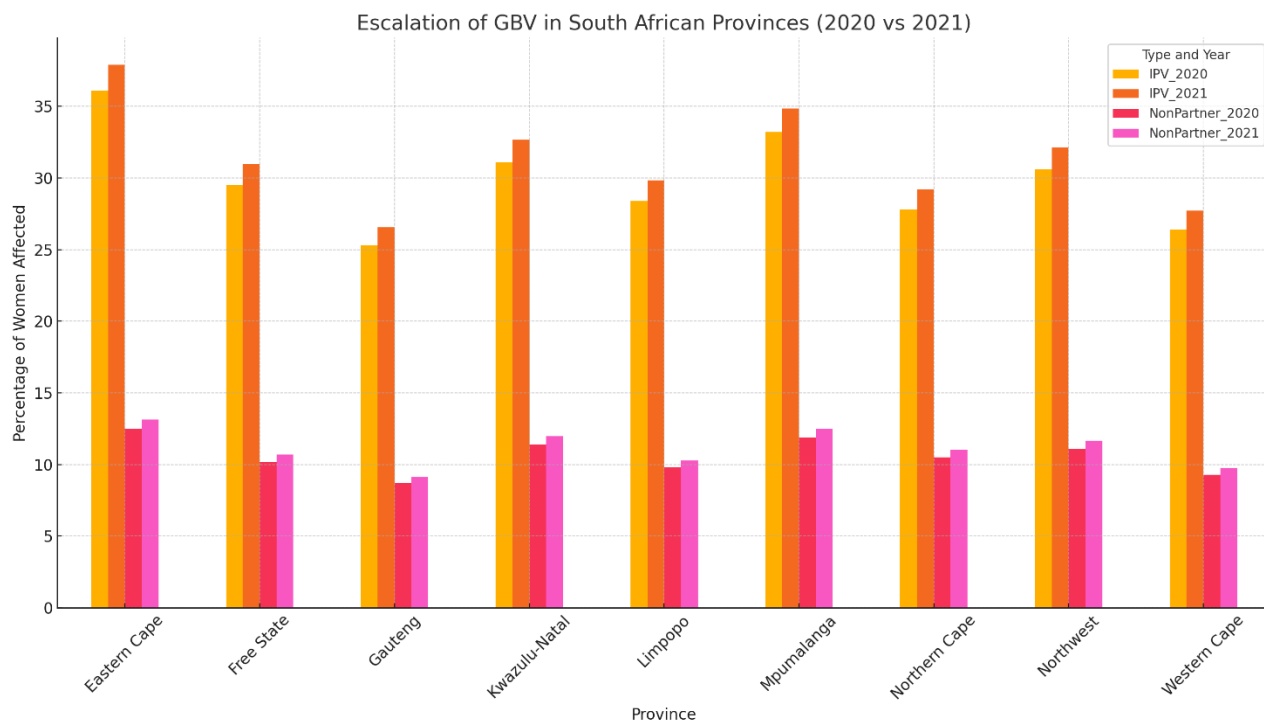
Reflections on GBV in South Africa

Over a decade South Africa gender-based violence has taken an unanticipated turn. The current state of gender-based violence (GBV) remains a pressing social issue such that has been characterized as South Africa's second pandemic (Ellis, 2020). Despite legislative advancements and heightened awareness campaigns, GBV continues to pose severe challenges. As illustrated in chart 3, South Africa is recognized as one of the countries with the highest GBV rates globally. The statistics indicate that around 40% of women experience GBV in their lifetime, with significant cases of intimate partner violence. And the types of violence include domestic violence, femicide, sexual violence as well as age and vulnerability violence where younger women (ages 18–35) and marginalized communities face the

highest risks and LGBTQ+ individuals also experience high levels of violence and discrimination.

Table 1: Provincial prevalence of GBV among women in South Africa (SAPS report 2020-21)

Province	Physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence (IPV)	Non-partner physical and/or sexual violence
Eastern Cape	36.1%	12.5%
Free State	29.5%	10.2%
Gauteng	25.3%	8.7%
Kwazulu-Natal	31.1%	11.4%
Limpopo	28.4%	9.8%
Mpumalanga	33.2%	11.9%
Northern Cape	27.8%	10.5%
Northwest	30.6%	11.1%
Western Cape	26.4%	9.3%



The bar graph displays the escalation of (GBV) in South Africa across provinces between 2020 and 2021, for both physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) as well as non-partner physical and/or sexual violence. The interpretation to the bar graph is that there was an overall increase in GBV in the years cited. There is a visible increase across all provinces and both categories of GBV in 2021 compared to 2020. This reflects a consistent upward trend with the Highest IPV Rates in Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga, and Kwazulu-Natal rates in both years. These provinces show an alarming baseline and continued escalation. On the other hand, the Lowest IPV Rates were recorded in Gauteng and Western Cape reported the lowest IPV rates but still show growth into 2021. With regard to non-Partner Violence, although lower in percentage than IPV, non-partner violence also increased slightly in all provinces, but Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga, and Kwazulu-Natal again have the highest rates, indicating broader systemic vulnerability.

With regard to femicide, the UN report 2023 shows that globally, every 10 minutes a woman is intentionally killed by either partner or a family member. In South Africa alone with 5.5 women killed by intimate partner per 100,000 women between 2020 and 2021, femicide rates have remained high Human Science Research Council (HSRC) (2024). Looking at the prevalence of lifetime physical violence regardless of partnered status, the study found that 33,1% of all women aged 18 years and older had experienced physical violence. This translates to an estimated 7310389 women when generalized to South African population. This agrees to Dlamini (2020) and Ellis (2020) study findings that GBV/femicide in South Africa was approximately four times higher than the global average as is seen in chart 1,2 and 3.

Factors contributing to GBV and Femicide (GBVF) in South Africa

Historical colonial/apartheid legacies and Inequality discrepancies

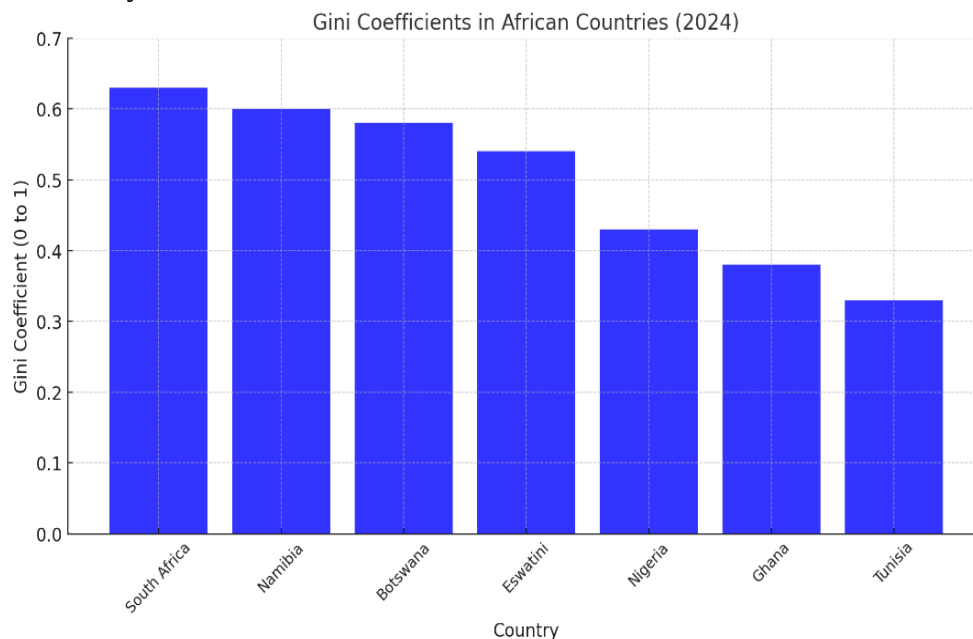
The issue of GBV in South Africa cannot be discussed without firstly looking into historical past. South Africa has a long history of infamously high levels of inequality, which are overwhelmingly racial in nature. Previous attempts to understand GBV in South Africa have consistently undermined the historical past as one major factor contributing to GBV resurgences. The emergence and persistence of this disparity in economic equality is often regarded as the main contributing factor to GBV. Knowing this historical context is crucial to comprehending why the inequality argument has endured in the post-apartheid age. In this paper, two political economy indicators from the post-apartheid era have attracted significant attention. The first is the issue of race and seconded by the issue of gender. The World Bank ranks South Africa as the most unequal nation in the world with a Gini coefficient of 63 and the poverty levels are growing every day. Inequality in South Africa is one such a situation that can never be overemphasized.

Warah 2021 argues that the racial segregation created a huge economic gap in South Africa where black people struggle in desperation situation in the communities. Under apartheid and even earlier, the majority of members of non-white racial groupings were positioned at the bottom of the income and wealth distributions in the country. To be precise, members of the black community make up the lower rung of the ladder. A clumsy attempt at social engineering, apartheid was implemented in South Africa to turn the country's black population into a cheap and abundant labor force. Instead, it prevented the vast majority of people from taking an active part in the economy. South Africa became poorer than it ought to have been as a result. Resources abound in South Africa. But apartheid squandered this opportunity for more than 40 years.

The World Bank report (2020) shows that the pandemic caused an increase in poverty for 88

million to 115 million people. Covid-19 pandemic exposed unfair and inequitable institutions that fail the most marginalized and vulnerable populations, from racial inequality to failed public healthcare systems. This is a result of colonialism and the apartheid system, which left the majority of the black population landless and impoverished. Nearly 30 years after a government was democratically elected, the wealthiest 20%

of South Africans still control nearly 70% of the country's resources. Income disparities between races are significant (Oxfam research 2020). Chart 5 shows Gini coefficient adopted and adapted from World Bank research group (2024) showing the position of South Africa with regard to other Sub-Saharan countries.



Grid index measuring the Level of inequality in African countries by income earnings. The chart illustrates the Gini coefficients (a measure of income inequality) for selected African countries in 2024. South Africa leads with the highest inequality, followed closely by Namibia and Botswana. In contrast, Tunisia demonstrates the lowest inequality among the listed countries. whether the dynamic post-apartheid economy and the post-apartheid government's policy measures have been able to start reducing these extraordinarily high levels of inequality. White South Africans, who make up 8.4% of the population earn the highest income across all sectors. The 2020 Oxfam research noted that it would take the salaries of 461 black women from the poorest 10% of workers to equal the annual salary of the typical white male CEO.

Underdeveloped black communities and lack of service delivery

The architects of apartheid created a system on purpose to deprive black South Africans black communities of the opportunity to work, development, and contribute to the nation's riches. Geographical patterns of poverty in South Africa still correspond to the "homelands" of apartheid, which were desolate rural areas far from cities that were populated by a lot of people but had little infrastructure, no development, and few job places (Swartz, Mahali, Moletsane, Khalema (2018). Black communities in South Africa are profoundly impoverished, with 64% of the population being black, compared to barely 1% of whites and 6% of Asians and Indians. A recent study conducted under Masibambisane Project (2022-2023), in-Free State and (Eastern Cape) provinces reveal the followings: -

- Poverty-stricken communities with poor delivery service.

- Poor infrastructure (gravel roads within the locations) – Poor infrastructure (gravel roads) - No streetlights in the area, which promote crime especially at night.
- Many unregistered taverns and shebeens in the township.
- Long distances to Police Station (SAPS office, 7km from the office) which result in unresponsive police to reported cases/emergencies (vehicle shortage and breakdown). Even though the provision of office space by SAPS is a good initiative, the location ‘might’ possibly limit case reporting influx due to attitudes of people towards police.
- Lack of Resources such as Shelters, counselling services, and legal aid remain inadequate for survivors.
- High substance abuse among youth (the drug commonly used ‘crystal’ which is said to be highly addictive than ‘Nyaope’ - No recreational facilities for youth – Gangsterism
- High unemployment rate, more than 80% of the working population commuting daily to Bloemfontein for work as many firms are closed in Botshabelo
- High crime rates (Burglary common) and teenage pregnancies

The study further revealed that there is poor collaboration among the relevant stakeholders between the policy implementors and the community which is affecting smooth implementation of other GBV programmes. The long term of such situation is not only felt by the people but it has a long lasting because it affects any other effort to development such as education.

The continuation of privilege through structural impediments is a term that has been the subject of a number of conceptualizations, according to French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1997). Bourdieu focuses on how success, choices in life, and chances in life are affected by education or its ab-

sence. Three forms of capital—economic, cultural, and social—are described by Bourdieu. Later, he added symbolic capital. According to Bourdieu's formulation, societies are structurally stratified and not just reliant on straight forward games of chance because of the unequal distribution of resources in all their forms. The symbolic capital that Bourdieu refers to enables people who enjoy status-related esteem, honor, and attention. In his formulation, the unequal distribution of resource in South Africa in all forms explains why societies are structurally stratified and not merely dependent on simple games of chance. Black people in South Africa find themselves entangled in this situation and Black women are the most affected. This lead to women not empowered economically and keep on depending on men who sometimes take advantage and abuse them. This becomes a circle of oppression and marginalization which affects the upcoming generation.

In a book, “Studying While Black”, Swartz, Mahali, Moletsane, Khalema (2018). Explained in their book titled ‘Studying While Black’ that 14.3% of Coloreds and 12% of Blacks enroll in higher education now, compared to 58.5% of Whites and 51% of Indians. Despite the fact that the nation offers economic development incentives for students for example NESFAS, very few black students are eligible for them. This prompted students to demand free education nationwide in 2015 under the hashtag #FeesMust-Fall. An alternative movement was given the chance to form politically as a result of the SRC activities at the University of Pretoria (UP) in September 2015 and its subsequent failure to have the proposed tuition fee hike reduced. Given the structural constraints the SRC faced, the pause period allowed some student activists to disengage from UP SRC organizations, reflect, regroup, and establish a new student movement. The result was the creation of Uprising, a union of the Grassroots movement and Tuks 11. This was followed by the subsequent gathering of students, their mobilization, and the imple-

mentation of group action on campus and in Hatfield (UP's neighborhood), which ultimately resulted in a march to Union Building in 2015. Swartz et al. (2018) made an argument regarding economic capital, in which they stated that unlike social and cultural capital, which must be built up over time and cannot be instantly transferred, economic capital may simply be given or transferred, such as through grants and scholarships.

Cultural Norms and women dependence syndrome

Patriarchal attitudes and toxic masculinity contribute significantly to GBV in South Africa. Studies have revealed that women are a population that has suffered severely from social exclusion in addition to the racial and economic isolation that the black community experiences as a result of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa. Reddy, Munthre, and Wiebesiek (2010) argues that lack of economic independence for women and GBV are directly related. In many Sub-Saharan nations, financial dependence on men is a significant factor contributing to both domestic violence. Gillion (2021) argues that social position of women and worsened gender inequities dictate how individuals and groups navigate daily interactions. Women's subjugation to men is ingrained in households due to cultural constructs and a lack of economic independence. Although they play important social and economic responsibilities, women are sometimes given no choice but to put up with the abuse they are subjected to. Women are still marginalized, given no voice, and not included in decision-making. According to Sinha (2020), when women's economic engagement is enhanced to reduce the dependency ratio, economic development in any nation is significantly boosted. It is imperative to understand the socioeconomic environment of the neighborhoods, including the rates of unemployment, education, and access to basic services, as well as the level of violence and crime. Empowering young women to be economically independent gives them more leverage to decide to leave an abusive situation. Women's

lives and livelihoods will be improved by enabling their education, involvement and participation in economic and entrepreneurship, and South Africa's overall economic growth and recovery will also benefit.

The COVID-19 pandemic severely worsened the economic situation by disrupting global supply chains causing job losses, and increased unemployment. The pandemic also highlighted and exacerbated existing economic inequalities particularly in countries with already high levels of inequality such as South Africa. Warah (2021), argues that COVID-19 has revealed fault lines in both the prosperous and the poor parts of South Africa. Since the pandemic's beginning, strict lockdowns have been implemented on the South Africa population, have the highest salaries in every industry. The unemployment rate increased to 32.6% in the first quarter of 2021, while food inflation has increased to 6.3%, the highest level since 2017. Two out of three people in the nation claimed that COVID-19 limitations prevented them from working under rigorous lockdowns. Poverty and unemployment exacerbate GBV, often trapping victims in abusive relationships. This was made clear during the protests and store looting that occurred in major South African towns in July in response to the former president Jacob Zuma's incarceration, notably Johannesburg and Durban. More than 200 people died as a result of the riots, and many political analysts asserted that Zuma's supporters, who believed he was the target of political assassination, were behind the violence. Even the country's President, Cyril Ramaphosa, called the unrest an "insurrection" meant to wreck the infrastructure and economy of the nation. The fundamental divisions in South Africa's society, which have not yet healed from the effects of apartheid, are now widely accepted as the real cause of the riots. Television footage of the theft showed thieves snatching necessities like food and toiletries, indicating that much of the looting was opportunistic and spontaneous rather than planned. The upheaval exposed a country where a

sizable portion of residents struggled with hunger and poverty (Warah 2021).

Homophobic mindset and toxic masculinity

Toxic masculinity is another element that cannot be overemphasized in Sub-Saharan Africa in which South Africa is not exempted. Homophobic mindsets significantly contribute to gender-based violence (GBV) in South Africa by perpetuating systemic discrimination, toxic masculinity, and violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression. Homophobic attitudes often stem from strict adherence to traditional gender norms, leading to hostility towards individuals who challenge or deviate from these roles. Homophobia intensifies the already high levels of GBV in South Africa by targeting individuals based on their identity, creating a culture of fear, and perpetuating cycles of violence. Those perceived as defying gender norms, particularly LGBTQ+ individuals, may face punitive actions such as "corrective rape" measures, including violence, to enforce conformity. Corrective rape is a horrific homophobic GBV act where individuals, particularly lesbians, are targeted with the intent to "cure" their sexual orientation (Gouws 2022).

Gouws argues that masculinity often involves asserting dominance over those perceived as weaker or non-conforming. Homophobia fuels this by promoting aggression towards LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly gay men or transgender women. This stems from cultural and religious beliefs that many African nations upholds. Certain cultural and religious beliefs label homosexuality as immoral or deviant, legitimizing violence in the name of moral or spiritual "purity." This moralistic framing can normalize or excuse violence against LGBTQ+ individuals under the guise of protecting societal values. LGBTQ+ individuals are often seen as a threat to patriarchal structures, leading to violence as a form of reasserting control. LGBTQ+ individuals are disproportionately targeted in hate crimes, many of which are violent and explicitly fuelled by homo-

phobic ideologies. These acts of violence are often intended to intimidate not only the individual victim but also the broader LGBTQ+ community. Homophobia isolates LGBTQ+ individuals, making them more vulnerable to abuse and less likely to seek help or report violence due to fear of further victimization or rejection by authorities which may also lead to stigmatization leading to families and communities to ostracize individuals, leaving them unsupported and more susceptible to GBV.

This is deeply rooted in cultural and heteronormative beliefs that homosexuality is unnatural or a deviation that must be corrected. Gouws (2022) explains that being gay in South Africa was seen as un-African because white men held the reins of power. This is why lesbian women and gay men are disproportionately the victims of rape, murder, and what I refer to as "corrective rape." Gouws maintains that institutionalization and acceptance of rape as the norm throughout the colonial era led to the situation that South Africa is facing today. Black males who had personal relationships with white men were prosecuted, whereas white men who raped slave women or domestic workers were not. South Africa is an exact reproduction of what was happening during colonial times and among the powerful, as the proverbial adage goes, "an apple does not fall far from the tree."

Although many interventions and policy efforts have been implemented in South Africa, such as the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) (1998), the Sexual Offences Act (2007), the Prevention and the Combatting of Trafficking in Human Persons (2013) Act. Currently there is a new National Strategic Plan Launched in 2020, this framework aims to tackle GBV through prevention, protection, and support systems. The GBV and Femicide Council Established in 2024 to coordinate nationwide efforts and allocate resources for combating GBV and other recent legislative reforms aimed to enhance protection orders and improve responses from law enforcement.

In view of legislative reforms, the Constitution of South Africa being the apex law of the land, provides for the right to equality. Section 9 provides that everyone is equal before the law and the state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including gender and sex. The Constitution furthermore provides for the establishment of the Commission of Gender Equality which aims to promote respect for gender equality and the protection, development and attainment of gender equality. Much as we acknowledge and applaud the signing of new policies, Acts and increased funding which signals government Commitment and willingness to address the issue of GBV, South Africa's is still grappling to contain GBV and Femicide. This clearly indicate that GBVF requires more sustained commitment, societal change of attitude, better resource allocation, improved education, economic opportunities, and community-based interventions where local communities and other stake holders play a role. Tackling GBVF must be a top focus to ensure that the South African ocean economy and the Nine-Point Plan are designed to empower women and minimize their dependence on men, which can occasionally result in gender-based violence and abuse of women (Ellis, 2020). This paper acknowledges the works that have already been achieved in line with the Department of Women Strategic Plan 2015-2020, the reconfiguration and reorganization of the gender policy has focused attention on issues of socioeconomic and gender equality. This is a blatant indicator that emancipating women is a crucial objective and a pillar of a free, democratic, and wealthy South Africa, which in turn serves as a stimulant for the National Development Strategic Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. By 2030, a democratic and wealthy South African society and country are expected, according to the National Development Plan (NDP) to construct a just and violent free society that belongs to every individual.

Recommendation

Addressing GBV in South Africa requires a

multi-pronged approach, including strengthening legislation, providing support services for victims and challenging social that contributes to violence. Institutional failures and biased in prosecution is a challenge that has been created as a result of trivializing GBV acts in communities which at the end contributed to escalation of GBV in South Africa. Culture and patriarchal attitudes within law enforcement and judicial systems discourage victims of GBV from pushing the matter hence perpetuating a culture of impunity. Gouws (2022) argued on judicial backlashes while citing the rape case involving Jacob Zuma and Kwezi Fezeka as an illustration. In Zuma's case, the victim's arguments were dismissed, and justice was not served to her until she passed away. The paradox is that when the law no longer has any force behind it, the government is powerless to defend the women, and the police are complacent, which has led to the continued normalization of rape in South Africa. Recently, the country experienced an incident of rape where more than eighty (80) Zama Zama men (a group of illegal miners) arranged for a collective rape to eight women, but no prosecution was made up to date. In essence, cases involving GBV victims are often not taken seriously which exacerbates women and girls' vulnerability. In such cases, women are rendered into a bare life, and they continue to suffer.

Education and awareness is one key strategy that can be used as a tool of activism. Due to cultural issues especially when GBV occurs within partners, many incidences of GBV go unreported and uncouned. Dlamini (2020) describes how families would discourage survivors and family members from speaking out and try to 'settle' the issue through family meetings or arrangements of monetary compensations. Dlamini contended that the culture of silence has perpetuated the vicious cycles of violence across generations. Often children who witness violence at home either internalize the trauma or replicate the behaviour since there seem to be no consequences of such behaviours to the perpetrator.

Promoting acceptance of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities through education and public campaigns can challenge homophobic mindsets as well as legal protections and strengthened laws to explicitly address hate crimes and GBV targeting LGBTQ+ individuals, along with stringent enforcement, can deter perpetrators. Building inclusive support networks for survivors of homophobic GBV ensures they have access to necessary services and justice. Community engagement with communities is also vital to dismantle harmful stereotypes and promote inclusivity can address the root causes of homophobia and GBV.

Beyond the shifts and emphasis on equality and economic support to empower women, decolonized research methodology is another important aspect that may bring positive changes towards GBV. For many years, knowledge produced by the whites has been dominant and seen to be used both in the global north as well as the global south (universal knowledge). People from the Global South have been denied access to generate their own knowledge, and only the knowledge from the white males was considered to be symbolically logical and rationale. Women have been discriminated in various research fields, where men were given more access and privilege. This prevented women from contributing to the production of knowledge in areas that concern women (Almeida, 2015: 82). These concerns are crucial and arguably have a particular bearing on scholars working in the Global South and the African environment. Communities will guarantee data are collected to understand the impact GBV against women and girls in a South African setting, especially during this time of post COVID-19 pandemic that has presented another challenge to women. This analysis situates the challenges within the broader historical and

cultural context, emphasizing how apartheid-era legacies and patriarchal norms continue to disadvantage women and girl creating a situation of dependence in women. It is becoming more crucial for academics to critically consider participatory methods that can improve research outcomes for indigenous people. Using decolonized participatory and transformative research approaches that reflect Africa's context and women experiences will be of benefit to come to the root cause of GBV that the country is grappling with. African challenges can only be solved using African tools and strategies.

Conclusion

This paper has connected various elements that may be contributing factors to gender-based violence. Colonialism and apartheid legacy in South Africa have been viewed as the main contributors to inequalities which in turn fuel in GBV. Through its racial discrimination and segregation, apartheid gave opportunity and life chance to the white population while the black population remained disadvantaged. This has affected other disciplines such as education where many black people experience financial exclusion, exuberated level of unemployment amongst the black community, lack of economic capital and black children pursue university program which are affordable but not well paying. This has an implication to heighten unemployment rate amongst the black community which in turn lead to youths indulging in drug and alcohol abuse as a way of relieving their frustrations thereby also escalating incidences of GBV in society. With regard to policies, it is important that the National Strategic Plan (NSP) on GBVF is simplified and localized by government. The South Africa NSP (2020-2030) on GBV need to ensure that there is accountability as well as responsiveness to South African needs.

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.4>**GENDER, FINANCIAL INCLUSION, AND WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP: ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL FINANCIAL TECHNOLOGY ON BUSINESS PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIA*****Oladotun Larry Anifowose¹ and Bibi Zaheenah Chummun²****¹Graduate School of Business and Leadership, College of Law and Management Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa**²Professor, Graduate School of Business and Leadership, College of Law and Management Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa**ChummunB@ukzn.ac.za***Abstract**

The paper evaluated critically how digital financial technology, or FinTech, empowers women entrepreneurs and improves financial inclusion, both of which have an effect on the performance of their businesses. The study specifically looks into how gender inequality affects women's financial access, how FinTech tools (like digital lending, online payment platforms, and mobile money) help bridge the gap in financial access, and how this helps women-led businesses grow and survive in Lagos State, Nigeria. By looking at female owned enterprises that deal with agribusiness with special interest in aqua foods ecosystem was the case study to test the hypothesis. Descriptive statistics and Ordinary Least Square (OLS) were used in the analysis of data collected through structured questionnaire. The study employed multistage sampling in selecting the respondents from the study areas. Majority of the Female-owned business owners in the study area are still in their adulthood age and agile to work. The result showed that majority (73.33%) of the respondents were high adopters while only 26.67% of the female-owned business owners were low adopters. Also, Point of Sales (POS) users have the highest percentage of the high adopters followed by Automated Teller Machine (ATM). The implication is that traditional mobile banking such as USSD and Mobile App users' adoption level of the respondent was lower compared to all other technological innovations adopted by female-owned business owners in the study area. The result of the OLS shows that only ATM and POS have significant effect on the performance of Female-owned business owners in the study area at $P < 0.05$. The finding revealed that the contribution of POS to performance was higher than that of ATM. The result of the t-test revealed that there is significant difference in the performance of high Adopters and low Adopters due to technological innovations at $P < 0.05$.

In conclusion, study therefore, recommends that government should provide more empowerment programs that will benefit the Female-owned business owners to reduce constraints and improve their knowledge on technological innovation adoption.

Keywords: Gender, Financial inclusion, Women Entrepreneurship, Digital Financial Technology, Business performance, Nigeria.

1.0. Introduction

Women entrepreneurs¹ can be defined as women or a group of women who initiate, organize and operate a business enterprise. Women entrepreneurship needs to be studied separately for two main reasons. First, women

entrepreneurship has been recognized during the last decade as an important untapped source of economic growth. Women entrepreneurs create new jobs for themselves and others. They also provide the society with different so-

lutions to management, organization and business problems as well as to the exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities. The second reason is that the topic of women in entrepreneurship has been largely neglected both in society in general and in social sciences. Apart from the general diversity in entrepreneurial practices, there appears to be significant differences in the characteristics of male and female entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship has been a male dominated pursuit (UNWomen, 2024, Anifowose and Ale, 2020).

Although women make up more than 50% of the world's population, they own and manage significantly fewer businesses than men manage. The UK Global Entrepreneurship Report found that men are around two and half times more likely to be entrepreneurs than women are. Not only have women lower participation rates in entrepreneurship than men, but they also generally choose to start and manage firms in different industries than men tend to do. These industries (primarily retail, education and other service industries) chosen by women are often perceived as being less important to economic development and growth than high-technology and manufacturing (Anifowose and Ale, 2020, Kirobo, 2015).

According to UN Women (2024) indicated that women entrepreneurship entails ideas that individual holds to explore and optimize in order to assist, create new jobs and empower themselves economically. Across the globe, generations of women from different backgrounds show very encouraging sign of entrepreneurial spirit. It is believed that governments at all levels should provide environment in which this spirit can flourish (Deng et al., 2020). More than 200 million women are employed across all industry sectors, with half of this number in developing countries (Allen et al., 2007). Women entrepreneurship is expanding around the world. Research has shown that women owned businesses comprise between one-quarter and one-third of businesses in the formal economy and greater number in informal sectors (Allen et al., 2007). Recently, women are taking more professional and technical degrees to cope with market needs and are flourishing

as designers, interior decorators, exporters, publishers, garment manufacturers and exploring new avenues of economic participation (SMEDAN, 2017, Smedan, 2013).

Women entrepreneurs explore the prospects of starting new enterprises; undertake risks, introduce new innovations, coordinate administration, control businesses and provide effective leadership in all aspects of life. They have proved their dominance in male dominated business arena, majority of which are dynamic in the leadership style management and are capable of contributing more in areas they show more interest so as to keep their knowledge up-to-date (Kegoro et al., 2020).

In addition, this study's main goal is to evaluate critically how digital financial technology, or FinTech, empowers women entrepreneurs and improves financial inclusion, both of which have an effect on the performance of their businesses. The study specifically looks into how gender inequality affects women's financial access, how FinTech tools (like digital lending, online payment platforms, and mobile money) help bridge the gap in financial access, and how this helps women-led businesses grow and survive. The report acknowledges that women entrepreneurs have gender-specific obstacles such restricted access to formal financial institutions, low digital literacy, and sociocultural hurdles, especially in developing and emerging nations. In this regard, FinTech is a disruptive force that can increase financial access for underrepresented women entrepreneurs while cutting transaction costs and entry hurdles. The ultimate goal of the project is to create a causal route that demonstrates how gender dynamics, digital financial technology, and financial inclusion interact to affect women-owned firms' financial and non-financial success. It draws attention to both FinTech's enabling role and enduring obstacles that can still prevent women from fully utilizing digital financial tools for business success.

In conclusion, the paper is divided into five sections as follows Section two presents the conceptual, theoretical and empirical framework on Gender, Financial Inclusion, and

Women Entrepreneurship: Assessing the Impact of Digital Financial Technology on Business Performance in Nigeria, section three presents the methodology to analyses the influence of financial products on women-led business performance, section four present the result

and discussion of influence of financial products on women-led business performance and lastly, section five present the conclusion on the study.

2.0 Conceptual framework, theoretical framework and relevant empirical literatures on Gender, Financial Inclusion, and Women Entrepreneurship: Assessing the Impact of Digital Financial Technology on Business Performance in Nigeria

Women entrepreneurship is both about women's position in society and about the role of entrepreneurship in the same society. Women entrepreneurs face many obstacles specifically in marketing their product (including family responsibilities) that have to be overcome in order to give them access to the same opportunities as men. In addition, in some countries, women may experience obstacles with respect to holding property and entering contracts. Increased participation of women in the labour force is a prerequisite for improving the position of women in society and self-employed women (OECD, 2004).

Ghosh & Cheruvalath (2007) found that only one-fifth of women are drawn into entrepreneurship by pull factors. The rest are forced into entrepreneurship by push factors. The characteristics of Women Entrepreneurship are as follows: Imaginative: This refers to the imaginative approach or original ideas with competitive market. A well-planned approach is needed to examine the existing situation and to identify the entrepreneurial opportunities which imply that women entrepreneurs have association with knowledgeable people and contacting the right organization offering support services. Attribute to Work Hard: Enterprising women have ability to work hard. The imaginative ideas have to come to a fair play. Hard work is needed to build up an enterprise. Persistence: Women entrepreneurs must have an intention to fulfil their dreams. They need to actualise their dreams into an idea enterprise; studies have shown that successful women are persistence. The desire refers to the willingness to take risk and ability to be proficient in planning, making forecast estimates and calculations. Profit Earning Capacity: She

should have a capacity to get maximum return out of invested capital.

In Nigeria, MSMEs have seen an upsurge in female engagement over the previous few decades. According to (Smedan, 2013) survey, show that there were 17,284,671 businesses in the nation overall (of which 17,261,753, 21,264, 1,654 were micro, small and medium female owned enterprises, respectively). The total number of individuals employed by MSMEs in Nigeria as of December 2010 was 32,414,884. Similar to this, the most recent SMEDAN study from December 2017 reveals that there are now 41,543,028 MSMEs in the nation, with 41,469,947 micro companies and 73,081 small and medium-sized businesses. These MSMEs employ 59,647,954 Nigerians, or 86.3% of the country's labour force, and they make up around 49.78% and 7.64% of the GDP and exports, respectively. While men entrepreneurs still control the majority of businesses in Nigeria, female entrepreneurs are making important strides (SMEDAN, 2017, PwC, 2020).

The performance of female owned businesses in Lagos state, Nigeria and usage of digital technology are the main topics of this study. Female-owned Female owned enterprises (FOEs) are thought of as the world's fastest-growing entrepreneurial endeavours, demonstrating the importance of female entrepreneurs in national growth around the world (Bosma et al., 2016). Given the ongoing challenges they confront in realizing their full potential, the extent to which female entrepreneurs contribute to economic growth and development through participation in Micro,

Small, and Medium-sized Female owned enterprises (MSMEs) is exceptional. For instance, data from the Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion highlighted that in developed economies, the rate of female start-ups is much greater than the rate of male start-ups. They are essential in generating jobs and promoting economic expansion (GPFI, 2011). The survey also showed that in the US, the number of FOEs increased at a rate that was more than twice as fast as that of their male counterparts (23% and 9%, respectively, annually). The research also noted comparable Canadian developments (GPFI, 2011). According to a related survey published in 2015 by the (Bosma and Entrepreneurship, 2013), 126 million women worldwide were starting or managing new businesses in 67 different countries.

Furthermore, there were 98 million women running well-established businesses. These girls empower themselves, generate jobs, and engage others in productive work, which lowers the unemployment rate across many economies. In their various establishments, about 48 million FOEs and 64 million FOEs each employ one or more people (Bosma et al., 2016). Females actively participate in economic activity through the ownership of company ventures in developing economies, including Nigeria. Through this method, they have significantly contributed to the eradication of poverty and the expansion of the economy (Nwosu and Orji, 2017). For instance, a survey of 1228 FOEs in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region revealed that women are running well-established businesses with revenues above \$100,000, comparable to what FOEs in the United States of America produce (GPFI, 2011).

One of the barriers commonly attributed to low rates of women entrepreneurship involves the lack of self-confidence. Morris et al. (2006) contend that the socialisation process throughout women's lives may critically affect their self-assessments about being ill-prepared with regard to firm creation even when outsiders evaluate skills and needs as being equal to those of men. Also, inequality of access to

credit. For instance, micro credit is to promote small-scale business enterprises and its major aim is to alleviate poverty by income generating activities among women and the poor. However, there is difficulty in obtaining finance as a woman compared to man especially in Nigeria, because of their inability to meet the conditions attached to such a credit, that is, the collateral needed to obtain the loan. Also, lack of experience as all stages in entrepreneurship are dependent on relevant experience, from the identification of opportunities to the execution of running a business. Human capital theory posits that individuals with more or higher quality human capital achieve higher performance in executing relevant tasks.

2.1 Conceptual Framework on financial technologies

Digital technology is the term used to describe the impact of new technologies on the financial services industry. It includes various products, applications, processes, and business models that have transformed the traditional way of providing banking and financial services (Banks, 2016). It is digitized traditional banking services, activities, or products offered via online channels, applications, and mobile platforms.

In its broadest sense, "digital technology" (DT) is described as computer-based systems used to manage digital information (Idris, 2019). Abbott, (2007), Castro (2019) assert that DT entails the process of developing, gathering, and analysing digital information. Additionally, Khin and Ho (2018) claimed that DT stands for any device that uses a binary computational code, as do laptops, computers, smartphones, and other associated services like the internet, social networking, and Wi-Fi (Idris, 2019, Castro, 2019). Examples of DT have been highlighted in relation to computer software, web pages, social media, databases, and computer programs (Idris, 2019, Khin and Ho, 2018). The report did note, however, that a variety of digital technologies are employed in the field, including digital project management, mobile solutions, monitoring and control technology, sensor technology, automated

and digital fabrication, and digital imaging (Puolitaival et al., 2018). Puolitaival et al., (2018) went on to emphasize that the industry's definition of DT is the application of all these technologies, among many more.

Similar to this, DT is defined in the context of education as the process by which a teacher or student utilizes digital tools (such as learning platforms and virtual learning environments) while using digital equipment like a computer (laptop, mobile phone, television, MP3 player, or tablet) (Sharif et al., 2020). When used successfully, the digital tools (used to support e-learning) can develop interactivity, critical thinking, and collaboration among teachers and students in the field of education (Sharif et al., 2020). Also, Anifowose and Ale (2020) defined female-owned businesses as businesses ventures owned, operated, and managed by a female. On the other hand, Performance - measures the overall outcome and goal achievement of a firm both in financial and non-financial terms over a particular period of time (Kegoro et al., 2020, Shamaki et al., 2022). The rationale for selecting Lagos, Nigeria is that Lagos is a prominent African financial centre and the economic hub of Lagos State and Nigeria. Lagos is also one of the ten cities and urban areas with the fastest growth rate worldwide. The megacity is home to one of the biggest and busiest seaports on the continent and has the fourth-highest GDP in Africa. The Lagos metropolitan region is a significant hub for education and culture in SubSaharan Africa.

2

Thulani, Chitakunye, & Chummun (2014) investigated a deeper understanding of the determinant of financial inclusion proxied by usage level of mobile money, and how it has accelerated financial inclusion among the rural communities in an emerging economy such as Zimbabwe. The study employed a mixed methods approach and a concurrent dominant status design where quantitative and qualitative approaches were concurrently used with the quantitative approach having a dominant

Empirical Literature on Gender, Financial Inclusion, and Women Entrepreneurship: Assessing the Impact of Digital Financial Technology on Business Performance in Nigeria

Women are becoming more active in entrepreneurship across all facets of human endeavour on a global scale. The concept of female entrepreneurship has thus been characterized by various scholars from various angles; for instance, it has been defined as the procedures by which women start and/or run their firms (Kirobo, 2015, Zizile and Tendai, 2018). The extent to which women contribute to equity and the employment positions of the firm held by women, however, are two key criteria for distinguishing women entrepreneurial activities. These researchers provide a more expansive definition (Kirobo, 2015, Zizile and Tendai, 2018, Deng et al., 2020). Therefore, this second set of academics defined female entrepreneurship as a business that a woman owns and controls, has a minimum financial interest of 51% of the capital, and provides at least 51% of the employment generated by the business to women (Deng et al., 2020). The workforce is also emphasized, with the need that at least 51% of the enterprise's personnel be made up of women, in addition to the ownership and management of the business (Deng et al., 2020). In the context of this study, female entrepreneurship is defined as the founding and operation of businesses that women own, manage, and control and who make innovative and creative use of resources, including digital technology, to produce value for their clients (Sharma and Kulshrestha, 2019).

status. The study was carried out in the Midlands Province and a simple random sampling technique was applied to select the province. Eight districts in the province formed the study population of 262 493 households and a pilot sample size of 37 household was chosen. The study used a survey method to collect data, where a questionnaire and focus group discussions were used as the main data collection instruments. It emerged that the usage of mobile money by the unbanked rural people is very

high, especially for sending and receiving remittances. However, the saving and loan aspect of mobile money were not very popular. Users were still relying on their traditional methods of savings and borrowing. The implications are that the service providers need to increase their awareness programs targeting this specific market to encourage them to migrate from traditional ways to safe and secure way of saving their meagre income. More so, that their saving patterns will determine their access to loans.

In light of the aforementioned, female entrepreneurs are defined as women or groups of women who start, plan, and operate a business operation in a unique and creative way (Sharma and Kulshrestha, 2019). They participate occasionally in the day-to-day management of the business and face the financial, administrative, and social risks of the entity (Deng et al., 2020, Chummun & Nleya, 2021). The global phenomenon of digital technology has now established itself as a crucial success element for the development of female business (Pergelova et al., 2019). It gives female business owners the tactical advantage of overcoming a variety of difficulties that are unique to them (Pergelova et al., 2019). These (some advantages that DT bring to female-owned businesses, including the fact that DT: lowers transaction costs through electronic platforms; increases access to market information; enables improved communication in the value chain; and ensures better customer satisfaction (Popovic-Pantic et al., 2020).

In addition, there is a noticeable gender gap between male and female entrepreneurs in terms of access to and adoption of DT, with the men having more access, despite the enormous benefits of DT for female entrepreneurs that have been documented (Popovic-Pantic et al., 2019).

The social status of women in comparison to men, their traditional roles in society, their Studies in the SA group generated firm performance information by asking firm managers/owners and other stakeholders for their

ability to own property and other legal rights, and their lack of access to business support services for female entrepreneurs are some of the factors that UNCTAD recently studied in the context of some African countries (Tanzania, Uganda, and Nigeria) (Popovic-Pantic et al., 2020). The majority of female business owners in Nigeria, especially those in rural areas, see DT as an opportunity, but lack the digital literacy to take use of it (Felstead, 2019, Shamaki et al., 2022). This is brought on by the underrepresentation of women in fields that make it easier to function in the digital age (Felstead, 2019, Shamaki et al., 2022).

Theory of Performance

Definition Firm Performance

In both financial and non-financial terms, firm performance assesses the overall results and objective accomplishment of a firm over a specific period of time (Kegoro et al., 2020, Husnain et al., 2020). It also describes the degree to which an organization succeeded in achieving its goals with the least amount of employee work and the least amount of company resources (Kegoro et al., 2020, Husnain et al., 2020). Scholars disagree on the specific methodology used to determine the "extent of success or the degree to which corporate objectives are attained." For instance, multiple financial and non-financial variables, such as firms' profitability, market share, annual sales turnover, customer happiness, and the number of employees, have been used to gauge firm performance in various studies.

The dimensions and indicators of Business Performance of female -owned business

According to a review of studies measuring "firm performance" in the context of how it is influenced by DT, the studies can be divided into the Objective Approach (OA) group and the Subjective Approach (SA) group based on the source of information about the firm performance (Joensuu-Salo et al., 2018, Yasa et al., 2019, Shamaki et al., 2022).

perception/opinion regarding the past or future performance of their firms, as opposed to stud-

ies in the OA group, which generated firm performance information by using verifiable sources (financial statements, annual reports, and balance sheets) (Khin and Ho, 2018). The following justifications led to the adoption of the subjective approach to measuring company performance in this study:

Small And Medium-sized Female owned enterprises (SMEs) have a poor record-keeping culture, which makes it difficult for researchers to access their financial and non-financial records; business owners and managers are typically reluctant to share sensitive information with researchers for fear that it will be used against them by rivals or the government for tax purposes; and respondents are typically more willing to give a subjective assessment of the firm. For instance, a subjective method

is the only way to accurately assess employee abilities, customer satisfaction, or motivation (Fadda, 2018, Shamaki et al., 2022). The client is the main focus of this study, which employs a subjective method to gauge customer satisfaction at female-owned businesses in Lagos, Nigeria.

Consumer satisfaction is a term used to describe how a customer feels about a company's performance overall. It also includes a metric used to gauge how satisfied customers are with a company's goods and services (Hayati et al., 2020, Shamaki et al., 2022). Most non-financial KPIs in research are assessed by subjective methods that depend on the perception and opinions of the participants being studied, and this study is no exception (Yildiz et al., 2020, Shamaki et al., 2022).

2.4. Conceptual framework

Figure 1: The Conceptual framework

Usage of Digital finance Technology

- Automated Teller Machine (ATM)
- Point Of Sales (POS)
- Mobile Banking
 - Mobile Banking (USSD)

Source adapted from (Shamaki et al., 2022)

3.1 Methodology

This section discusses the methodology used in the study. The study used descriptive survey design which according to (Churchill and Iacobucci, 2006) is appropriate where the study seeks to describe the characteristics of certain groups, describes what exists and considers the existing conditions or relationships, current processes and tangible developing effects. Population of the study comprises the customers of seventeen (17) classes residing in Lagos metropolis only. A sample of four hundred and twenty-five (425) customers of financial institution residing in Lagos, was drawn using convenience sampling technique. 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was used to collect the data.

Data were analysed and the hypotheses were

tested using ordinary least square at 5% level of significance. Following **Technology Acceptance Model and Balance Score Card** are the theories that underpinned this study and (Iluno et al., 2018), the model of the study is specified as follows:

$$CS = f_{i0} + f_{aPOSi} + p_{2ATMi} + P_{3PBi} + Et$$

.....
(1)

Where: CS = Customer satisfaction,

POS = Point of Sales

ATM = ATM card

PB= Mobile Banking (i.e., usage of USSD and APP) also called mobile banking P0=Constant,

p_1 , P_2 , and P_3 are the parameters estimate

a = Error Term

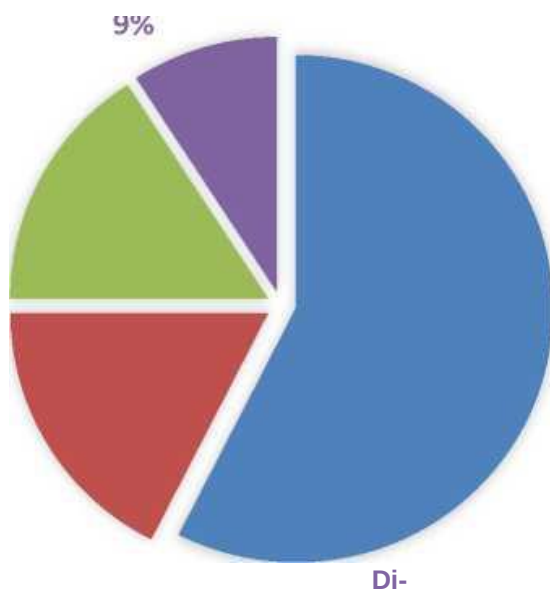
Aprori expectations: Aprori expectations: $\pi_i > 0$, $P_2 > 0$, $P_3 > 0$

4.1 SOCIALECONOMIC CHARACTERISTIC OF RESPONDENTS

4.2

4.1.1 DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY MARITAL STATUS

Table 4.1 revealed that 57.50% of the respondents were married; 17.50% were single;



Sources: Field survey, 2024

wid-
owed

4.1.2 DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY AGE

4.0. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The objective of this section is to analyses the raw data collection in the field as well as test statistically the hypotheses developed for the study and discuss the findings. These analysis and findings will form the basis for drawing conclusion and recommendation.

15.83% were widowed; 9.17% were divorced. Therefore, married has the highest percentage of marital Status in this study area.

Table 4.1 Distribution of Respondents by Marital status

mar-
ried

sin-
gle

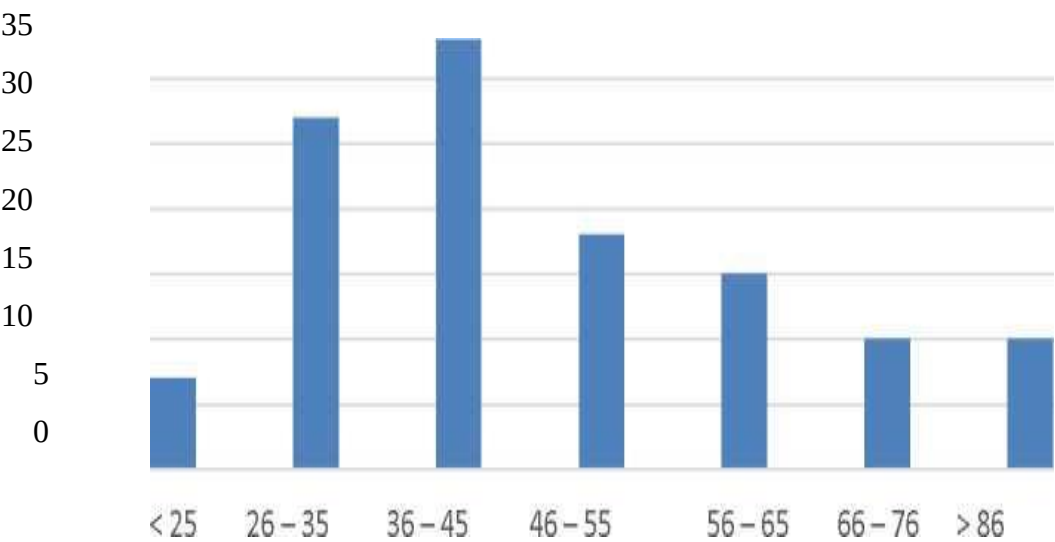
Table 4.2 showed the age distribution of the respondents. The result revealed that 5.82% of the respondents were less than 25 years old,

22.5% of the respondents were from 26 to 35 years, 36 to 45 years has 27.51%, 46 to 55 years has 14.17, 56 to 65 has 13.32, While 66 - 76years has 8.33% and age from 86 years and above has 8.31% of the age distribution on this

study. Implicit in the finding is that majority of Female-owned business owners in the study area are still in their adulthood age and agile to work. Since they are adult, they are expected to

be conversant with the technological innovation practices which invariably can affect their level of adoption of technological innovation.

Table 4.2 Distribution of Respondents by Age



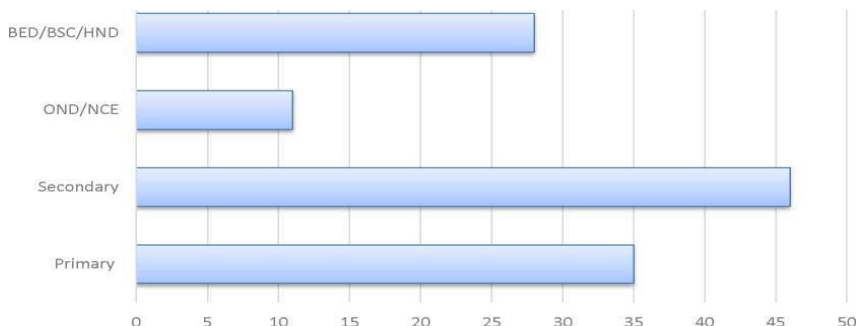
Source:
Field Survey, 2024

4.1.3 DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION

Table 4.3 revealed 29.17 % of the respondents acquired just primary school education, 38.33% of the respondents acquired formal education up to secondary school, 9.17% of the respondents had formal education up to OND/NCE, while 23.33% of the respondent had formal education up to BED/BSC/HND. The respondents with the secondary school have the highest education; that means majority of the respondent were highly literates. Due

to the topic of the study; effect of digital financial Technologies usage on Female-owned business Performance in Lagos, Nigeria, it will aid the study the level of usage and the effect of digital financial Technologies usage on Female-owned business Performance in Lagos, Nigeria, whose findings showed that lot of female-owned business owners in Lagos Island local government area council were uneducated.

Table 4.3 Distribution of Respondents by Level of Education



Source: Field Survey, 2024

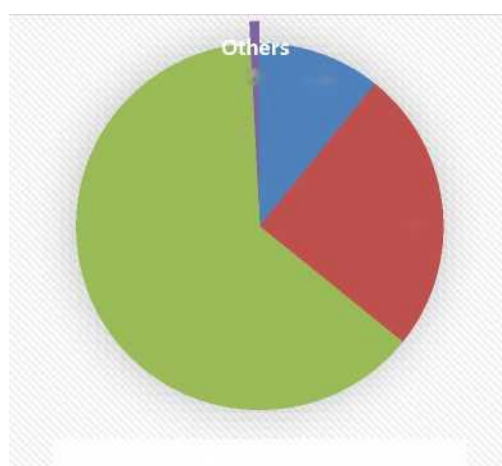
4.1.4 DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY TRIBE

4.1.5

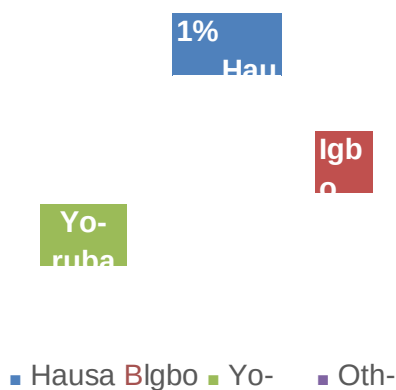
Table 4.4 revealed that 25.00% of the respondents are Hausa, 10.83 % of the respondents are Igbo, while 63.33% are Yoruba, 0.83% of the (63.33%).

respondents in the study are from other religions which were not named in this study. The respondents of this study were dominated by Yoruba which has the largest percentage

Table 4.4 Distribution of Respondents by Tribe



Source: Field Survey, 2024

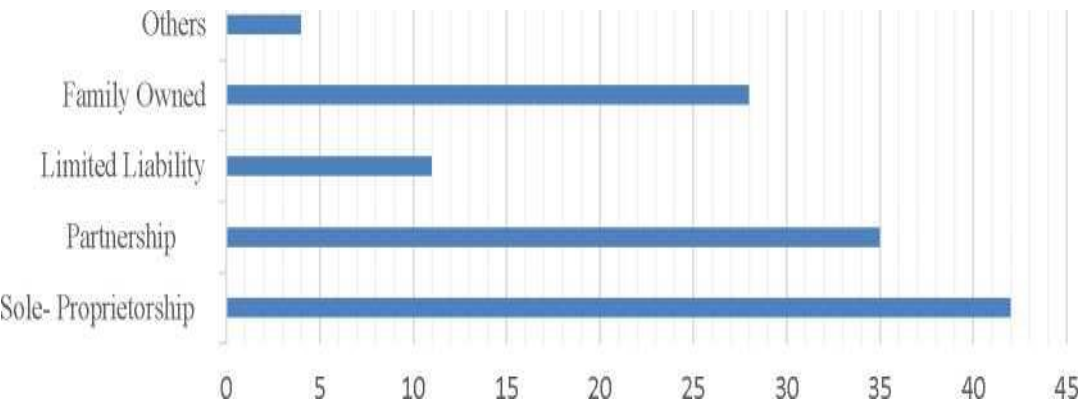


4.1.6 DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS
BY FEMALE OWNED BUSINESSES
OWNERSHIP

Table 4.1.6 showed the distribution of the respondents according to their types of female ownership they operate. 35.00% respondents were Sole-Proprietorship, 29.17% ownership are Partnership, 9.17% respondents are Limited

Liability, 23.33% are family Owned and 3.33% are respondents from others. Therefore Sole-proprietorship has the highest percentage of respondents.

Table 4.6 Distribution of Respondents by
Aqua Business



Source: Field Survey, 2024

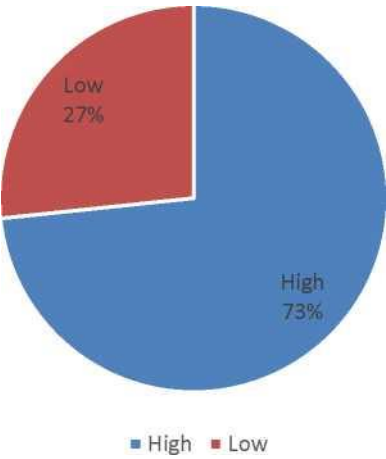
4.1.7 Level of digital financial Technologies usage among Female-owned business in the study area

4.1.7.1 Distribution of Respondents by Level of Adoption of digital financial Technologies usage among Female-Owned Businesses in Lagos, Nigeria

Table 4.7 presents the level of adoption of digital financial Technologies usage on Female-owned business Performance in Lagos, Nigeria. There are two categories of respondents in this study which includes High adopters and Low adopters. The high adopters are the respondents who adopted two or more of the technological innovations considered while low adopters are the respondents who adopted less than two of the technological innovations

considered. The result showed that Majority (73.33%) of the respondents were high adopters while only 26.67% of the Female-owned business owners were Low adopters. The implication of this finding is that all the respondents are adopters of technological innovations with majority having high level of adoption of the technology. This finding corroborates that of (Abubakar et al., 2016) where farmer adoption index was high.

Table 4.7 Level of Adoption of financial
Technological Innovation by respondents



Source: Field Survey, 2024

4.1.8 Distribution of Respondents by Level of POS, ATM card users and mobile banking Adopted

Table 4.8 shows the distribution of respondents by level of POS, ATM and mobile banking adopted. The result revealed that 69.4% of the respondents who adopted POS are high adopters while only 30.6% were low adopters. Also, majority (60.4%) of the respondents are high adopters of ATM while 39.6% are low adopters. For the mobile banking, 56.1% of the respondents are high adopters while 43.9% of

them are Low adopters. The implicit in this finding is that POS has the highest percentage of the high adopters followed by ATM users. The implication is that mobile banking adoption level of the respondent was lower compared to all other technological innovations adopted by Female-owned business owners in the study area.

Table 4.8 Level of POS, ATM and Mobile Adoption of Technological Innovation respondents

S/N		LEVEL OF ADOPTION	
		HIGH (%)	LOW (%)
1	POS	69.4	30.6
2	ATM	60.4	39.6
3	MOBILE BANKING	56.1	43.9
	ALL	61.9	38.1
	Total	120	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024

4.5.19 PERFORMANCE OF FEMALE-OWNED BUSINESS OWNERS IN THE STUDY AREA.

This is the category that captured digital financial technological innovation adoption on the performance of Female-owned business owners in the study area. Table 4.9 shows the profitability status of respondents. The result revealed that the profitability level (N2, 312,393)

of the high adopters was higher than that of low adopters (N1, 387,834). The implication of this finding is that the higher the level of technological adoption the higher the level of performance of the female-owned business owners in the study area.

Table 4.9 Profitability status of female owned businesses in the study area

LEVEL OF ADOPTION	MEAN(N)	STANDARD DEVIATION
High	2,312,393	3,060,792
Low	1,387,834	1,764,518

Source: Field Survey, 2024

4.5.10 Examine the contributions of technological innovation adoption on the performance of Female-owned business owners.

Table 4.10 presents the contribution of technological innovation on the performance of the respondents. Three different financial innovation included in the model are POS, ATM and mobile banking apps. The result show that only POS and mobile banking have positive significant effect on the performance of female-owned business owners in the study area. The analysis shows that POS has significant effect on the performance of Female-owned business

owners at $p < 0.05$ (0.705). The analysis also shows that tools have significant effect on the performances of Female-owned business owners at $p < 0.05$ (0.925). Implicit in this finding is that the contribution of POS users to performance was higher than that of mobile banking users. The model fit indicate a R-squared = 0.0875 suggesting about 8.75% of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables.

Table 4.10 Contributions of technological innovation adopted to the performance of Female-owned business owners

VARIABLES	CO - EFFICIENT	STA	T
POS	0.705443*	0.3716505	1.90
ATM	0.01014887	0.3850659	0.26
Mobile banking	0.9254293*	0.3379061	2.74
Constant	11.08799	0.919565	12.06
R-squared	0.0875		
Adjusted R-squared	0.0639		

*significant(0.05)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

4.5.11 TESTING OF HYPOTHESIS

4.5.11 Hypothesis one: There is no significant difference in the performance of Female- owned business owners due to level of Technological innovations adopted in the study area

Table 4.11 shows the difference in performance between the high Adopters and low Adopters. The result of the t-test revealed that there is significant difference in the performance of high Adopters and low Adopters due

to technological innovations at $P < 0.05$. Hence reject the null hypotheses one (H_{01}) and accept the alternative hypothesis.

Table 4.11: t-test result of the difference in performance of Female-owned business owners due to technological adoption

VARIABLES	N	MEAN	STANDARD ERROR	DIFF	t value
High	88	2312393	326281.5	924558.8 (573758.8)	1.6114
Low	32	1387834	311925.6		

Significance level ($p < 0.05$)

Source: Field survey, 2024

5.0. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

This study analysed the usage of digital finance technologies by agribusiness female owned businesses in Lagos state, Nigeria. The study shows explicitly how digital finance technologies are crucial in the operation and growth of enterprises as the correspondence agreed with the statements on its impacts in growth of enterprises. The study suggests that digital finance technologies are used as effective tools in promotion and improving Enterprises as majority of the correspondence agreed that these technologies would enhance business performance thereby reducing the rate of female owned business failures in Nigeria. This study

also revealed the credence of the usage of digital finance technologies as essential in business performance as stated in (Kodongo and Chummun, 2023) which affirmed that digital finance technologies fast track transfers of funds from customers to female owned businesses, reduce the rate of theft, serves as a tool to track funds and measure performance as well as enhance accountability and transparency which actually fosters business performance which affirm that digital finance technologies are in form of stepping - stones for enterprises and are such need financial backbone to survive the economic.

5.1 CONCLUSION

Digital finance technologies play a crucial role in the operation of enterprise; this ensures that the derived output will be that which sustains the growth and development of the economy (Chummun, 2017, Kodongo and Chummun, 2023). The enterprise development policies would therefore be more ensured, if the investment on research and human development are

given a proper attention in form of improved educational Standard of the people to be design appropriate research and in return formulate a sustainable policy programme. Increase in enterprise operations particularly that of small-scale enterprises are related venture of the government, the financial institutions, private enterprise and group of individuals.

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.5>**GENDERED DISCOURSES IN SELECTED POST-COLONIAL FEMINIST WRITERS IN ZIMBABWE: A RELOOK AT THE IMPACT OF LITERATURE TEXTS ON HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS.*****Belinda Ndlovu,**University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Education,
Edgewood Campus, Durban.E-mail: belindak309@gmail.com.**Jugathambal Ramdhani,**University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Education,
Edgewood Campus, Durban.E-mail: Ramdhanij@ukzn.ac.za**Marshall Tamuka Maposa,**University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Education,
Edgewood Campus, Durban.E-mail: Maposam2@ukzn.ac.za**Abstract**

Post-colonial feminist writers have significantly challenged traditional gender representations in literature, particularly in high school novels. These writers often explore themes of identity, power dynamics, and resistance within the context of colonial and post-colonial societies. Through their works, they highlight the experiences of marginalised groups, particularly women, and critique how gender roles are constructed and enforced. The paper aimed to examine gender representation in high school novels, focusing on high school novels in Zimbabwe. The feminist lens was also used to critique language in set book novels, together with Gee's use of metaphors, Ferguson and Thompson's legitimisation linked to rationalisation, summing up the strength of language. Ferguson and Thompson's rationale focuses on critiquing the traditional assumptions underlying economic development theories, emphasising the importance of historical context, power dynamics and cultural factors in shaping development processes. The findings showed that post-colonial feminist writers often present complex and multidimensional female characters who defy stereotypes and expectations. The literature texts navigate issues of race, class, and gender with resilience and agency, offering learners a more nuanced understanding of the intersections of identity and power. These characters are portrayed as strong, independent, and capable of challenging oppressive systems. The paper concludes from the findings that the selected four set book novels portray that gender representation remains imbalanced and biased towards males who have economic and social power, which takes away women's power.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Gender, feminism, inequality, representation.**Introduction**

Zimbabwean post-colonial feminist writers are a powerful lens for examining the intricacies of gender, identity, and power dynamics. Their work is a crucial bridge for high school students, introducing them to the ongoing dis-

course surrounding gender relations. This paper examined the portrayal of women in contemporary works by Postcolonial women writers, highlighting empowerment through the evolution of the idealised woman into an assertive, self-determined individual on a journey to find and realise her true self. The primary goal

of CDA, as outlined by Wodak (2001), is to unravel these ideologies and seek pathways for the oppressed toward liberation. Senkardes (2022) identifies five categories of gendered discourses, but this researcher concentrated on two discourses that reflect power domination and those that reflect other women. Haugaard (2012) describes power domination as a condition that is not coincidental but instead relies on the emancipation of others, further illustrating how societal structures and relationships sustain inequality. Domination represents a specific power that contradicts those affected (Arnold & Harris, 2017). Various forms of domination encompass themes such as patriarchal oppression, marginalisation, social class exploitation, and psychological manipulation, all of which are prevalent in the selected high school novels.

Othering women can emerge through various narrative techniques and character portrayals. Saad (2024) connects Beauvoir's ideas on gender inequality to the concept of othering, where women are rendered inferior to men. The novels were randomly selected from a list of set books studied in Zimbabwean literature by both Form Fours and Sixes, who are in their exit years from high school into the wider world. It is worrisome from the complex representation of gender about what they have learnt through the formal and hidden curriculum from their novels. The authors are both males and females to get multidimensional views on gender representation. Moreover, the authors were tagged as post-colonial writers because their plots revolve around issues that oppress or emancipate women after the post-colonial era. This implies that language is not neutral; rather, it is a tool for exercising power and control over individuals, particularly regarding gendered representations. Furthermore, critical approaches extend beyond mere social relationships to consider their implications for status, solidarity, the distribution of social resources, and power dynamics (Gee, 2011, p. 68). Similarly, Thompson (2007) underscores how power can be derived from legitimising women's status as second-class citizens. This research explored how these novels construct,

negotiate, and subvert gender norms, ultimately influencing students' perceptions of gender roles, expectations, and relationships. The Form Four and Six set book novels include, namely, Novel A, Novel B, Novel C, and Novel D, which represent women and girls and highlight the persistent nature of gender inequality in the Zimbabwean society. This paper used CDA to reveal the root causes of such inequalities, and this can be done by roping in Thompson (1990) and Ferguson et al.'s (2009) schema of legitimisation, divided into rationalisation, universalisation and narrativisation, to answer the following questions.

- a) How do post-colonial feminist writers portray gender relations in the selected novels, and what impact does it have on the narrative?
- b) What role does language play in reinforcing or disrupting patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes in the selected novels?

The problem and its context

Like many countries, Zimbabwe grapples with significant gender issues. Language plays a crucial role in these discussions, as it is often claimed that gender bias is perpetuated through language, such as when the world is represented as patriarchal or favouring males (Banda, 2018). Former president Robert Mugabe's assertion that "women cannot be at par with men" (Powell, 2015) highlights the existing inequality between genders. Such attitudes contribute to the pervasive nature of gender inequality in Zimbabwe, including within the education sector through the textbooks and learning materials used by students, including the selected novels. Dudu et al. (2008) highlight that women often remain largely invisible in texts, as evidenced by the titles of passages, images, and excerpts, which predominantly reflect a male perspective. Novel A emphasises women's empowerment by showcasing women in high-paying jobs traditionally dominated by men. However, men still occupy strategic positions at the top, assisting women in their ascent to success.

Thompson (2009) states that "symbolic forms are adapted to a standard framework which is promoted as the shared and acceptable basis of

symbolic exchange” (p. 64). A well-educated and empowered young woman understands her relationship goals in Novel B. However, she ultimately ends her romantic involvement to pursue her dream of fighting for her country’s liberation. This decision symbolises the transformation of women in the modern world. Conversely, Novel C continues to reinforce numerous gender stereotypes, featuring prevalent name-calling and labelling of women. Lastly, Novel D depicts women as vendors and in some previously male-dominated roles, but highlights the significant oppression they endure. Gee argues that the grammar of any social language consists of specific forms designed to perform particular functions, although a single form can often serve multiple purposes. Throughout the four novels, language conveys various connotations that reflect gender inequality. Therefore, how do selected post-colonial feminist writers in Zimbabwe depict gendered discourses in their literature, and what impact do these portrayals have on high school learners?

Theoretical Framework

In this study, we utilised various feminist theories to comprehensively understand their connections to the topic, specifically African feminism, liberal feminism, radical feminism, and feminist post-structuralism. African feminism is particularly significant for non-Western feminist discourse, as the involvement of relevant feminist scholars in this area often overlooks the unique struggles African women face (Brink, 1990). Over the past thirty years, African feminism has increasingly emphasised the need to resist cultural imperialism, which undermines African people’s philosophical ideologies and belief systems (Nkealah, 2016; Amaefula, 2020). It advocates for gender equality and challenges patriarchal norms by centring on the experiences of African women. Additionally, it argues that the challenges faced by African women compared to their counterparts in other regions are not solely gender-based; instead, they stem from the broader context of the unique African experience, particularly in the postcolonial era (Oluwaseyi, 2014).

Given the historical context of gender inequality in Zimbabwean education and learning materials, liberalism as a feminist theory focuses on “equality of opportunity” for both males and females (Nahdiyati, 2009, p.12). Liberal feminists advocate for equal access for women and girls to educational opportunities. Nevertheless, this branch of liberal feminism has made significant strides in elevating African feminism and disseminating empowerment concepts across the continent, where the consumption culture requires careful understanding (Salami, 2017). It has also pushed for curriculum reforms that incorporate gender-sensitive perspectives and challenge gender stereotypes in educational materials, in addition to participating in programs to empower girls and women. Matanga (2018) suggests that in Zimbabwe, liberal feminists have made considerable progress by advocating for equal opportunities, particularly in education, although the sector still grapples with persistent inequalities. Radical feminists focus on language used in textbooks as an often-overlooked barrier to equality in education (Nofal & Qawar, 2015). Within the Zimbabwean context, they challenge traditional gender roles by questioning female subordination and male dominance. They contend that the education system remains fundamentally patriarchal, perpetuating the marginalisation and oppression of women (McMahon & Banyard, 2011).

Instead of merely addressing superficial issues such as specific laws, radical feminists aim to tackle the underlying problem of patriarchy (Cottais, 2015). They critique patriarchal language and discourse and challenge the cultural and social norms depicted in many literary works. As articulated by Gutsa et al. (2011, p.24), “men create and maintain patriarchy not only because they have the resources to do so but also because they have real interests in making women serve their interests.” This ideology often translates into learners’ reading materials, which serve as guides for their lives and contribute to the perpetuation of gender inequality. Radical feminists focus on language used in textbooks as an often-overlooked barrier to equality in education (Nofal & Qawar,

2015). Within the Zimbabwean context, they challenge traditional gender roles by questioning female subordination and male dominance. They contend that the education system remains fundamentally patriarchal, perpetuating the marginalisation and oppression of women (Banyard, 2011). Lastly, this paper will look at Feminist post-structuralism, which tends to view language as a canon through which differences between and within identity categories (e.g., gender, race, and ethnicity) are created and realised (Morgan, 2007). They challenge dominant narratives and power structures. By focusing on textbooks and novels, we try to unpack how hidden curriculum operates to perpetuate patriarchy in the educational context (Bachore, 2022). Several scholars in novels note that deconstructing patriarchal language and discourse is important. Feminist post-structuralists believe power is everywhere and reject the ideology of hierarchical power of the dominant (Cooper, 2016). Also, teacher education has been made to address gender, culture, and power dynamics to dispel inequality.

Literature review

The backbone of any research is a literature review. According to Hart (2018), studying the literature helps researchers reveal the main problems by giving a more robust understanding of the subject under study. This paper will reflect on the following literature review collection.

Global historical gender representations

Literature worldwide consistently portrays gender inconsistency between women and girls as disadvantaged regarding their social status (Braveman & Gruskin, 2016, p.21). According to Barrett (2013), working-class women in the Victorian era held several positions. Still, they were not paid the same as their male co-workers (even though their production figures and products were higher). This was a segregatory move which made women feel inferior and unappreciated. Moreover, women in novels were socially constructed as weak, naive, and nothing more than household commodities throughout the Victorian era (Shuckla, 2016). These descriptions undermining women have resulted

in inferiority and open forms of abuse. Linked to women being second-class citizens is the UNESCO 2020 annual fourth report on female characters, including those in the textbooks, who are very few compared to images of males. Women are also presented in less prestigious occupations and as introverts and passive (UNESCO, 2020). Gender inequality has always been problematic and has negatively affected women. History records that inequalities in present-day Africa began during the Early Iron Age, around the second century, when the domestication of crops and animals led to a more settled way of life (Chinyani, 2010). Proctor and Phimister (1995) assert that it was then that the division of labour between men and women that had begun in gatherer societies developed into a relationship of inequality, with women growing the most crops but with few rights. Throughout history, women have battled for equality, respect, and the same rights as men (Bamarami, 2014). There is, however, a great need to do more research to find out the root causes of gender inequality and how it can be addressed or eliminated.

Gender representation in high school novels in Zimbabwe.

High school learners in Zimbabwe are adolescents who spend most of their time interacting with educational materials, including the novels that they read. It is a critical development period conventionally understood as the years between the onset of puberty and the establishment of social independence (Steinberg, 2014). It is a period of rapid change and stressful challenges among youths. At the same time, it is an impulsive stage where they copy any behaviour that suits them without analysis. The current generation of teens and young adults is inherently negatively awash in an unprecedented flood of information, complicating living in the information age (Meyers, 2018). Schools and teachers must support adolescents' quest for identity formation through curricular experiences (Kira & Bukagile, 2013). Moreover, Yang et al (2013) note that adolescents may disregard family responsibilities, including schooling, in favour of peer group influence. Reading materials have a great influence on

learners, which might be positive or negative. Eisenman (2021) posits that giving youth a wide variety of reading materials has significant value as it gives them direct experiences of situations they have never experienced. Textbooks play a great role in children's upbringing by directly or indirectly transmitting models of social behaviour, norms and values (Kira & Bukagile, 2013). Textbooks are the learners' reference point, hence cultivating norms and values of a given society or country.

Gender representation in set book novels and textbooks

Recent socio-cultural outlooks about gender, subject knowledge and teaching materials suggest that the deep curriculum roots to gender and achievement are more affected by how gender values are privileged in subject communities in schools (Bachore, 2022). Writing English textbooks is a task for English language specialists: people who are proficient in the language and know how best to impart knowledge to the learners (Baldeh, 1990). Conversely, while textbook selection is important, the fundamental transformation happens when educators step out of their comfort zones and open spaces for children to identify and discuss systemic injustice (Moller, 2012). A lot of hidden curricula is learnt through novels. Morojele (2012) notes the dominance of masculinities over femininities in ways that perpetuate inequitable gender relations at the same time consolidating male supremacy through school textbooks. This, in a way, downgrades women and markets men's skills as a better gender in place of women, so that they are selected for minor jobs or confined at home. While learning materials in some countries might have undergone reforms to bring about fairness in gender representation, similar measures must be implemented in many parts of Africa, including Zimbabwe. Moreover, Mutekwe and Modiba's (2012) findings showed that patriarchal values and ideologies were embodied in textbooks used in secondary school curricula. Kaur (2018) notes that this type of gender bias is rife in textbooks around the world and is undermining girls' motivation and achievement in schools. Zigara (2016) notes that a content

analysis of gender issues in College Press and Longman publishers' language textbooks predominantly used in Zimbabwean primary schools confirms the notions of gender stereotyping inherent in textbooks. Similarly, in every part of the world, women face a common problem based on gender discrimination within and outside the family (Akhter, 2021).

Methodology

We selected the qualitative approach, which links well with the Critical Discourse Analysis, which is the methodology for this study. It gives a detailed analysis because of its reflexivity, collaboration, power analysis, and advocacy components. Through a qualitative approach, researchers can penetrate textual information and uncover the layers of meaning, comprehending the specifics of marginalised women's experiences that they come across (Smith, 2015). Moreover, it aims to provide a detailed understanding of human behaviour, emotions, feelings, attitudes, ideas and experiences (Tong et al, 2012). It brings about data relevant to human groups in social settings, which will be the gender relations that exist in stories.

Critical paradigm

Critical paradigm critiques power relations and social structures, emphasising social justice and transformation. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), a critical paradigm is used in research on social justice issues. It seeks to address the political, social, and economic issues that lead to social oppression, conflict, struggle, and power structures at whatever levels these might occur. It is a perspective primarily concerned with eliminating injustice, inequality, oppression, and or domination embedded in individual, relational, cultural, and structural contexts (Alveson & Deetz, 2000; Deetz, 1996; Jackson, 2000). The data extracted from the four novels will be used to explain the human qualities linked to gender representation. In addition, the qualitative approach is a type of research that explores and provides deeper insights into the real problems (Terry & Thapa, 2012). Gender representation in learners' materials has always been problematic since they

lay the foundation of world views.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical discourse is a methodology that examines the relationship between language, power and social structures in a particular community. According to Tabatadze (2023), Critical discourse analysis is widely used to analyse school textbooks, allowing researchers to critically examine the language, power relations, ideologies, and social representations embedded within educational materials. It is a branch of discourse analysis propounded by prominent scholars such as Fairclough (1992), Thompson (2009), and Ferguson et al. (2009). Thompson (1990, p. 105) describes any attempt to “read off” issues regarding the production or reception of texts by attending to the text alone as the “fallacy of internalism.” This suggests the need to critically analyse words to have a better understanding. Each of these Zimbabwean High school novels (A, B, C & D) addresses the themes related to gender, as arrived at through the thematic analysis. Users of thematic analysis develop core skills for conducting other kinds of qualitative analysis (Amerian & Esmail, 2014), which is a flexible approach that blends well with the analysis of novels.

Results and discussion of findings

Post-colonial writers’ female characters, stereotypes and expectations

The analysis is divided into two main themes: power domination and the othering of women. Power domination encompasses themes of resistance to patriarchy, oppression, and the challenge to traditional roles associated with women and girls. Some novels depict a gradual power transfer to women through employment and acquisitions, though this shift is incomplete. Despite the evolving portrayal of female characters and their roles, gender equality remains a significant issue, as women often face opposition and cannot fully exercise their power in a landscape where men retain predominant authority. Post-colonial feminist writers have moved away from traditional characterisations of women, presenting them as more assertive. Nevertheless, men continue to hold an advantage in high-paying positions; for instance, Mr. Masosa is a top executive in

Novel A, alongside his white lawyer counterparts. In

Novel C, which is written from a male perspective, there is a lot of ‘othering’ of women with many oppressive rules and abuse that girls and women go through, which reflects the perceptions of men about women in their writings. Novel B shows a woman who is empowered to challenge patriarchal roles and free herself from male domination by rejecting marriage to fight a war of liberation. The theme of marriage is still presented as an institution of abuse and gender inequality.

Implications of gender inequality on women and girls in textbooks

The effects of gender inequality on girls and women in general have been more detrimental than beneficial. Gender inequality negatively impacts the education of girl children, and it is detrimental to equal educational attainment for boys and girls. Similarly, girls tend to be affected and lag, while others fail to excel and even drop out. Inequality issues take away women’s drive because they make them afraid of the bad things in society. “The prevalence of ideologies justifying female subordination promotes the problem of gender-based violence” (Mashiri 2013, p. 95). Students’ Attitudes towards the roles of men and women in society are highly affected by how women and men are represented and portrayed in the instructional materials (Orfan, 2021). The socialisation of students into different gender roles is significantly influenced by educational materials, school organisations, curriculum design, and the content presented in schools worldwide. Sometimes, textbooks promote discriminatory gender norms and practices, and children’s engagement in class may diminish. The representation and discrimination found in school textbooks play a vital role in shaping children’s motivation and life choices. The portrayal of gender in textbooks greatly affects students’ perceptions of the world around them; hence, female students are sometimes excluded, devalued, or marginalised in the key roles depicted in textbooks and literature, which can lead to feelings of worthlessness.

Postcolonial representation of gender in novels

Eras may come and go, but the issue of gender representation continues to be a significant topic of discussion. Thamarana (2015) characterises postcolonial literature as reflecting life following independence from colonial rule, highlighting themes of segregation, division, isolation, and discrimination. The portrayal of women in literature has historically been imbalanced (Bamarani, 2014). Despite their crucial roles in society and the economy of their countries, women have faced severe oppression and disconnection from their histories, mainly due to the dual impact of colonialism and patriarchy (Bolat, 2022). Authors such as Chinua Achebe, Pius Okigbo, Es'kia Mphahlele, and Wole Soyinka have depicted women in roles shaped by societal norms dictated by religion and culture. Peter (2010) notes that this patriarchal perspective on female characters has led to suffering not only in real life from a traditional viewpoint but also, more specifically, in the literary works of these authors themselves. Additionally, the political and cultural codes and conventions circumscribed by the dominant male gender group stifle female subjectivities and unfairly appraise the crisis primarily or exclusively from a male vantage point (Nyambi, 2014). African women's stereotyped depiction and silencing frequently prevented them from voicing the issues they had encountered. To combat patriarchy and uncover the more profound implications of how and why systemic violence has taken root in various forms of violence, such as war, conflict, terror, poverty, and social inequality, postcolonial feminist theory focuses primarily on how women are portrayed in formerly colonised nations.

The results show that even though the difficulties and hardships of the postcolonial world have been documented in postcolonial literature, African women were sadly kept out of the core of the theory due to male-dominated perceptions. Unfortunately, women have been victims, and other people have always made many decisions about their lives rather than making decisions for themselves. The results

have shown that language textbooks can be biased against women in several ways, such as by under-representing females or LGBTQIA+ groups or by portraying gendered people as only engaging in particular activities, taking on specific roles, or displaying particular behaviours. Hence, women's suffering was caused by the socialisation of men's mistreatment during colonial authority. Some literature suggests that many African books published during that time portray women primarily as supporting characters to the main male protagonists, relegating them to a secondary role in societal issues (Schrottner et al., 2009). Narratives play a crucial role in helping us navigate various life situations by fostering an understanding of others and our collective human experiences (Jones, 2021). Men who experienced segregation and division in white-owned industries often applied similar principles to women and girls to assert their dominance (Tyagi, 2014). Postcolonial narratives significantly influence educational environments and shape concepts of identity formation (Schrottner et al., 2009). The male-centric ideology that emphasises women's suffering remains prevalent in postcolonial literature.

Gender representation in the current Zimbabwean educational system

Additionally, Mareva (2014) states that the government is committed to promoting equality in the education of women, girls and other disadvantaged groups who traditionally have suffered limited access to education. Nevertheless, these authors portray their younger female characters as intelligent and inquisitive individuals who refuse to be silenced by the injustices they face. Instead of accepting their circumstances, they challenge the patriarchal structures that define their lives, viewing these systems not only as sources of oppression both at home and in society but also as battlegrounds in their struggle to overcome their oppressors. These novels serve as a microcosm of the female experience, raising questions about the role of women in contemporary postcolonial Zimbabwe. The female characters endure the harsh realities of domestic oppression imposed

by repressive societal forces. However, they ultimately rise against these injustices, determined to assert their identities and establish their place within society. Thus, the biggest challenge facing Zimbabwe as a growing nation is the lack of education among women who ultimately succumb to abuse to survive or provide for their families.

Critical Discourse Analysis, Power and Dominance

Critical Discourse Analysis is a broad and diverse language ideology used in different settings. The results of the relationship between language, power, and ideology were broadly defined through CDA (Amerian & Esmail, 2014). As a result, novels selected for learners usually exhibit power struggles by revealing different discourses and ideologies claiming and struggling for dominance. Language is a powerful tool used to reflect power and solve power issues. The authors illustrate how women assert their empowerment and effectively reclaim their agency from the constraints of patriarchy. This paper highlights the ongoing efforts of women writers to create opportunities for liberating women's futures from dominant power structures in Postcolonial societies. It asserts that Postcolonial women writers have shifted away from traditional portrayals of conflicted female characters in search of identity, moving beyond mere definitions based on victimhood. Subsequently, the constant unity of language and other social matters ensures that language is entwined in social power in several ways: language indexes power and expresses power; language is involved where there is contention over and a challenge to power (Van Dijk, 2011). Santos and Aji (2020) posit that power is not one of someone's or a social group's continuous and unavoidable characteristics; instead, people with authority will continually be compelled to accept their power at one level, while others without power are ultimately vulnerable to the offer of power. This is displayed in set books selected where different forms are shown, some are gained, forced and affect different characters in several ways. This is where critical discourse analysis will be used as a research tool.

Critical Discourse Analysis and Othering Women

The concept of othering women encompasses themes such as objectification, marginalisation, stereotyping, and essentialism. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been employed to investigate the language utilised in social contexts. Additionally, CDA is a research framework that can explore the connections between literature and the underlying mechanisms of othering, power, and control. This indicates a significant relationship between othering and power dynamics in gendered literature. Typically, othering carries a negative connotation. As Rahman et al (2018) noted, the colonised individual is identified as "other" through discourse highlighting the subjugation of colonised populations. In the context of gender, the "other" is often perceived as the weaker party, typically represented by women or girls. Moreover, othering functions as a form of social representation closely linked to stereotypes (p.38). These authors highlight the exploitation and discrimination faced by women, portraying their characters as powerful examples of women's empowerment. They depict these characters as symbols of hope for the oppressed and address questions concerning women's roles in society.

Cases of power domination are prevalent in Novels A, B, C and D. To cite one example, "That woman, Fiona Kanda, the acting CEO of Pentagon Bank, is being unnecessarily headstrong. She's wasting everybody's time," Lincoln said. This depiction on Page 3 of the Novel shows women having power, but Lincoln's comment shows dissatisfaction with women's power. The dissatisfaction shows that power is not in the hands expected by men, hence the criticism. Discrimination through economic power and social systems is noted (Ferguson et al., 2009, p. 897). In the patriarchal world, men find it an anomaly for a woman to go against decisions made by men. Men rationalise their power and do not want women to be better than them.

Relations of domination may be established and sustained by being concealed, denied or

represented in a way "which deflects attention from or glosses over existing relations or processes" (Thompson, 2009, p.62). Men are discriminatory in terms of power being in the women's hands. In post-colonial novels, women's power and domination often emerge as central themes, challenging traditional patriarchal structures (Begum, 2017). An empowered woman possesses the courage to make her own life choices and the clarity to recognise her ambitions. She actively engages in efforts to attain equality with men, thereby diminishing gender-based discrimination in a patriarchal society. Empowerment challenges the stereotypes that portray women as submissive, invisible, weak, dependent, and self-effacing, enabling them to rise above social and economic discrimination rooted in gender. For example, in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, female characters like Olanna embody resilience and agency, navigating a war-torn society while asserting their independence (Harry & Muthusamy, 2023). Similarly, in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, Ammu's defiance against societal norms highlights women's struggles against colonial and domestic oppression. These narratives reveal how women reclaim their identities and reshape power dynamics, illustrating the complexities of gender within post-colonial contexts and emphasising their crucial role in cultural and political transformation.

Othering women

In post-colonial novels, the concept of "othering" often manifests through the marginalisation of women, reflecting both colonial and patriarchal oppression. Postcolonial women writers address significant issues concerning women, including their awakening to individuality, departure from traditional roles, relationships with men, and goals and aspirations. However, the feminism they embrace is not centred on rebellion against difference, inequality, and oppression, instead, it emphasises a rhythmic, mutual, complementary, and welfare-oriented perspective. Characters like the subjugated women in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* illustrate how colonialism exacerbates gender inequalities, rendering

women as "others" in a male-dominated society. Similarly, in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, women navigate oppressive cultural expectations and are often seen through the lens of exoticism or victimhood. This process of othering highlights their struggles for identity and autonomy and critiques the intersectionality of race, class, and gender, revealing the intricacies of post-colonial identities. The findings revealed othering of women on Pages 115 (Novel A), 10 (Novel B), 10 (Novel C and Novel D). The analysis revealed that a great number of women who are undermined are problematic, especially being discriminated against in acquiring education. A reasonable number could not read or write; the most pathetic thing was that they did not even know how valuable education was. They walked blindly through life, happy to have their husbands and brothers lead the way (Novel B, P.10). Men are afraid of being challenged by women once they become literate (Sinha, 2018). Although women worldwide still face significant barriers to accessing education, it remains a key factor in promoting women's empowerment (Reshi et al, 2022). Legitimation linked to rationalisation explores different relations in the society that are defended (Ferguson et al., 2009, p. 897) through: -Structural limitations; discrimination within the economic and social systems; Problems of gender inequality will remain an obstruction in women's emancipation despite the intervention by feminist writers to uplift women.

The findings show that post-colonial feminist writers often present complex and multidimensional female characters who defy stereotypes and expectations. The literature texts navigate issues of race, class, and gender with resilience and agency, offering learners a more nuanced understanding of the intersections of identity and power. These characters are portrayed as strong, independent, and capable of challenging oppressive systems. The paper, through the findings, concludes that individually, the selected four set book novels expose that gender representation remains imbalanced and biased towards males who have economic and social power, which takes away women's power.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed how critical theories primarily focus on issues of power and justice, examining how factors such as economy, race, class, gender, religion, education, and sexual orientation shape, reproduce, or alter social systems. Discourses are often supported by ideologies, which are understood as sets of values and beliefs established by dominant social groups to maintain their power. In Zimbabwe, textbooks are considered part of the prevailing system within the education sector, conveying concepts of power and gender inequality to stu-

One of the aims of the National Gender Policy is to foster the equitable advancement of both men and women across all sectors of Zimbabwe's economy. Additionally, the government aims to provide an inclusive and non-discriminatory educational environment where all children must receive an equal education. However, the reforms implemented have not achieved true equality and justice within the curriculum, as it continues to perpetuate stereotypes about women and men, with access to

The paper has highlighted how the conflict exacerbates existing gender inequalities, further intensifying the difficulties faced by marginalised women. To better understand the dynamic nature of gender representation in novels and how it affects many facets of life, it is recommended that longitudinal studies be conducted to track changes in gender identity and expression across time. This could make it possible to understand gender experiences in a more complex way, including how gender impacts social outcomes, health, and well-being.

dents. Like many countries worldwide, Zimbabwe has developed policies that ensure the inclusion of all genders within its education system. Furthermore, there should be more inculcation of gender theories that instil equality. This could be fostered during Teacher training where inclusivity is incorporated in every subject, sport and extra-curricular activities. Moreover, for the already practising teachers, there can be taught more about gender equality through workshops, staff development programmes which promote critical thinking and caution on dealing with gender issues.

quality education, which largely favours the financial divide. While gender equality remains unfulfilled in practice, the state should take reasonable legislative and other measures to promote equality and protect or advance individuals or groups disadvantaged by unfair discrimination. It is our hope that more studies of this nature could be conducted to keep on improving the gender research outcomes. This study was based on secondary research, which limited the research to information from the four novels.

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.6>**EXPLORING NURSES' EXPERIENCES OF CARING FOR MENTAL HEALTH USERS DIAGNOSED WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISORDER IN GAUTENG, SOUTH AFRICA**

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Abstract

Background: Substance use disorders are highly prevalent and contribute substantially to the burden of disease globally. Mental health and substance abuse disorders are complex, interrelated conditions that pose significant challenges for healthcare providers worldwide. The growing concern is that substance use disorders are related to the development of other mental health disorders, which are often treated at the same time in the hospital, leading to a prolonged hospital stay. The purpose of the study was to explore nurses' experiences of caring for hospitalised mental health users diagnosed with substance use disorder in the Gauteng province. Methods: A qualitative explorative descriptive research design was used. The population comprised all nursing categories who work in the units/wards admitting mental health care users diagnosed with substance use disorders. Stratified purposive sampling was employed to select participants. Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather in-depth insights from nurses working in mental health and addiction care settings. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. Results: Two themes emerged from the data: the nursing staff's experiences and nurses' responsibilities. Conclusion: Nurses caring for MHCUs diagnosed with substance use disorders experience difficulties that affect their psychological status and well-being. Contribution: This study contributes to a better understanding of the challenges nurses face in working with hospitalised mental health users with substance use disorders. Therefore, undergraduate, postgraduate and work-based training can be explored to mitigate these challenges for nurses.

Keywords: *caring mental health care users, relapse, psychiatric hospitals, substance use disorders.*

Introduction and background

Mental health and substance abuse disorders are complicated, correlated conditions that establish major challenges for healthcare professionals globally due to overlapping symptoms, complex interactions, and the need for integrated treatment approaches.¹ In South Africa, the Gauteng province is increasingly experiencing mental health and substance abuse, ranging from double that of the overall population for anxiety disorders to five times that of the for bipolar disorder.² These conditions have a widespread and extreme

impact on the general population, negatively affecting the health and well-being of individuals, families, communities, and healthcare systems. It leads to health impediments such as increased rates of chronic illnesses and mental health disorders, which place a significant burden on public health services.³ Nurses, as frontline healthcare professionals, throughout the treatment process, play an essential role in advocating for all-inclusive patient care and work together with other healthcare providers while also providing psychosocial support, education, and medication management.⁴ However, despite the

critical nature of nurses' involvement in mental health care, minimal consideration has been given to understanding their personal experiences, challenges, and coping strategies in managing which dual diagnosis often hinders their well-being and potentially impacts patient care.⁵ Substance use has become a major growing global concern of public health and the socioeconomic impacts thereof affect a person's well-being.⁷ Literature defines substance use disorder (SUD) as a mental disorder that affects a person's mind and actions, leading to their "abuse" or problematic use of legal or illegal substances.⁸ Authors indicated that SUDs may contribute to the development of other mental disorders that can usually be treated at the same time in the hospital.^{9,10} Mental health care users (MHCUs) suffering from SUDs are admitted to psychiatric hospitals, which poses an important challenge to nurses working in mental health care hospitals, especially to those who are caring for MHCUs diagnosed with SUD.^{11,12} Research shows that caring for SUD patients challenges nurses to the extent that it contributes to the perpetuation of stigma in mental health, along with nurses thinking that their knowledge is insufficient and blaming their formal education and training.^{13,14} Estimates from South Africa are higher, with one in six adult South Africans meeting diagnostic criteria for substance use in 12 months.^{15,16} These conditions have a widespread and extreme impact on the general population, negatively affecting the health and well-being of individuals, families, communities, and healthcare systems. It leads to health impediments such as increased rates of chronic illnesses and mental health disorders, which place a significant burden on public health services. The well-being of patients diagnosed with SUDs is intervened through the provision of comprehensive healthcare that requires the psychiatric nurses' role to coordinate mental healthcare.¹⁷ Even though nurses are the prime population of health care providers lead the health system transition. The South African Mental Health Care Act (No. 17 of 2002)¹⁸ defined MHCUs as individuals receiving care, treatment and rehabilitation in a health institution to improve mental status. Consequently, treating

The dual diagnosis of mental health and substance abuse disorder requires specialized knowledge, and a multifaceted approach to integrate treatment focusing on both conditions concurrently.⁶

MHCUs fairly, honestly, and with human dignity is an important aspect for effective coordination of mental health in the provision of psychiatric services during hospitalisation.^{19,20,21} Even though the provision of comprehensive mental health care obligates nurses to have adequate knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes toward mental illness. Literature shows up to 43% unplanned readmission rate in mental health institutions, which may be used to measure the quality of the provision of nursing care.²² Several studies that nurses experience fear of violence, uncertainty, and poor working environment^{23,24,25} and are emotionally affected to the extent that they regret their career and need mental health and emotional support.^{26,27} However, there is limited research exploring the lived experiences of nurses in this specialized area of care.

Global research has explored the challenges faced by nurses in caring for patients diagnosed with SUD and co-occurring mental health, there remains a notable gap in literature focusing on the South African context-specific mental healthcare, particularly within the Gauteng province. Existing studies tend to generalize the experiences of mental healthcare providers without recognising the unique depths of nurses, who are often the frontline caregivers. Understanding how nurses traverse these challenges can inform competent mental healthcare training, policy development, and training programs, ensuring individuals with dual diagnoses receive holistic nursing care.^{28,29} In addition, a lack of thorough understanding of nurses' experiences may result in inadequate support, training, and resource allocation for nurses to compromise the quality of mental healthcare.³⁰

In this regard, it is crucial to explore the experiences of nurses working in SUD units/wards in a psychiatric hospital in South Africa to identify areas for concern and enhance the overall mental

health practice. This study contrasts with existing research on SUD in Africa as it focuses specifically on the lived experiences of nurses caring for MHCUs diagnosed with co-occurring SUD in Gauteng, South Africa. However, much of the African literature addresses the prevalence, treatment outcomes, and public health effects of SUD. This study adopts a qualitative approach to uncover the experiences that nurses face and offers a nuanced, context-specific contribution that is largely preoccupied in current African SUD literature. This aspect prompted the authors to conduct the current study and ask: 'What are the experiences of nurses caring for MHCUs diagnosed with SUDs in a psychiatric hospital in Gauteng Province? Therefore, the current study will contribute to the body of knowledge regarding the experiences of nurses caring for MHCUs diagnosed with SUDs in a psychiatric hospital in Gauteng Province.

Research methods and design

Research design

A qualitative explorative, descriptive, and contextual design was used to examine nurses' experiences of caring for MHCUs diagnosed with SUD. This approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of the nurses' depths, capturing the hints of their experiences within the specific context³¹ of Gauteng, South Africa.

Setting

The study was conducted in one of the psychiatric hospitals in Gauteng Province. This is the only psychiatric hospital in the Tshwane District of Gauteng Province providing long-term mental health care services. The hospital also serves as a referral facility from Mpumalanga, Limpopo, and North-West Provinces. The SUD wards/units admit MHCUs from 18 to 50 years of age. The hospital consists of 24 wards with a bed capacity of 32 beds in each ward for the entire institution, of which two wards admit MHCUs diagnosed with SUDs. When discharged, MHCUs are referred to local clinics for follow-up on outpatients to access mental health care services at a primary level.

Study population and sampling

All nurses caring for the MHCUs diagnosed with SUDs in the hospital were recruited. Non-probability purposive sampling technique was used to ensure that participants were recruited based on their absolute experience and relevance to the focus of the study. The sample included nurses from all professional categories (professional nurses, enrolled nurses and auxiliary nurses) who work in the SUD wards. The sample size consisted of 12 nurses from both day and night shifts, depending on who was on duty during the data collection period. To ensure depth and relevance of experience, eligibility was limited to nurses who had been working in the SUD wards for a minimum of two years and agreed to take part in the study voluntarily and met the inclusion criteria were selected. Informed consent was obtained from each participant before they participated in the study. Only those who had signed consent forms to participate in the study were included.

Data collection

A semi-structured interview guide was developed, based on the objectives of the study,³² to collect data from nurses who were on duty. Arrangements were made regarding the date and time to conduct the interviews. The face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted in a room with minimal distractions for 45 to 60 minutes and audio recorded to ensure that information was not missed. The English interview guide was developed and pre-tested on three participants before the main study to maintain consistency during the process of data collection. One open-ended question was "*Tell us about your experiences regarding caring for the MHCUs diagnosed with SUDs in this ward,*" followed by probing questions to obtain more details information from the participants.³³

Data analysis

All the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and analysed following six steps for thematic analysis, as described in Braun and Clarke^{34,35} as follows: 1) Familiarisation with the data: This

was achieved through readings of interview transcripts and field notes data thoroughly. The authors engaged actively with the material, making initial notes and observations to become familiar with both the content and the notes of the data before moving forward in the analysis. 2) Organising the data to generate initial codes: After familiarisation, the authors organised the data into meaningful groups to identify and code to capture a specific element of the data that is relevant to the research question to reduce the data to manageable pieces. 3) Sorting codes into themes: themes were identified from the codes to ensure that each theme is both internally articulate and distinct from other themes by moving back and forth between codes and extracting data to refine and adjust them as the analysis deepens with the research question. 4) Reviewing and refining themes: The authors revisit the themes to check whether the themes accurately represent the coded data and whether they work with the entire dataset to split, combine, or discard themes based on the data they are intended to capture. 5) Defining and naming themes: Once the themes have been refined, the authors defined each theme in more detail to clarify what each theme represents to ensure that it captures a distinct aspect of the data in a way that gives a clear indication of what the theme represents. 6) Writing-up the Analysis: The researcher illustrated each theme with representative data excerpts to link these examples back to the research question interpreting the themes in the context of existing literature to demonstrate how the findings contribute to the broader field of knowledge. Additionally, the authors involved an independent coder to enhance objectivity, in coding and categorizing themes,

providing additional depth to the data. This extended process enables authors to uncover deep insights while maintaining a high level of rigor and precision in their analysis.

Ethical considerations

An ethical clearance certificate was obtained from the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee to conduct the study with reference number SMUREC/H/186/2015:PG and NHREC: Rec. 210408-003. Permission was granted from 06 August 2015 to 06 August 2016 to conduct the study. The researcher also obtained permission from the Head of a health establishment as well as from the respective SUDs unit managers. Participants were given informed consent and voluntarily participated, of which three participants withdrew after signing the consent form. Participants were given fictitious names to protect their identities during data collection. Privacy and confidentiality of the data collected were encrypted with a password.

Results

Participants demographic data, of the 12 participants who were interviewed, six ranged between having 5 to 10 years of experience, three ranged between 11 to 20 years and three ranged between 21 to 30 years. Nine females and three males of all nursing ranks participated. Their ages varied from 30 to 60 years old, of which six were 30 to 40, four were 41 to 50, and two were 51 to 60 years of age. Of the 12 participants, one professional nurse had a master's degree in nursing, two with an Honours Degree in Nursing and two with a Diploma in Nursing. Three enrolled nurses and four auxiliary nurses had a certificate.

The two themes that emerged from the study are indicated in Table 2.

Table 2. Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
1. The experiences of the nurses	1.1 Decrease morale 1.2 Feeling powerless 1.3 Experiences regarding MHCUs' recovery 1.4 Family involvement in care 1.5 Positive acknowledgement
2. Nurses' responsibilities	2.1. Application of the nursing process 2.2. Administration and monitoring of medication 2.3. Referral to a substance rehabilitation unit

Theme 1. The experiences of the nurses**Sub-theme 1.1 Decreased morale**

The participants felt that the MHCUs in their unit were not motivated enough to conquer addiction after discharge. Some nurses cited their frustrations with admitting the same patients very often, as indicated below.

'Truly speaking. It is so hard. It is as if we are taking one step forward and two steps backward. Such things tend to make us burnout.' (Jane, 31 years old, female)

'I really become frustrated when I readmit a known MHCU, especially one who has been admitted by me previously.' (Christine, 52 years old, female)

Sub-theme 1.2 Feeling powerless

The participants expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the re-admission of substance users. They felt that their interventions and efforts spent on these MHCUs on their previous admissions were fruitless and a wasted exercise.

"Of the staff, especially if it is a known patient to the unit, you'll find that the staff feels demoralised when we don't see progress concerning helping that patient.' (Elsie, 34 years old, female)

Sub-theme 1.3 Experiences regarding MHCUs' recovery

The participants stated that it is simple for them to observe and plan interventions by conducting therapeutic interviews. Participants reported that

they feel motivated when they observe the psychotic traits lessen with withdrawal symptoms, and this improvement in the patient's physical state makes them feel good about what they do.

'It depends on the patient, for instance, when we have a supportive interview and you have reached out to the patient, and they have opened up to you and you have tried your level best to assist and you get positive feedback from the patient.' (Collen, 33 years old, male)

Sub-theme 1.4 Family involvement in care

The participants' experience in caring for MHCUs diagnosed with SUDs indicates the significance of family involvement. The participants mentioned that it is important that the family members be involved and educated about the management of addiction so that they can be able to support their loved ones.

'With most of the patients, the families can be helpful, but there are times whereby the family comes and questions the treatment that is given to the patient by the doctor and that might be negative to the recovery of the patient.' (Minkhenso, 43 years old, female)

'Sometimes you might find that the patient is diagnosed with schizophrenia and the mother will be saying "Not my child", and that might result in the patient not taking the medication and abusing substances'. (Christine, 52 years old, female)

Sub-theme 1.5 Positive acknowledgement

The findings of the study indicated that some of

the participants mentioned that the families of the MHCUs have faith in the rehabilitation programme, judging from the success rate following attendance at the rehabilitation unit. The participants confirmed that some MHCUs manage to remain off substances following the rehabilitation programme.

'Some of the family members call us to thank us for nursing the patients when they are satisfied with the change in the patient, and this motivates us.' (Tom, 41 years old, male)

'Some families are consulting us before they leave the hospital to ask what and how they can support their loved ones at home during discharge.' (Lebo, 36-years old, female)

Theme 2. Nurses' responsibilities

The findings of the study indicated that nurses play an important role in providing care to manage MHCUs' physical needs and treating mental health illnesses. Participants mentioned that nurses have the responsibility to care for individuals with SUDs to help them recover and improve their quality of life.

Sub-theme 2.1 Application of the nursing process

Participants indicated that the application of the nursing process is a major aspect that helps them manage the MHCUs. The quotes from participants evidenced that nurses are responsible for the application of the nursing process.

'The only thing that is helping us to manage our patients diagnosed with SUDs is the nursing process. This also assists in planning what should be done to assist the patients, implementation, and the evaluation of our interventions. Some of the problems can be addressed through individual therapy, some through group activities, while other problems need family involvement.' (Justice, 37 years old, male)

'We consider the nursing process as a scientific nursing approach to guide us in managing our patients.' (Jane, 31years old, female)

Sub-theme 2.1 Administration and monitoring of medication

Participants identified that the administration and monitoring of medication affect the management and recovery of MHCUs. The following quotes from participants evidenced that the administra-

tion and monitoring of medication were problems.

'Our patients are always smoking dagga, which I think is not good when taking medication. We are giving them medication as prescribed, but it takes time for them to recover since they continue smoking while admitted.' (Lebo, 36 years old, female)

'It is difficult to monitor patients with SUDs since they are always aggressive when we advise them about the danger of smoking and sometimes refuse urine tests that will reflect cannabis.' (Tom, 41 years old, male)

Sub-theme 2.3 Referral to substance rehabilitation unit (SRU)

The participants reported that the hospital has a SRU programme to rehabilitate MHCUs diagnosed with SUDs. It was also indicated that MHCUs are not granted leave of absence (LOA) when referred to the SRU to minimise the risk of interrupting the programme. The following quotes from participants evidenced that nurses understand the significance of the referral to the SRU programme within the hospital.

'We have a programme, SRU, where MHCUs need to commit themselves, so you can imagine a patient that has been admitted for the third time saying they are going to commit themselves to stop using these substances.' (Elsie, 34 years old, female)

'Before the MHCUs start to attend the SRU programme within the hospital, we prepare them by conducting mental health education specifically for those who are referred.' (Sanky, 46 years old, female)

'We know that it is difficult for the MHCUs, including those who are smoking, to quit what they are used to. That is why we are conducting mental health education before the SRU programme.' (Andile, 38 years old, female)

Discussion

The study findings explored the experiences of nurses caring for MHCUs diagnosed with SUDs in a psychiatric hospital in Gauteng Province. Participants highlighted significant aspects that indicate that caring for MHCUs diagnosed with SUDs affects their psychological status and well-being. This was also found in the Mthombeni³⁶ study, which revealed that nurses' psychosocial

well-being should be considered, as it may contribute to poor prognosis on the patient's treatment outcomes. This is similar to the literature on the nurses' coping strategies when caring for MHCUs diagnosed with SUDs, leaving nurses psychologically and physically drained.³³

The study findings highlighted that those participants felt that admitting known MHCUs frustrates nurses when admitting the same patients soon after discharge, contributing to feeling demotivated, which may influence the provision of quality mental health services. A study conducted to describe the existing experiences of mental health nurses caring for MHCUs with comorbidities highlighted decreased morale as a negative consequence. This experience deeply frustrates nurses because of being capable but unable to manage MHCUs that affect the provision of mental health care services.³⁶

The literature suggests growing evidence supports various interventions that might mitigate burnout and improve psychological well-being. According to Razai et al.³⁸ burnout from a stressful work environment unpleasantly impacts work productivity, leading to disciplinary majors. These can be managed by developing organizational-level interventions such as stress management, mindfulness, small group discussions and peer support made accessible to help employees feel connected to promoting and maintaining their well-being. The same author also highlighted significant challenges that remain in the development and implementation of such interventions. Cohens³⁹ study to investigate the impact of interventions designed to address well-being revealed that interventions such as mindfulness-based education are shown to elicit positive results in well-being while promoting positive mindsets and organisational changes. In addition, the development and facilitation of effective coping strategies, such as training programmes, were suggested for employees to improve resilience and help buffer against the onset of adverse mental health and burnout.⁴⁰

Consequently, participants reported that they feel motivated when they observe the MHCUs' psychotic traits lessen with withdrawal symptoms. This is similar to a study by Sehularo et al.³⁷, who reflected that when nurses observe MHCUs recovering, it makes them feel motivated and view

the recovery process positively to overcome their negative life experiences of caring for MHCUs diagnosed with SUDs. Furthermore, the training, such as simulation-based education, was found to provide a potent contact-based strategy in simulations to prompt critical reflection and cultivate empathy, for reducing stigma and fostering a supportive approach to caring for individuals with SUDs.⁴¹

The participants also highlighted the significance of involving family members through family therapy sessions. This revealed that when family members were educated to understand why they are involved in caring for their loved ones diagnosed with SUDs, it contributed to effective treatment compliance at home.⁴² Likewise, the study by Bagley et al.⁴³ revealed that nurses play a significant role in guiding family members about how they can help support their loved ones to recover, as well as monitoring for substance use and compliance with medications. Moreover, Public health policies and campaigns that focus exclusively on promoting open disclosure of mental illness to foster community education outcomes are unlikely to be effective without additional strategies aimed at preventing and redressing the structural impacts of stigma for all family members.^{44,45}

The positive acknowledgment from families who were involved gives nurses a sense of gratitude when family members understand the reasons for discharging the MHCU from the hospital and ask questions for clarity before discharge. Research shows that family members re-integrate with nurses to understand their mental health conditions, which also assists them to realise and accept MHCUs when discharged.^{46,47,48} Participants also indicated that family members trust nurses to the extent that they receive calls asking how the rehabilitation programme is conducted, so that they understand what they can do to assist their MHCUs at home when discharged. Family-based approach and a mixed model of care, in which the family members are engaged to participate in caring for patients diagnosed with SUDs, were found to be effective in integrated care needs in mental health nursing practice.^{49,50}

In addition, a collaborative treatment model was also found to be an effective integrated family approach in addressing family-related issues in a

holistic way in mental health.⁵¹ In this collaborative treatment model, families are engaged from the beginning of the mental healthcare to the end; this helps families gain an optimal understanding of the nature of SUDs and their importance in supporting the MHCUs as well as understanding that the treatment success benefits both the service user and the family as a whole.^{52,53}

The current study finds that the application of the nursing process is one of the nurses' responsibilities to care for individuals with SUDs to help them recover and improve their quality of life. These findings are similar to Lemon et al.⁵⁴ and Sim et al.⁵⁵ who found that nurses are obliged to understand the application of the nursing process as a significant responsibility in promoting mental health recovery.^{56,57} Participants indicated that the administration and monitoring of medication to the MHCUs diagnosed with SUDs was a problem. This is also in line with Sim et al.⁵⁵ aimed at understanding the experiences of nurses caring for MHCUs characterised by aggressive behaviours, which suggested the need for intervention to resolve difficulties experienced by psychiatric nurses.

Regardless of the internal referral to the substance rehabilitation unit programme. The current study revealed that MHCUs were expected to be granted leave of absence (LOA) for a certain period before discharge when recovered. It is highlighted in literature that a comprehensive rehabilitation programme should be supported by a long-stay inpatient without granting LOA to promote a recovery-oriented rehabilitation programme, followed by referral for support at the community level.^{58,59} In this regard, participants reported that when MHCUs are referred to the SRU are not granted LOA to minimise the risk of interrupting the programme. Research shows the existence of treatment centers in Gauteng province to motivate and encourage service users to attend aftercare programmes, and to keep in contact with healthcare professionals to arrange follow-ups after discharge from the hospital.⁶⁰ It is noted in the literature that the aftercare programmes are not consistently available or accessible to recovering MHCUs due to financial constraints linked to traveling and geographical location. In addition, factors such as determination

to break away from substance use, personal commitments, support from family members, unemployment, and poverty were found to be associated with the rates of relapse.⁵² However, the current study revealed that regardless of the positive and negative experiences, nurses are knowledgeable about their responsibilities for caring for MHCUs during hospitalization, which could be met continuously until they are discharged.^{56,59} Research shows that post successful completion of the treatment in the rehabilitation centers, substance users' patterns of relapse and returning to the institution multiple times could result in dependency in the treatment process, which drains a lot of energy out of nurses and results in feelings of self-doubt.^{60,61} Despite the numerous challenges, nurses' dedication to their patients' well-being and their understanding of the complexities of dual diagnosis care are essential in fostering positive recovery outcomes. The current study made recommendations focusing on continuous education, management, a holistic nursing practice, and future research. Nurses should receive specialized training on co-occurring disorders to enhance their assessment and treatment strategies. Hospital management should facilitate and engage nurses in professional development opportunities that will keep them informed about best practices for managing dual diagnoses and proactively managing relapse risk by helping MHCUs' follow-up care to maintain recovery. Nurses should be encouraged to participate in psychoeducation, therapy, and support groups to improve the quality of nursing practice. Additionally, nurses should also advocate for comprehensive support services by establishing strong ties with community organisations and advocating for integrated mental health and substance use services within the public healthcare system. Finally, the study recommended that research should be conducted in other mental health facilities among healthcare professionals with experience of collaboratively caring for the MHCUs diagnosed with SUDs.

Limitations of this study

The findings of this study may not be generalised in other contexts because the study was limited to nurses who have experience in caring for

MHCUs diagnosed with SUDs who have previously worked in SUD wards/units. In addition, the study was also limited to other healthcare professionals with experience in collaboratively caring for the MHCUs in the same SUD

Implications for nursing practice

Employee satisfaction surveys for all nurses caring for MHCUs diagnosed with SUDs should be conducted gradually to identify areas of concern. The hospital management, through operational managers, should support the morale of nurses by conducting in-service training to capacitate them to overcome the challenges they experience caring for MHCUs diagnosed with

Conclusion

This study explored nurses' experiences caring for MHCUs diagnosed with SUDs. Several challenges were identified, which have affected their psychological status and well-being. Nurses also reported their feelings of demotivation when they admit the same MHCU several times due to relapse. The study's findings highlight the evidence that Behaviour Change Theory encouraged nurses to understand their role

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Data availability

Data analysis of these study findings can be obtained from the first author, E.D.M., on reasonable request.

ward/unit during data collection. Therefore, a comparative study with similar facilities in other regions or including other healthcare professionals could provide a more robust understanding of systemic and interpersonal challenges.

SUDs. Family involvement in caring for MHCUs should be emphasised to improve the quality of mental health care. Mental health awareness related to the danger of substance use should be conducted in local areas to empower the community members to enhance their knowledge and minimise the risk of developing SUDs.

and responsibilities in caring for MHCUs diagnosed with SUDs. Future research that will include nurses who have previously worked in SUD units/wards and other health professionals who are directly collaboratively involved in MHCUs diagnosed with SUDs should be pursued in the same hospital to improve the quality of mental health services.

Competing interests

The authors declare no financial or conflict of interest in writing this manuscript.

Author's contributions

E.D.M. and N.F.M. contributed equally to this research manuscript.

Disclaimer

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INFLUENCE OF TSHIKONA TRADITIONAL DANCE ON YOUTH BEHAVIOUR AT MUKUMBANI VILLAGE, LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

The change in times has been affecting various aspects of life which include culture and tradition. Tshikona traditional dance has been a part of the Vhavenda cultural identity thus having an impact on the lives of young men who take part in the dance and the community at large. As the world becomes more modernised, the traditional aspect of life is likely to suffer. The aim of the study was to investigate the influence of Tshikona traditional dance on youth behaviour at Mukumbani village. The study was qualitative in nature. This study used non-probability sampling and purposive sampling method to select participants at Mukumbani village. The study used a narrative research design as well as face-to-face semi-structured interviews to collect data. The data collected in the face-to-face interviews was analysed through a thematic data analysis method. The findings of the study showed that Tshikona plays a vital role in the lives of young people thus having an influence on their behaviour. The study recommended various ways to enhance Tshikona traditional dance to benefit young people

Keywords: Keywords: Behaviour, Influence, Tshikona, Youth

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Introduction

South Africa is famous for its cultural diversity and its musical richness. Music remains a large part of South Africa's cultural history. South African cultural diversity includes the Nguni which are (Zulu, Xhosa, and Swazi), Sotho, Tswanas, Pedi, and Tsonga and Venda lineages. Each of these groups shows different characteristics, dance, and cultural traditions. For effective communication, traditional dance has been playing various roles that are functional in all major demonstration of human behaviours (Versi, 2017).

Traditional dance has been a taking part in different areas, playing various roles that are useful in all the major manifestations of human endeavours for effective communication (Hanna, 2014). Furthermore, traditional dance has also helped in shaping and reshaping the history of different cultures all over the world. Traditional dance is always important because it is religious in a self-expressive and communicative sense, and it is

states that the most basic motive of traditional dance is the physical expression of inner emotion.

The Venda culture is imbedded in the role of the royal leaders and the royal family. The royals lead their communities by example wherein they uphold the rules of behaviour and present good morals. The Venda culture is guided by rites of passage which all involve dance wherein children learn how to conduct themselves at home and in their communities (Mabuela, 2017; Phaswana, 2015). Tshikona is Vhavenda traditional dance. Tshikona is performed in all Vhavenda important occasions, such as the installation of a new leader, when there is death of the king, weddings and the sacrificial rites at the graves on a leader ancestor (Mabuela, 2017). Tshikona dance is performed by group of men dancing around making a circle from the middle of the ground going outwards, the dance is led by drummer and

it involves leaping and spinning movement.

African dance is a histrionic small-scale version of many of the cultures. Dance has always been an important aspect of African tradition and communities. Wahab, Odunsi and Ajiboye, (2012) indicated that in many traditional African societies dance was common part of significant occasions in an individual's life cycle as compared to modern life in Europe and America where behaviour is individualistic and segmented. These occasions generally fell within the jurisdiction of indigenous religions. There are dances for birth, youth education, adult initiation, worship, work, play, and death. Today, African traditional dance in most parts of the continent has lost its key position in society. African traditional dance performed in religious and socio-economic functions with recent changes in Africa have either disappeared or have altered. Many African communities have lost their traditional way and traditional dances (Wahab, Odunsi & Ajiboye, 2012).

In a study by Mugovhani (2015), it was revealed that indigenous cultural performances such as Tshikona have always been multifunctional. It was conceptualised and performed for several purposes, and according to a variety of functions. Amongst others, Tshikona served to entertain guests at the royal court or to create a peaceful atmosphere revealing the status of the environment. The splendour of Tshikona served to enhance the image of the ruler as the patron and sole custodian of the tradition. Tshikona is strictly performed by males and not females and this cultural practice helped in introducing them gradually to patterns of maturity, responsibility, and political authority. The performances were also possibly used to keep the boys out of mischief (Mugovhani, 2015).

Purpose and objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to look into the influence of Tshikona on youth behaviour at Mukumbani village

These were the key objectives of the study:

- To investigate the type of behaviour displayed by youth who participate in the Tshikona traditional dance.
- To uncover the experiences of youth who participate in the Tshikona traditional dance.
- To discover measures that could be implemented to enhance the Tshikona traditional dance.

Research Design and Methodology

This study was conducted through qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data and it is broadly inductive, constructive, and interpretive. In this study, participants which were young men and men from Mukumbani village gave answers based on their experiences of being Tshikona dancers in order to obtain information which is of quality.

A narrative research design was used in this study in which verbal data is the core of the work. The participants led and told story of their lives and the researcher collected stories and created a new story in turn or a description of the experiences from the collective stories (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). This approach enabled the participants to describe their experiences. Narratives allow researchers to go post the transmission of data, making the experience revisited, which includes important features of understanding the subjects interviewed.

Study population and sample

Population refers to the general group from which the targeted group is drawn one of the important elements of qualitative research with regard to sampling is that the sample is taken from the population in which the phenomenon is explored (Oxford Dictionary, 2019). For this study, the population consist of young people from Mukumbani village in Vhembe District, Thulamela Municipality in Limpopo province.

In this study, nonprobability sampling was used, because this method does not select the sample

randomly. Under non-probability sampling, participants were selected through purposive sampling. Through purposive sampling, the researchers use their own judgement about which participants to choose and they select only those who best meet the purpose of their study (Swartz et al, 2011). This method is often used in situations where in sampling is done with a specific reason. In this study, it is done because the researcher only picked those who seem to best meet the purpose of the study. The sample size consist of 10 men ranging from the ages of 18 to 50 who are a part or members of the Tshikona dance group in Mukumbani village.

Data collection strategy and analysis

Data collection can be done through several methods, which includes interviews, focus groups, surveys, telephone interviews, and questionnaires. For the purpose of this study, interviews were used as a data collection method. Interviews conducted between the research and participant becomes the backbone of most narrative studies (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Qualitative methods means that you will be generating data that is primarily in form of words. Some of the most common data collection methods are different types of individual interviews and group discussions.

Interviews resemble everyday conversations, although they are focused on a greater extent of the researchers needs for data. They also differ from an everyday conversation because we are concerned to conduct them in the most rigorous way. According to Alshenqeet (2014), interview is a conversation, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life world of the interview with respect to interpretation of the meanings to the described phenomena.” There are different types of interviews but for this study semi-structured interview was used. Semi-structured interview allowed simplicity to be achieved by giving the interviewer the chance to probe and expand the interviews responses. Semi-structured interview allowed the researcher and participants engage in a formal interview. The advantage of semi-structured interview is that the researcher can explain

the questions if participants they don’t understand the question.

Data analysis means breaking up collected data into manageable themes, patterns, trends, relationships and aim to reach or give best possible understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Mount, 2013). According to MacMillan and Schumacher (2010), qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among categories. In this study, the analysis interpreted data to provide the narratives of young people who live at Mukumbani Village. The searcher critically scrutinized and constructed pages of interview transcripts and document analysis (MacMillan and Schumacher, 2010).

Thematic data analysis was used to analyse the data collected from the research. Since all interviews were recorded through tape record and taking notes data was transcribed into written forming into categories and themes were thoroughly identified. Where collated by the researcher, these themes gave insight into a particular issue being studied (Swartz et al, 2011).

Literature Review

Traditional dance plays a special role in South African society and social life. People dance to express joy or sadness, and stories are often told through mime and dance to reinforce cultural beliefs and values. Dance has been part of South Africa’s history since the first nations. This chapter intends to discuss the literature review to support and enhance understanding of the influence of Tshikona traditional dance on the behaviour of youth.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE OF TRADITIONAL DANCE

The history of traditional dance is long and diverse because differs from country to country as well as with different ethnic groups. It is an important part of cultural heritage worldwide and it reflects on the history, beliefs and values of communities around the world (Hanna, 2014). There are so many different cultures and ethnic groups

in the world all with different traditions, with dance being a universal language, every continent, country, and ethnic group has their own unique traditional dances (Selase, 2019).

In Asia, traditional dances like Kabuki in Japan, Bharatanatyam in India and Lion dance in China showcase intricate movements and symbolic storytelling. In India, traditional dances such as the Bharatanatyam are performed for various reasons such as worship and devotion, storytelling, cultural preservation, spiritual expression, social and cultural celebration and for therapeutic reasons (Ragvhan, 2013; Shankar, 2014).

In China, dance is a diverse form of art which consists of contemporary and traditional dance category which covers various performances for rituals, celebrations, and other ceremonies. The Chinese indigenous dances were important performances of superstitious beliefs that were performed in hope of good harvest or good hunt since the indigenous dances were originally performed by hunter-gatherers. The indigenous dances have since been a progression of many of the earliest court rituals and ceremonial dances in China. As such, the folk dances are vital in the development of dance in China's history (Selase, 2019; YCC, 2021).

In Europe, flamenco in Spain, Tarantella in Italy, River dance in Ireland, Highland dance in Scotland and ballet in Russia often reflect the cultural, social and historical setting of their respective countries and regions. Furthermore, they are performed during various events and they are an important part of safekeeping cultural heritage and identity (Washabaugh, 2010).

The Salsa and Powwow which are Latin American and Native American dances show the cultural blend and resilience of the indigenous and immigrant communities. Nevertheless, traditional dances such as the Haka display the immersed cultural heritage of the Pacific island nations in America (Kaepler, 2017).

In Africa, dance can be traced back to the earliest records made by humans which include paintings and carvings on rocks and cave walls. Dance in Africa is a communicative aspect in the sense

that movements can translate a message more effectively than verbal communication (Mensah 2019). African dance is important because it has powerful communication potential as it refers to things outside itself, bringing relations about ideas, feelings, and physical things. It is within this sense of meaning that dance appears to contribute to the continuity of essential attributes in Africa (Humphrey, 2018).

In Botswana, Phathisi dance which is believed to have been initiated in the Ngwaketse and Kweneng regions of Botswana, took place in the cultivated fields and at the cattle grazed. Gaotlhaole (2013) believes that the dance was traditionally practised in the bush while the cattle were grazing, and the herd boys did not have much to do except watch and keep them from straying. Phathisi music would also take place during setapa in the evening, when people were done ploughing and heading cattle, they would come together to share stories and experiences. However, the dance evolved from music for self-expression into a social activity and has eventually become a product for competitions and profit making (Gaotlhaole, 2013).

In Nigeria, dance is extensively used for educational purposes. The Egungun, Atilogwu, Bata AND Nkwa Umuagbogho dance patterns are used to educate children and introduce new members to traditional ways of conduct and behaviour. The most important use of these dances in educational terms is to introduce adolescents into adult society and to stress the meaning of fertility and the conduct considered proper between sexes for that society. Dance is also used to keep young men physically fit, to teach them the control and discipline necessary in warfare, and to train feelings. These dances teach teamwork, language skills, communication, emotional intelligence and self-expression (Adeoye, 2017; Eze, 2020; Ojo; 2018; Onwuegbuna, 2019).

TRADITIONAL DANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Just like in all other African traditions, traditional

dance plays a special role in South African society and social life. People dance to express joy or sadness, and stories are often told through mime and dance to reinforce cultural beliefs and values. Dance has been part of South Africa's history since the first nation. The Venda, Xhosa, Zulu, Tsonga and Sotho dances emphasize that these traditional dances are intended to emphasise the importance of the native South African culture as it is a big part of identity. Each of these traditional dances had distinct rituals, traditions and beliefs. In an attempt to form a new unity, through traditional music festivals and competition, however, came a loss of tradition and originality (Rani, 2018).

IMPORTANCE OF TRADITIONAL DANCE (TSHIKONA)

Traditional dance is an essential element of all aspects of life in a homogeneous society. A dance usually has a crucial rich purpose and a number of related subsidiary purposes which may be a conscious expression or an implicit reflection of the structure of the society and its way of life (Sandri, 2012). In the Vhavenda traditional societies, dance is the vortex of rituals and ceremonies, a leading dancer, using dance and symbolic gestures to lead initiates in dances designed to appease the supernatural powers, solicit divine protection, or give thanks to the guardian spirits of the community. Traditional dance is important because dance benefits society because it is a form of entertainment. Traditional dance shows what personalities we have in other countries (Rani, 2018).

Tshikona traditional dance is of great value to the Vhavenda tribe. Tshikona is not just performed for fun, and it plays a vital role during the royal ceremonies. When a chief dies, the community is summoned to the public meeting place (khoru) for the men to take part in the Tshikona dance which is a commemorative dance. Prior to the dance, a cow is killed and roasted. People would have to cut their hair and beards as a sign of a new reign. The Tshikona dance serves a political purpose and stress leadership and internal order within the society (Magoma, Badenhorst &

Pikirayi, 2016; Venda land 2014). Furthermore, Tshikona was known to be performed during rain prayers and during the celebration of a battle victory over another territory. Tshikona was which is initially owned by traditional leaders according to their classed levels. It was traditionally executed by Vhavenda men who were in support of their traditional leader (Mugovhani et al., 2013).

Tshikona is a vital aspect of Venda culture, serving as a means of preserving traditional customs and values. Through its intricate footwork and rhythmic movements, Tshikona helps to pass down Venda history and myths, ensuring the continuation of their cultural heritage (Makhitha, 2013). Additionally, Tshikona plays a significant role in socializing young people and the community teaching them important values and norms. It is also important to note that Tshikona is a powerful symbol of Venda identity and heritage, which encourages a sense of community and unity among its people (Nemutanzhela, 2017). The dance provides an outlet for emotional expression and celebration, allowing individuals to connect with their cultural roots and express themselves in a meaningful way. Furthermore, Tshikona has been recognized for its potential to promote social cohesion and community building, bringing people together through its energetic and dynamic performances (Makhitha, 2013).

INFLUENCE OF TRADITIONAL DANCE ON YOUNG PEOPLE

Traditional dance has a profound influence on young people, shaping their cultural identity and values. Participating in traditional dance fosters cultural pride and self-esteem, allowing young people to connect with their heritage and develop a sense of belonging (Kumar, 2017). Additionally, traditional dance develops social skills, teamwork, and communication, essential for building strong relationships and achieving success in various aspects of life (Hanna, 2013).

Traditional dance also preserves cultural heritage and traditions, ensuring their continuation for future generations (Makhitha, 2013). Furthermore,

it provides an outlet for emotional expression and stress relief, promoting emotional well-being and mental health (Nemutanzhela, 2017). Physical fitness and coordination are also improved through traditional dance, contributing to overall health and well-being (Kumar, 2017).

Moreover, traditional dance plays a significant role in shaping young people's values and worldview, teaching them important life skills such as discipline, respect, and perseverance (Hanna, 2013). By participating in traditional dance, young people can develop a strong sense of purpose and direction, guiding them towards a positive and fulfilling future.

Goslin, et al (n.d) show that dance plays a very important role in the initiation ceremonies of both girls and boys. The best known initiation dance is the "Domba" (python dance) of the Venda. It is through dance that the expected codes of married life are conveyed and reinforced. In most Tshivenda traditional dances, girls and boys would dance separately and through those different dances, they would carry a vast life lesson with them. For instance, Hogo is one of the initiation dances in the Vhavenda culture, it is a dance for young boys. Initiated men do not dance in an exciting rough way, they move in short steps, holding long thick sticks, looking down at all times. This body of language is in accordance with their status. They are no longer boys but men (Goslin, et al. n.d).

Traditional dance is meant to have a positive influence on young people. It has numerous benefits, and it can also have negative influences on young people. One of the drawbacks are the potential for cultural constraints, where traditional dance can perpetuate limitations and restrictions, stifling young people's freedom to express themselves and explore their individuality (Hanna, 2013). This can lead to a sense of oppression, where young people feel forced to conform to traditional norms, rather than being encouraged to innovate and create.

Another negative influence is the pressure to conform, which can be overwhelming for young people. The emphasis on preserving cultural her-

itage can lead to a focus on tradition over innovation, causing young people to feel like they are unable to bring new ideas to the table (Makhitha, 2013). Furthermore, traditional dance can be physically demanding, posing a risk of injury if proper training and safety precautions are not observed (Kumar, 2017). This can be a significant concern for young people who are still developing their physical skills and may not have the necessary expertise to perform complex movements safely.

Additionally, traditional dance can be vulnerable to cultural appropriation, where elements are borrowed and used out of context, disrespecting the cultural significance and ownership (Nemutanzhela, 2017). This can be a sensitive issue, particularly if young people are not educated about the cultural significance of the dance they are performing. Finally, the focus on traditional dance can limit young people's exposure to other dance styles and opportunities, potentially restricting their career prospects and artistic growth (Hanna, 2013). With the change of time, there has been a loss of tradition among the Vhavenda community. Tshikona has lost its significance since now the focus is more on competitions that the original purpose and this has brought challenges in that sphere (Goslin, et al. n.d).

CULTURAL POLICIES

In South Africa, cultural policies and documents related to traditional dance, including Tshikona, emphasize the importance of preserving and promoting this significant part of Venda cultural heritage. The Department of Arts and Culture recognizes Tshikona as a valuable cultural asset that contributes to South Africa's diverse cultural landscape, and supports initiatives that document, teach, and perform Tshikona to ensure its continuation (South African Traditional Dance Council, n.d.; Department of Arts and Culture, 2019).

The National Arts Council provides funding opportunities for projects that promote Tshikona, encouraging innovation and fusion with other

dance styles to promote cultural diversity and exchange. Additionally, the Copyright Act protects the intellectual property rights of Tshikona creators and performers, ensuring that their work is recognized and respected (Copyright Act, n.d.; National Arts Council, n.d.).

Tshikona is also promoted through national events, festivals, and competitions, raising awareness and appreciation for this traditional dance form. The South African Traditional Dance Festival provides a platform for Tshikona performers to showcase their skills and share their cultural heritage with a wider audience. Overall, these policies and initiatives demonstrate a commitment to preserving and promoting Tshikona, recognizing its value as an important part of South Africa's cultural heritage (South African Traditional Dance Festival, n.d.).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Abend (2013) explained that theoretical framework brings together and defines the theory that explains why the research problem in the study exists. It must bring about an understanding of concepts that are relevant to the research topic and the research problem. The ecological system theory served as the theoretical framework of this study. The researcher also looked at individualism and collectivism as a social theory.

Ecological System Theory

The ecological system theory explains how human development is affected by one's interaction with various parts of society and the environment. According to Bronfenbrenner, the consideration of the ecological system offers an understanding on human development. The theory provided a platform for understanding how Tshikona traditional dance influences the behaviour of youth and its effects in future since the theory is about human development. The ecological system consists of various subsystems that assist encourage and guide an individual's development, these subsystems include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem (Hoffman & Kruczek, 2011).

Microsystem is the direct environment we have in our lives. Your family, friend's classmates, teachers, neighbours, and other people who have a direct contact with you are included in your micro system. The microsystem is the setting in which we have direct social interactions with these social agents. The theory states that we are not mere recipients of the experiences we have when socializing with these people in the microsystem environment, but we are contributing to the construction of such environment (Guy-Evans, 2020; Sincero, 2012). The immediate environment of Tshikona includes the dancers, instructors, and community members who participate in and support the dance (Hanna, 2013). The microsystem influences the learning and practice of traditional dance through direct interactions and relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The mesosystem includes the interactions between traditional dance and other aspects of the community, such as music, art, and cultural practices (Kumar, 2017). These interactions shape the dance form and influence its development (Hanna, 2013). The meso-system involves the relationships between the microsystems in one's life. This means that your family experience may be related to your school experience. It talks about how one part of a child's life can affect the other (Guy-Evans, 2020; Sincero, 2012).

The exosystem includes external factors that impact traditional dance, such as government policies, cultural exchange programs, and technological advancements (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These factors can either support or challenge the preservation and development of traditional dance (Kumar, 2017). The exosystem is the setting in which there is a link between the context where in the person does not have any active role, and the context where in is actively participating (Guy-Evans, 2020; Sincero, 2012).

The macrosystem encompasses the broader cultural, social, and economic context in which traditional dance exists (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This includes values, beliefs, and historical events that shape the dance form and its significance (Hanna, 2013). The macrosystem setting is the actual culture of an individual. The cultural

contexts involve the socioeconomic status of the person and/or his family, his ethnicity or race and living in a still developing or a third world country. For example, being born to a poor family makes a person work harder every day (Guy-Evans, 2020; Sincero, 2012).

The chronosystem considers the passage of time and historical events that affect traditional dance (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This includes the evolution of the dance form over time, its preservation and transmission across generations, and significant events that impact its development (Kumar, 2017). The chronosystem includes the changes and adaptations in one's lifespan. This may also involve the socio-historical contexts that may influence a person. One classic example of this is how divorce, as a major life transition, may affect not only the couple's relationship but also their children's behaviour. (Guy-Evans, 2020; Sincero, 2012).

This theory shows how various aspects in life affects one's development and thus their behaviour. In order to understand how Tshikona traditional dance influence the behaviour of youth we have to focus more on the macrosystem. As indicated above, the macro system focuses on how cultural aspects affects a child's development. In this case we look at how Tshikona traditional dance as a part of the Vhavenda culture affects the behaviour of youth. Thus, culture that individuals are immersed within may influence their beliefs and perceptions about events that transpire in life. The macrosystem is different from the other ecosystems since it does not focus on a specific environment but on a society that is already established. This explains why it is possible for the behaviour of youth to be influenced by Tshikona since it is something which has been in existence for quite some time (Guy-Evans, 2020).

Individualism and Collectivism as a social theory

Since Tshikona is a dance which is done by a large group of people, it is relevant to look at this as a social theory. Individualism focuses on the importance of each person being their own per-

son without being influenced by other people. Individualism is a dominant mostly in western culture than in African culture. It tends to create a more independent trait and strong characters which are different from collectivism (Jay, 2021). Tshikona, a traditional Venda dance, embodies both individualism and collectivism in its practice and significance. On the other hand, Tshikona emphasizes individual skill and mastery, as dancers strive to perfect their movements and showcase their talents. This emphasis on individual expression and creativity allows dancers to convey their emotions and experiences through movement, fostering a sense of personal accomplishment and pride (Hanna, 2013; Kumar, 2017; Makhitha, 2013).

According to Nickerson (2021), collectivism is the tendency to view oneself as interdependent and a member of a group rather than as an independent being. This implies that individuals identify themselves and a part of a certain group than identifying themselves individually. Collectivism in culture mostly stretches the importance of social harmony, respectfulness, and the needs of the group rather than the needs of an individual. This explains why most if not all participants of Tshikona display similar traits. Furthermore, it stresses the fact of how collectivism can influence every aspect of behaviour. On the other hand, Tshikona is deeply rooted in Venda culture and community, emphasizing the importance of collective identity and shared heritage. The dance is often performed in groups, highlighting the value of unity, cooperation, and mutual support. This collective aspect of Tshikona promotes a sense of belonging, social cohesion, and respect for tradition, as dancers work together to preserve and pass on their cultural heritage (Hanna, 2013; Kumar, 2017; Makhitha, 2013).

Individualism and collectivism are deeply rooted in culture that they shape our self-concepts and identities. Thus, both concepts play a vital role on the influence of behaviour. Furthermore, collectivism stresses how Tshikona may influence the behaviour of young people (Jay, 2021; Nick-

erson, 2021). The interplay between individualism and collectivism in Tshikona reflects the complex dynamics between personal expression and communal values in traditional Venda culture. While individual dancers may strive for excellence and recognition, they do so within the

context of a shared cultural tradition that emphasizes community and collective identity. This balance between individualism and collectivism is essential to the continued preservation and evolution of Tshikona as a vibrant and meaningful part of Venda cultural heritage (Hanna, 2013; Kumar, 2017; Makhitha, 2013).

Study results and literature control

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Table 1: Characteristics of participants

PSEUDONYM	AGE	GENDER	PERIOD BEING DANCER A TSHIKONA
Participant 1	56	Male	17 years
Participant 1	19	Male	4 years
Participant 3	25	Male	2 years
Participant 4	55	Female	5 years
Participant 5	35	Female	3 years
Participant 6	29	Male	10 years
Participant 7	20	Male	5 years
Participant 8	22	Male	3 years
Participant 9	25	Male	7 years
Participant 10	19	Male	2 years

The information above was obtained from the ten (10) participants from Mukumbani village who are part of the Tshikona dance group. As seen from the table, eight (8) participants in the study are males and two (2) are female. Most participants were below the age of 30, five (5) of the participants were in their 20s and two (2) were in

their teen years, only one (1) of the participants was in their 30s and two (2) of the participants were in their 50s. Furthermore, two (2) of the participants have been part of Tshikona for over a decade while eight (8) have been part of Tshikona for less than 10 years.

Table: Thematic Results derived from the data collected

THEMES	SUB THEMES
Reinforcing Cultural Identity	Pride and Belonging Preservation of Traditions and Cultural Awareness
Promoting Social Cohesion	Community Bonding Social Skills

Cultivating Discipline and Respect	Structure and Order Respect for Elders
Building Resilience and Perseverance	Overcoming Challenges Resilience in the Face of Adversity Positive Mind set

Reinforcing Cultural Identity

It has been identified that Tshikona plays an important role in reinforcing cultural identity and shaping youth behaviour. The involvement in Tshikona brings a sense of pride and belonging, the preservation of tradition as well as cultural awareness which all reinforces cultural identity

Pride and Belonging: Tshikona encourages a sense of pride and belonging to the youth and the community, strengthening their connection to Venda culture. The dance links young people with their cultural roots thus fostering pride in their heritage. The following responses form the interviews help to illustrate this point:

“I have been dancing Tshikona for a long time and I have gained a lot of knowledge about us as the Vhavenda tribe which makes me to take pride in being mvenda. I know that I am a mvenda man because of my involvement in Tshikona...”

Participant 4

“Tshikona has made me self-conscious and to be more focused on knowing who I am as an individual as well as knowing my place in the community.” **Participant 9**

“Tshikona is the only thing that differentiates me from other boys, it is my culture and heritage and there is no me without knowing my roots which are in the tshikona dance.” **Participant 2**

Preservation of Traditions and cultural awareness: Participation in Tshikona helps preserve cultural heritage and traditions, ensuring that they are passed down to future generations. Tshikona ensures that cultural legacy and heritage stays alive even for future purposes. Furthermore, through the dance, participants get to learn about the history of the dance, its importance and what the dance stands for. Participants shared their experiences showing how Tshikona preserves tradition in the responses below:

“It is through Tshikona where I learned of the importance of the vhavenda chieftaincy and also

of youth. Traditional dance provides a tangible link to ancestors and cultural legacy, allowing individuals to tap into their cultural roots, fostering cultural authenticity and pride and forge a sense of belonging.

how much dignity it carries. As we speak, I know that I’ll be able to teach my children a thing or two about our culture and heritage as the Venda nation.” **Participant 3**

“Tshikona has brought me closer to my culture so much particularly relating to our history as the Vhavenda nation, there is always a story that comes with every rhythm that we play and most of the stories are informative, and important.”

Participant 5

“I have learnt so much about our culture and the history of vhavenda through Tshikona. I realised that participating in our traditional dance can be one of the ways to keep our heritage alive even for the future generation” **Participant 7**

Promoting Social Cohesion

Social cohesion refers to the bonding and unity that develops among individuals and communities through various interactions and in this case, it is through participating in Tshikona. Participating in the dance also facilitates community engagement, bringing people together through shared cultural experiences and storytelling. Cultural events and festivals provide opportunities for social bonding, cultural exchange, and community cohesion. Through the responses of participants, it is shown how social cohesion comes through dance.

Community Bonding: Tshikona is often performed in communal settings, fostering a sense of unity and togetherness among youth. By participating in traditional dance, individuals from diverse backgrounds come together, breaking so-

cial barriers and stereotypes. This cultural exchange encourages empathy, tolerance, and understanding, essential for building stronger community bonds.

"We often find ourselves going to perform in different communities and this is where I interact with many people and make friends with people of other communities for future purposes" **Participant 10**

"I found it hard to interact with a large group of people before joining the group. I have met lot of people from different communities who some of them have become my friends." **Participant 3**

Social Skills: Youth learn important social skills, such as teamwork, cooperation, and respect for others, through their participation in Tshikona. Social skills include an individual's ability to communicate effectively in social relationships, cooperate and show empathy provides a rich environment in which individuals can develop their social skills. Participants must constantly communicate with each other, follow certain rules and adapt to the group dynamics. This allows individuals to develop their social skills naturally

"Tshikona dance requires one to be a people's person, you have to be able to work with a group, this is has impacted how I socialize with other people." **Participant 1**

"Teamwork and unity is expected from Tshikona dances, the dance requires a high number of participants and as such one has to be a team player to thrive. It is through the different interactions with various people where I now have friends in different villages" **Participant 10**

The responses above show how Tshikona promotes social skills through the various interactions that participants have amongst themselves and members of other groups outside their villages.

Cultivating Discipline and Respect

Tshikona offers a powerful tool for cultivating discipline and respect, fostering a deeper connection to cultural heritage and community. By embracing traditional dance, individuals can develop valuable life skills, cultural values, and a lifelong appreciation for the beauty and signifi-

cance of cultural expression. Through the responses of participants, it is shown how Tshikona cultivates discipline and respect.

Structure and Order: Tshikona involves strict adherence to specific movements and rhythms, instilling a sense of discipline and order in youth. *"Tshikona requires one to be fully dedicated since there are many elements involved in the dance. It teaches you discipline and being responsible since everything from sound to foot work must be in sync."* **Participant 2**

"The dynamics of the dance involves different roles. As one of the drummers it is my role to ensure that I do not flop so that the footwork will also follow suit. My experience in the group has taught me to understand that the different roles we play are all important" **Participant 5**

"Being a Tshikona dancer on its one means being able to be accountable, we play a vital part in ensuring that the tune is in sync with the footwork, horns and flutes. This has channelled me to be a responsible individual and also be cooperative." **Participant 10**

Respect for Elders: The dance often involves honouring elders and ancestors, promoting respect for authority figures and traditions. In addition, there often have specific rules and customs that must be followed. Adhering to these rules instils a sense of respect and self-discipline. *"Discipline and respect are expected from someone who is a Tshikona dancer. As Tshikona dancers we need to be representatives of the royal family and that means we are expected to have good moral conduct and be well mannered."*

Participant 2

"Tshikona has made me put me in a position where I feel like I am a mirror of those above me. As member of the Tshikona group in Mukumbani thondoni, the first rule of conduct is respecting my elders and our royal family." **Participant 4**

"Throughout my experience in taking part in Tshikona, respect has been one of the key aspects of Tshikona because of the link it has with the high authorities of different communities and noting that it is mostly performed during auspicious occasions like the inauguration of chiefs and kings." **Participant 3**

Building Resilience and Perseverance

Overcoming Challenges: Tshikona helps individuals to process and cope with challenges. The dance's community-based practices foster social cohesion, teamwork, and cultural exchange, promoting tolerance and understanding. Despite challenges such as cultural preservation, limited resources, and competition from modern dance forms, mutual understanding is one of the participants and community lead to overcoming challenges encountered. The participants expressed their opinions on overcoming challenges through Tshikona.

"There is always a challenge and differences between the youngsters in the group and the elders. The generational gap tends to be one of our biggest challenges since the different generations practice things differently. However, because of the love for our tradition and dance we always find common ground and understanding." **Participant 3**

"Many people do not understand that Tshikona is not only for men but women can also participate in the practice. This has led me to take it upon myself to educate people on the history and dynamics of Tshikona even in this day and age."

Participant 5

"The lack of support from the community leaves us as a group having to deal with challenges of funding when we have to go to competitions and events that require transportation. But we always find people in the group willing to raise funds for themselves and ensure that we always get to where we are needed." **Participant 10**

Resilience in the Face of Adversity: The experience of overcoming obstacles in Tshikona can help youth develop resilience and the ability to cope with adversity. Tshikona's resilience and adaptability ensure its continued relevance.

"Tshikona requires a lot of strength and energy, having to practice and play always leaves one tired and hungry but one has to persevere and pull through till the end. The dynamics on its own teaches you to be able to preserve and not give up." **Participant 1**

"I have been judged and misunderstood for being a young person taking interest in Tshikona

but that has not discouraged me at all rather I keep focusing on the positive impact that Tshikona has on my life as a young female." **Participant 4**

"It can be very demanding while talking part in Tshikona because practicing Tshikona involves your emotions, physical wellbeing and also your time. I have had to prepare myself mentally for every competition since they can go on for the whole day and they are exhausting" **Participant 8**

Positive Mind set: Tshikona can foster a positive mind set and a sense of hope, encouraging youth to strive for their goals. Tshikona dance also empowers youth by providing leadership opportunities, career paths, and community involvement. Experienced youth dancers can lead workshops or performances, contributing to community events and cultural initiatives. By acquiring life skills such as communication, teamwork, and adaptability, youth dancers develop into well-rounded individuals.

"Taking part in Tshikona has inspired me to want to know more about our cultural practices which I would like to do while I further my studies." **Participant 7**

"Tshikona has impacted my goals in a positive manner, I am now more focus on my studies and I am now able to keep myself away from negative influences since I spend most of my time at home studying or practicing Tshikona" **Participant 3**

"One of my dreams is to have a community cultural centre and through my involvement in Tshikona I am more motivated to make this dream come true because I have met a lot of people who share the same dream as I." **Participant 1**

Tshikona traditional dance plays a vital role in fostering a positive mind set in youth by promoting emotional well-being, social connections, personal growth, mindfulness, cultural pride, and life skills. Through physical expression and storytelling, Tshikona dance helps youth release stress and anxiety, process emotions, and build confidence. Community-based practices bring youth together, fostering social bonds, teamwork, and cultural connection.

Conclusion

The study discovered that Tshikona plays a huge role in the lives of those who dance Tshikona. It was revealed that is part of their identity which was unexpected. Nevertheless, Tshikona was indicated to be a way to preserve culture which is very imported to the tribe and for the future generation. Surprisingly the researchers discovered that the behaviour displayed by the young men who dance Tshikona totally the opposite of the behaviour which is expected from them.

This study was centred on the ecological system theory and individualism and collectivism as a

social theory as a theoretical framework; in line with this study, it can be concluded that young people learn their behaviour from various aspects of life which include culture. The theories revealed that culture has a big impact on the behaviour of individuals as such Tshikona has an impact on the behaviour of youth Mukumbani. When taking everything into account various factors influence one's behaviour, however, it does not change the fact that Tshikona can influence the behaviour of youth since there is an interaction with many individuals with different traits.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: To the Community and Community Leaders

- Parents and the community need to offer more support to people who take part in Tshikona traditional dance.
- The community and the leaders must re-introduce cultural practices so that culture and cultural practices must not be lost.

Recommendation 2: Tshikona participants and elders

- The young men must set as an example to young boys who are interested in joining Tshikona by portraying good behaviours and therefore bridging the generational gap.
- The elders should educate the young generation more about the history and importance of the dance.

Recommendation 3: Measures that could be implemented to enhance the Tshikona traditional dance.

- The Department of Sports and Arts and Culture should offer more support to Tshikona dance through sponsoring their trips and competitions.
- The Department of Education should encourage the participation and lessons on Tshikona in schools as it is done with dances such as Malende and Tshigombela as a part of extra mural activities.
- The competitions should offer prizes that are not only money but also scholarships, bursaries, and support to the families of participants.

Recommendations for Future Research

Advanced research must be conducted to look into how modernisation affects Tshikona and the behaviour displayed by the youth who participate in Tshikona. Conducting further research might assist in adding knowledge about Tshikona traditional dance and the history of the dance.

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.8>**TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE, GENDER, AND POLICY IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH****Benjamin Seleke¹**

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Abstract

This systematic review critically examines the integration of indigenous knowledge and gender perspectives in shaping inclusive education policies and practices for marginalised groups in the developing world. Recognising the limitations of conventional educational paradigms which often overlook culturally specific epistemologies, this study synthesises empirical evidence and theoretical insights to elucidate the transformative potential of indigenous knowledge in fostering gender-responsive and sustainable educational environments. A comprehensive search was conducted across major academic databases (including Scopus, Web of Science, and ERIC), supplemented by grey literature and community reports, to capture a broad spectrum of perspectives. Studies were included if they addressed the intersection of Indigenous knowledge with gender dynamics in inclusive education settings, particularly within developing regions. Thematic analysis identified key factors influencing educational inclusion, such as sociocultural barriers, policy shortcomings, and the capacity of culturally grounded pedagogical approaches to challenge entrenched gender biases. A total of 45 studies were included in the review, representing a broad spectrum of geographical regions and methodological approaches. Findings indicate that incorporating Indigenous epistemologies enhances the contextual relevance of educational content and fosters greater community engagement and empowerment, ultimately contributing to a more equitable educational landscape. This review provides nuanced insights into the interplay between indigenous practices and gender-responsive policies, advocating for educational reforms that align with Sustainable Development Goals. Policy recommendations underscore the importance of culturally responsive curricula and collaborative frameworks integrating local wisdom to address persistent gender inequities and access issues. The study contributes to a more holistic understanding of inclusive education in the developing world and highlights the critical role of indigenous knowledge in promoting social inclusion and educational quality.

Keywords: *Inclusive Education; Indigenous Knowledge; Gender Perspectives; Marginalised Groups; Developing World; Systematic Review.*

1. Introduction

Over the past several decades, the global education agenda has increasingly underscored the

pivotal role of inclusive education as a cornerstone for sustainable development (Kopnina, 2020). This paradigm shift is especially critical

in developing contexts where marginalised groups face a multitude of barriers, including socio-economic disparities, cultural stigmas, and infrastructural deficits, that severely constrain their access to quality education (Adam, 2020; Arimoro, 2025; Paganini et al., 2025). Despite extensive reforms, conventional educational models have often failed to accommodate the diverse needs of these populations, thereby perpetuating cycles of exclusion and inequality. In this light, indigenous knowledge emerges as a compelling and underutilized resource. Rooted in centuries of lived experience and cultural wisdom, Indigenous epistemologies offer a holistic perspective that can illuminate the nuanced challenges of inclusive education (Ofosu-Asare, 2025). They provide contextually relevant strategies that not only address systemic barriers but also enhance community engagement and resilience, thereby fostering educational environments that are genuinely inclusive and culturally sensitive.

Notwithstanding the global commitment to inclusive education, a significant gap remains in systematically integrating Indigenous knowledge systems into educational practices and policy frameworks (Mohanapriya & Suriya, 2025; Seleke, 2021). Integrating Indigenous knowledge into the discourse on inclusive education holds transformative potential for academic inquiry and policy formulation (Seleke, 2021; Seleke et al., 2019). This approach offers a culturally nuanced lens to yield innovative, context-specific policy recommendations and practical interventions (Mohanapriya & Suriya, 2025; Seleke et al., 2019). The study contributes a more comprehensive understanding of creating equitable educational environments by bridging the gap between conventional educational frameworks and indigenous epistemolo

gies. The insights generated through this systematic review are expected to provide valuable guidance for policymakers, educators, and community stakeholders, ultimately fostering educational practices that are not only inclusive but also responsive to the unique cultural dynamics of marginalized groups in developing contexts. The primary research question guides this review:

- ***How do Indigenous knowledge systems inform inclusive education practices for marginalized groups in developing contexts?***

In addressing this inquiry, the review also examines subsidiary questions regarding the role of Indigenous epistemologies in promoting gender equity, enhancing community participation, and contributing to sustainable educational outcomes. This line of investigation directly responds to the journal's call for manuscripts that interrogate the intersections of gender, education, and inclusion. Moreover, it aligns with broader global imperatives, notably the Sustainable Development Goals, by critically assessing how culturally embedded knowledge can recalibrate educational policies to serve diverse and historically underserved populations better. Figure 1 provides a visual illustration of the multi-theoretical approach adopted in this study, integrating the principles of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Constructivist Learning Theory, and the Diffusion of Innovation Theory to explore inclusive education practices.

4. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored in a robust multi-theoretical approach that integrates intersectionality, feminist theory, social justice frameworks, and Indigenous epistemologies to understand inclusive education comprehensively.

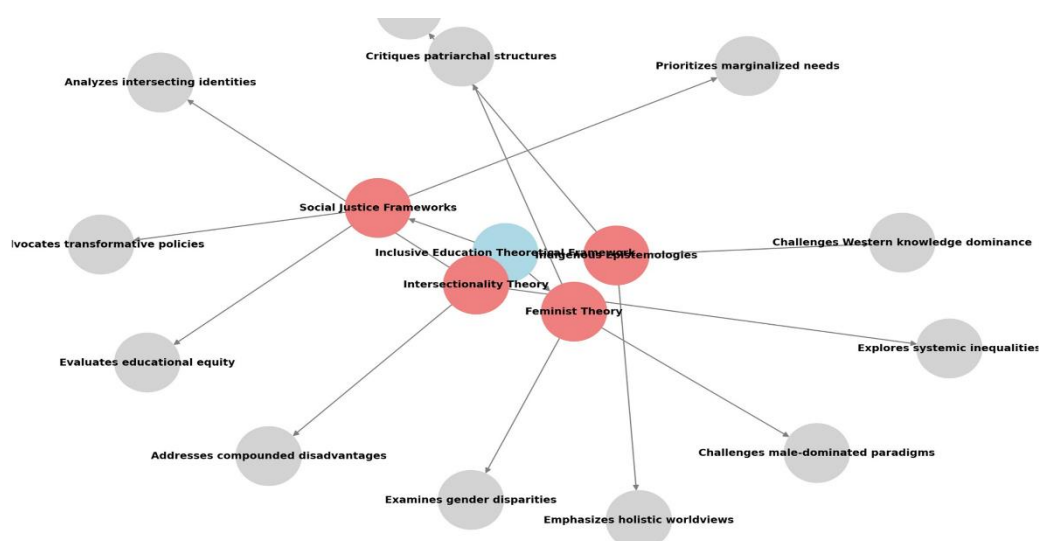


Figure 1: Multi-Theoretical Framework Guiding the Study

This theoretical integration offers a robust analytical lens through which to examine the adoption, contextual adaptation, and pedagogical implications of Indigenous knowledge and gender-responsive strategies within inclusive education frameworks. Intersectionality theory, initially advanced by scholars such as Crenshaw (1989), offers a critical lens through which the multifaceted and intersecting identities, such as gender, race, class, and ability, of marginalized groups are analyzed (Esposito et al., 2025; Nazari, 2025; Tarrayo, 2025). This perspective elucidates how systemic inequalities are compounded, producing unique experiences of disadvantage that are often neglected in more monolithic analyses of educational inequity. Feminist theory further interrogates the gendered dimensions of education by revealing how patriarchal power structures perpetuate inequitable access and opportunities within educational institutions (Henry, 2011; Omojemite, 2024; Peterson, 2012; Venkataraman, 2025). It critiques traditional educational paradigms that have historically privileged male experiences and knowledge production, thereby marginalizing the voices of women and non-binary individuals (Hanson, 2025; Lehner, 2025). Complementing these approaches, social justice frameworks provide a normative basis for evaluating educational systems regarding equity, fairness, and the redistribution of resources

(Küçüksüleymanoğlu, 2025). These frameworks argue that educational reform must be predicated on principles of justice that prioritize the needs of the most disenfranchised, thereby ensuring that policy interventions are transformative and sustainable. Indigenous epistemologies, with their deep roots in community-based knowledge, oral traditions, and holistic worldviews, offer a distinctive paradigm that challenges the dominance of Western epistemic traditions (Peterson, 2012; Seleke, 2021; Tariq, 2025). By emphasizing relationality, contextuality, and the interdependence of social, environmental, and spiritual well-being, Indigenous knowledge systems present alternative methodologies for understanding and addressing the complexities of educational inclusion (Bronen et al., 2020; Horsthemke, 2021; Kennedy et al., 2023; Le Grange, 2004; Le Grange, 2019; Odora Hoppers, 2021). Collectively, these theoretical perspectives offer a multi-dimensional framework that is analytically rigorous and sensitive to the diverse experiences of marginalized groups.

Foundations for Integrating Indigenous Knowledge and Gender Perspectives in Inclusive Education

Inclusive education, as understood in this review, is a transformative educational paradigm aimed at dismantling systemic barriers that hinder equitable access to quality learning. It seeks to ensure that all learners, irrespective of their

gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, disability, or other identity markers, are meaningfully included in all dimensions of education. This approach extends beyond the physical integration of learners to encompass curriculum design, pedagogy, and institutional policy reform that caters to diverse learning needs (Menon, 2025; Nawire et al., 2025). Central to inclusive education is its responsiveness to the needs of marginalised groups, who are historically excluded or disadvantaged due to entrenched socio-political, cultural, or economic structures (Mkhize & Idahosa, 2025). These populations often face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, with educational access and achievement being disproportionately constrained by the cumulative impact of gender, ethnicity, poverty, and disability.

Crucial to reconceptualising inclusive education in the context of the developing world is the integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), locally rooted bodies of knowledge that have evolved within indigenous communities through intergenerational transmission. These systems are characterized by their holistic, relational, and culturally embedded epistemologies, which stand in contrast to the compartmentalized, standardised approaches typical of Western educational models (Horsthemke, 2021; Kanu & Ndubisi, 2020; Oke, 2025; Seleke,

2021). In educational contexts, IKS offer a culturally grounded lens through which inclusive education can be re-imagined promoting sustainability, cultural relevance, and gender equity. The contextual integration of such knowledge not only challenges the dominance of Eurocentric paradigms but also enriches policy and practice by addressing environmental and social interconnectedness (Hanson, 2025; Shizha, 2025; Leighton, 2024). In sustainable development discourse, indigenous perspectives underscore the reciprocal relationship between human and ecological well-being (Miao & Nduneseokwu, 2025), while in gender-inclusive education, they inform practices such as intergenerational mentorship and community-based learning that are inherently gender-responsive (Chitando et al., 2024; Panju, 2024). Ultimately, the inclusion of IKS in educational policy and practice facilitates a dual transformation, bridging traditional and contemporary knowledge systems while advancing equity, sustainability, and cultural relevance (Kasera et al., 2025). Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual framework underpinning this study, highlighting the interconnections between inclusive education, marginalised groups, Indigenous knowledge systems, and contextual integration for equitable and sustainable educational transformation.

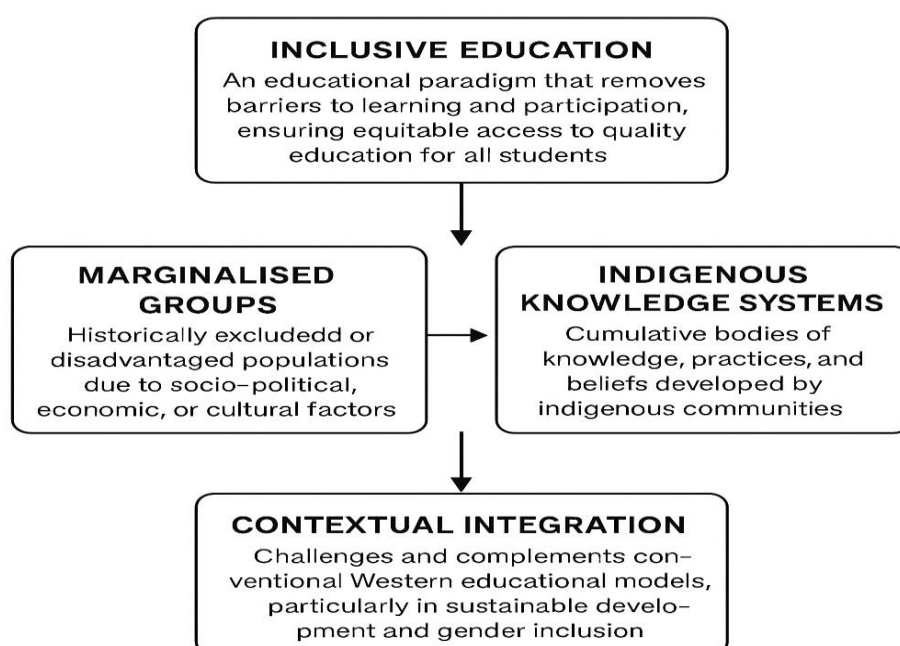


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework for Integrating Indigenous Knowledge and Gender Perspectives in Inclusive Education

This framework serves as a foundation for analysing how inclusive education practices can be reimagined through culturally grounded, gender-responsive, and contextually relevant approaches in the developing world.

Theoretical Contributions

The integration of indigenous perspectives contributed significantly to the theoretical discourse on gender and education. By incorporating Indigenous epistemologies, the study expanded conventional frameworks, such as intersectionality, feminist theory, and social justice models, by introducing culturally grounded dimensions that had been previously underexplored. Indigenous knowledge challenged the dominant Western-centric paradigms by emphasizing holistic, community-based, and relational approaches to learning. This integration provided a more nuanced understanding of how cultural narratives and local practices intersect with gender dynamics to influence educational access and participation. As a result, the study proposed an expanded theoretical model that reconciles structural and cultural dimensions of educational inequity, thereby offering a more comprehensive framework for future research and policy development in inclusive education.

5. Methodology

A systematic literature review was employed as the methodological cornerstone of this study due to its capacity to synthesize a broad spectrum of perspectives with rigorous transparency and replicability (King et al., 2020; Lim, 2024). Given the multifaceted nature of inclusive education, particularly when examined through the intersecting lenses of indigenous knowledge and gender dynamics, a systematic review was deemed the most appropriate method. This approach allowed for the comprehensive aggregation of diverse sources, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative research, and enabled the critical appraisal of literature that addressed the complex interplay between traditional educational models and culturally embedded epistemologies (Adeoye,

2024; Dehalwar & Sharma, 2023). A total of 45 studies were included in the review, representing a

broad spectrum of geographical regions and methodological approaches. Table 1 (*see findings*) summarized the key characteristics of these studies, including the country of study, research design, sample size, and the extent of indigenous knowledge integration. Among the included studies, 18 explicitly incorporated indigenous epistemologies into their analysis, with case studies primarily drawn from regions in Africa (e.g., Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya), Asia (e.g., India, Indonesia), and Latin America (e.g., Brazil, Mexico). Methodologically, the studies comprised qualitative ethnographic research (n=20), quantitative surveys (n=12), mixed-method approaches (n=8), and theoretical or policy analyses (n=5), ensuring a diverse evidence base for assessing the role of indigenous knowledge in inclusive education.

Search Strategy

A multi-pronged search strategy was implemented to capture the full breadth of relevant literature:

Databases and Sources

Searches were conducted in major academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and ERIC. In addition, grey literature, community reports, and ethnographic studies were systematically retrieved to ensure the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives that might not have been indexed in traditional academic repositories.

Keywords and Boolean Operators

The search strategy utilized specific keywords and Boolean operators to refine the scope of the literature. The search string included terms such as “inclusive education”, “marginalised groups”, “indigenous knowledge” AND “gender.” Variations and additional terms were incorporated to capture the regional and contextual nuances pertinent to the study.

Time Frame & Language

The search was restricted to publications from the past two decades to maintain contemporary relevance while incorporating seminal works that shaped the discourse. The primary language for inclusion was English, though studies published in other languages were considered

if they provided critical insights and were amenable to reliable translation.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The selection criteria were meticulously defined to prioritize studies that provided substantive insights into integrating Indigenous knowledge within the context of inclusive education. Inclusion criteria required that studies:

- Explicitly incorporated Indigenous knowledge or provided contextual analyses of Indigenous communities.
- Addressed issues related to gender, educational access, and the marginalisation of specific groups.
- Met established standards of methodological rigor, as evidenced by peer-reviewed status or equivalent scholarly validation.

Conversely, studies were excluded if they lacked a clear connection to the central themes of indigenous epistemologies and inclusive education or if they did not meet the quality benchmarks established for the review.

Data Extraction and Quality Assessment

Data extraction was carried out using standardized forms designed to capture essential information, including study objectives, methodologies, key findings, and the extent to which indigenous knowledge was integrated into the analysis. Quality assessment was conducted using established appraisal tools, notably the CASP checklists and PRISMA guidelines. Emphasis was placed on assessing the validity and contextual authenticity of sources documenting indigenous knowledge, ensuring that these contributions were evaluated within their cultural and methodological frameworks.

Synthesis Approach

The collected data were synthesized using a thematic narrative approach. This process in-

involved identifying recurring themes and patterns across

the studies and constructing a coherent narrative highlighting the interconnections between indigenous knowledge, gender dynamics, and inclusive education. A PRISMA flowchart was developed to document the study selection process visually, providing a clear audit trail of inclusion and exclusion decisions. This systematic synthesis enabled a robust analysis that informed the subsequent discussion of policy implications and practice-based recommendations.

6.Findings

A total of 45 studies were included in the review, representing a broad spectrum of geographical regions and methodological approaches. Table 1 below summarizes the key characteristics of these studies, including the country of study, research design, sample size, and the extent of indigenous knowledge integration. Among the included studies, 18 explicitly incorporated indigenous epistemologies into their analysis, with case studies primarily drawn from regions in Africa (e.g., Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya), Asia (e.g., India, Indonesia), and Latin America (e.g., Brazil, Mexico). Methodologically, the studies comprised qualitative ethnographic research (n=20), quantitative surveys (n=12), mixed-method approaches (n=8), and theoretical or policy analyses (n=5), ensuring a diverse evidence base for assessing the role of indigenous knowledge in inclusive education. Table 1 below presents a summary of the 45 studies included in this systematic review. It categorizes each study by country, research design, sample size, and the degree to which indigenous knowledge was integrated. This visual synthesis highlights the diversity of contexts and approaches, reflecting a global yet nuanced understanding of indigenous epistemologies in inclusive education.

Summary of Reviewed Studies on Indigenous Knowledge and Inclusive Education

Region	Country Examples	Research Design	No. of Studies (n)	Sam-Size n	Indigenous Knowledge
Africa	Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya	Ethnographic	15	25–200	10
Asia	India, Indonesia	Mixed-Methods Surveys	12	5–100	4
Latin America	Brazil, Mexico	Theoretical Analysis	8	Varies (ions-empirical)	4
Global/Other	Australia, Canada, Multi-country	Policy/Theoretical Analysis	10	Not specified	0
Total	Qualitative (n= 20, Quantitative:n(n = 12, Mixe				18

Table 1: Summary of Reviewed Studies on Indigenous Knowledge and Inclusive Education

The diversity of research designs and regional contexts captured in Figure 1 underscores the importance of localized knowledge systems in

shaping inclusive educational practices and policies, particularly for marginalized groups in the Global South.

Thematic Analysis

The analysis of the reviewed literature revealed several recurring themes:

Barriers to Inclusive Education

Despite its recognized importance for promoting social equity and sustainable development, inclusive education is undermined by a range of structural and systemic barriers that have been extensively documented in the literature (Allan, 2007; Mittler, 2012). Multiple studies have identified that inadequate educational infrastructure remains a critical impediment (Mncube, 2023; Sofi-Karim et al., 2023; Tanwir & Safdar, 2013). In many developing regions, schools are characterized by dilapidated buildings, overcrowded classrooms, and a lack of essential facilities—such as accessible ramps, adaptive technologies, and safe learning environments—that are necessary to support diverse learning needs (Barrett et al., 2019; Lebona, 2020; Owusu-Ansah & Annan, 2021). This physical inadequacy is further exacerbated by limited financial resources, which result in chronic underinvestment in public education (Abidemi & Bilikis; Kadio, 2025; Sibeko & Isaacs, 2019). Such financial constraints restrict not only the maintenance and modernization of school facilities but also the availability

of learning materials, teacher training programs, and supportive services required to implement inclusive curricula effectively.

In addition to infrastructural challenges, socio-cultural stigmas constitute a significant barrier to inclusive education. Deep-seated cultural biases and prejudices often marginalize specific social groups, including Indigenous populations, ethnic minorities, and students with disabilities (Djamali et al., 2025; Glasper, 2025). These stigmas are rooted in historical and societal narratives that devalue the contributions and potential of these groups, thereby reducing their access to educational opportunities. Entrenched institutional biases further compound these issues. Educational policies and administrative practices, which are frequently influenced by Western-centric models and historical inequities, may inadvertently reinforce discriminatory practices through unequal resource allocation, biased assessment methods, and curricula that do not adequately represent all learners' cultural and experiential realities (Chu, 2025; Pesonen, 2024; Sihela & April, 2025).

Collectively, these structural and systemic barriers disproportionately affect marginalized groups, exacerbating educational inequities and hindering their academic and socio-economic development (Fobosi & Malima, 2025; Radu et al., 2025). The persistent inadequacies in infrastructure, funding, and institutional support limit access to quality education and contribute to the perpetuation of cycles of poverty and social exclusion. Consequently, addressing these barriers is essential for developing truly inclusive education systems. Effective policy interventions must, therefore, focus on substantial infrastructural investments, equitable financial distribution, and comprehensive reforms in cultural and institutional practices to dismantle the biases that continue to impede the educational participation of marginalized groups (Makai & Amaka; Singha, 2025; Smith, 2025).

Role of Indigenous Practices in Fostering Community-Based Learning

A substantial body of research has demonstrated that indigenous practices are pivotal in fostering community-based learning. Several studies have documented those Indigenous pedagogies, characterized by holistic, experiential, and participatory approaches—significantly enhance learner engagement and contextual relevance (Boakye-Yiadom et al., 2025; Neophytou, 2025; Seleke et al., 2019; Soto-Molina, 2025). These pedagogical strategies are deeply embedded within the cultural fabric of Indigenous communities, reflecting a comprehensive understanding of learning that extends beyond the confines of formal education.

Indigenous practices often integrate oral traditions, storytelling, and hands-on activities that draw on local history and environmental knowledge (Leal Filho et al., 2025; Liang; MacLise & Watkinson; Nutti & Heatta, 2025). This integration makes learning more relatable to students and bridges the gap between formal curricula and the community's cultural traditions (Seleke, 2021). Such practices encourage learners to connect their educational experiences with their lived realities, promoting a more meaningful and inclusive learning environment. Furthermore, Indigenous pedagogies

emphasize communal participation and collective responsibility, which are essential to community-based learning (O'Leary et al., 2020; Odora Hoppers, 2021; Oke, 2025; Seleke et al., 2019; Shizha, 2025). For Seleke et al. (2019), these practices foster a sense of belonging and shared purpose by involving elders, community leaders, and family members in the educational process. This community involvement has been shown to contribute positively to student motivation and academic success, particularly in contexts where conventional educational methods may fail to address local needs (Tegegne et al., 2025). This evidence indicates that indigenous practices can effectively complement mainstream educational approaches. Furthermore, the above studies offer alternative frameworks that prioritize contextualized knowledge and collaborative learning, thus contributing to the development of educational systems that are both culturally sensitive and inclusive.

Gender-Responsive Interventions

Over the past decade, much research has concentrated on interventions to mitigate gender disparities within educational settings. Recent studies have documented those targeted interventions to increase female enrolment and retention, particularly in traditionally male-dominated fields such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), that have yielded positive outcomes (Atindama et al., 2025; Mabica et al.; Ntombela et al., 2025; Nweje et al., 2025; Okeke & Ramaila, 2025; Schismenos et al.; Tegegne et al., 2025). These interventions often included scholarship programs, mentorship initiatives, and tailored curriculum reforms that sought to dismantle gender stereotypes and create supportive learning environments. In addition to these conventional strategies, community-driven programs that integrated indigenous knowledge were particularly adequate in developing gender-sensitive curricula. (Adewale & Okafor, 2025; Ntombela et al., 2025; Nwankwo, 2025). Furthermore, Mbamba (2025), elude that such programs capitalized on culturally relevant pedagogies that resonated with local traditions and prac

tices, thereby addressing the specific socio-cultural dynamics that influence gender roles within the community. These interventions fostered increased female participation in education and promoted a broader re-evaluation of gender norms by engaging community leaders and leveraging local cultural narratives (Sepeng, 2025; Uvere & Ojiridike, 2025).

The empirical evidence consistently indicated that gender-responsive interventions were most successful when culturally contextualized and attuned to local gender dynamics (Abraha, 2021; Alshahrani, 2024; Kix, 2024; Koengkan et al.; Wignall et al., 2023). We concur with Hafman (2023) and Omodan (2024b) who eluded that programs that incorporated Indigenous epistemologies provided nuanced understandings of gender relations, enabling educators to design interventions that were both effective and sustainable. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of integrating culturally informed approaches into policy frameworks and educational practices, thereby enhancing the capacity of educational systems to achieve gender equity and inclusivity.

Data Synthesis

The data were synthesized using a narrative approach that integrated findings from mainstream educational research with insights derived from indigenous knowledge systems. This synthesis was performed in a stepwise manner, whereby quantitative data on standardized curricula and policy limitations were juxtaposed with qualitative findings from ethnographic studies that highlighted Indigenous pedagogies and community-based learning practices (Odora Hoppers, 2021; Oke, 2025; Shen et al., 2024; Tegegne et al., 2025). Mainstream research consistently identified structural barriers, including limited financial resources, inadequate infrastructure, and rigid curricular frameworks, as major impediments to inclusive education (Kadio, 2025; Sibeko & Isaacs, 2019). In contrast, studies focusing on Indigenous contexts revealed alternative educational practices, such as oral storytelling, experiential learning, and communal decision-making, which fostered greater learner engagement and contextual relevance. These indigenous insights underscored the importance of culturally grounded approaches that addressed educational access and enriched the learning experience through locally relevant content and methods (Zickafoose et al., 2024).

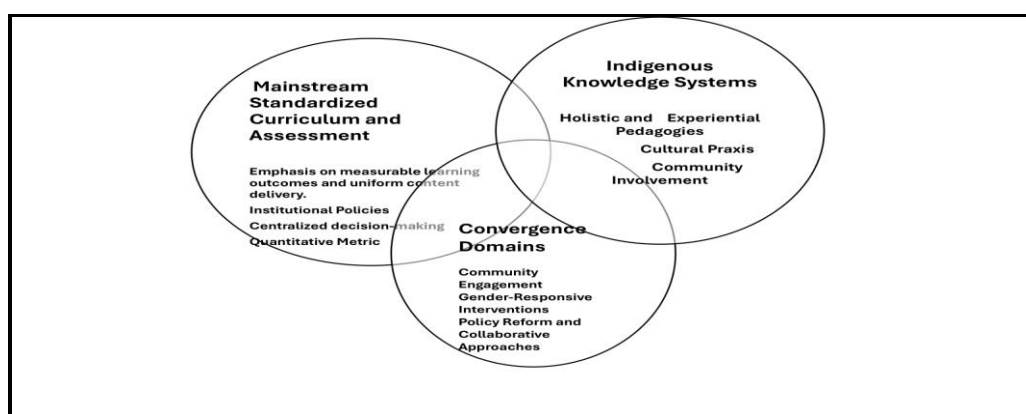


Figure 3: Conceptual Diagram of the Integration of Mainstream Educational Frameworks and Indigenous Knowledge Systems

A conceptual diagram (see Figure 3) was developed to represent this integration visually. The diagram illustrated overlapping domains where mainstream educational frameworks and Indigenous knowledge converge such as com-

munity engagement and gender-responsive interventions while delineating areas where Indigenous perspectives provided unique contributions absent from conventional models. This visual aid enhanced clarity by mapping the thematic intersections and divergences, providing

a coherent framework linking empirical evidence with cultural praxis. The synthesis revealed that integrating Indigenous knowledge into mainstream educational paradigms could mitigate policy gaps and foster more holistic, culturally sensitive educational practices (Moleka, 2024; Ngaka, 2025; Samier & ElKaleh, 2023; Udisi, 2024). The narrative underscored that a dual approach, combining the structural focus of mainstream research with the contextual depth of Indigenous insights, offered a more comprehensive model for achieving inclusive education in developing contexts (Ali et al., 2022).

7. Discussion

The integration of indigenous knowledge deepened the understanding of both the challenges and the opportunities within inclusive education. The literature synthesis revealed that Indigenous epistemologies provided critical insights into the socio-cultural and historical contexts that shape educational barriers (Seleke, 2021). These perspectives elucidated how cultural norms, community values, and traditional pedagogical methods intersect with structural inequities, such as inadequate infrastructure and limited financial resources, to exacerbate the exclusion of marginalized groups (Kadio, 2025; Sibeko & Isaacs, 2019). Indigenous knowledge illuminated aspects of educational disadvantage that conventional research often overlooked. For example, the inclusion of local narratives and community-based learning practices exposed how formal educational models frequently failed to engage with the lived experiences of Indigenous populations (Seleke et al., 2019). This gap contributed to a limited understanding of the nuanced factors affecting learner engagement and retention. In contrast, Indigenous perspectives emphasized holistic and experiential learning approaches that resonated with the cultural practices of communities, thereby offering viable alternatives to standardized curricula (O'Leary et al., 2020; Odora Hoppers, 2021).

Furthermore, integrating indigenous insights enriched the analysis of gender disparities within education. It provided a clearer picture of how traditional gender roles and cultural expectations influenced educational participation and achievement (Atindama et al., 2025; Mabica et al.; Ntombela et al., 2025; Nweje et al.,

2025; Okeke & Ramaila, 2025; Schismenos et al.; Tegegne et al., 2025). Indigenous frameworks demonstrated that community-driven interventions, rooted in local traditions and collective wisdom, could effectively challenge entrenched gender biases and promote more equitable educational practices (Assefa, 2022; Carpena-Méndez et al., 2022; Cindi, 2021; da Silva et al., 2024).

For Seleke et al. (2019), including Indigenous knowledge, deepened the comprehension of the multifaceted challenges in inclusive education and highlighted opportunities for transformative change. The findings suggested that a dual approach that harmonizes mainstream educational research with Indigenous epistemologies could lead to more culturally sensitive, community-based interventions. Such a synthesis offered a more comprehensive strategy for addressing structural barriers and fostering sustainable, inclusive educational environments in developing contexts.

Comparison of Findings from Indigenous Contexts and Conventional Studies

The review revealed convergent and divergent findings when comparing studies that integrated indigenous knowledge with more conventional research on inclusive education. Conventional studies primarily emphasized structural and systemic challenges such as inadequate funding, rigid standardized curricula, and top-down policy approaches that failed to address the specific needs of marginalized groups (Sepadi, 2025; Walton & Engelbrecht, 2024). These studies frequently relied on quantitative metrics to document disparities in educational access and gender participation, thereby providing broad generalizability of results across diverse contexts.

In contrast, studies rooted in Indigenous contexts provided rich qualitative insights that underscored the importance of community-based learning and culturally embedded pedagogies. These investigations highlighted Indigenous practices, such as oral storytelling, experiential learning, and communal decision-making, which offered alternative frameworks for understanding educational inclusion (O'Leary et al., 2020; Odora Hoppers, 2021; Oke, 2025; Seleke et al., 2019; Shizha, 2025). These researchers in indigenous settings often docu-

mented how local cultural values and traditional knowledge systems were harnessed to overcome barriers that conventional approaches tended to overlook. For instance, Indigenous research demonstrated that educational interventions developed from within communities were more responsive to local needs and more effective in mitigating socio-cultural barriers (Poland-McClain et al., 2024). Areas of convergence between the two bodies of research included a shared recognition of the persistent gender disparities and socio-economic challenges that continue to impede inclusive education. Both conventional and Indigenous studies acknowledged that systemic inequities significantly affected marginalized groups and that contextual factors played a critical role in shaping educational outcomes. However, divergence was evident in the methodological and epistemological approaches employed. Conventional studies predominantly used standardized, quantitative methods that, while offering comparability across contexts, sometimes failed to capture the depth of local experiences (Odora Hoppers, 2021; Oke, 2025; Shen et al., 2024; Tegege et al., 2025).

In contrast, Indigenous studies relied on qualitative, narrative-driven methodologies that provided nuanced accounts of community dynamics and cultural practices. This divergence highlighted the limitations of a one-size-fits-all approach to educational research and underscored the potential benefits of integrating Indigenous perspectives to inform more culturally sensitive and context-specific educational policies (O'Leary et al., 2020; Odora Hoppers, 2021; Oke, 2025; Seleke et al., 2019; Shizha, 2025). The synthesis of findings suggested that a hybrid approach, one that marries the empirical robustness of conventional research with the contextual richness of indigenous insights—could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities within inclusive education.

Policy and Practice Implications

The review revealed several concrete recommendations for integrating indigenous practices into modern educational systems. First, policymakers were advised to revise existing

curricular frameworks to incorporate indigenous knowledge, ensuring educational content reflects local histories, languages, and cultural practices. Collaborative partnerships between government agencies, indigenous communities, and educational institutions were recommended to facilitate the co-design and co-delivery of culturally responsive programs (Snow et al., 2024). Educators were encouraged to undergo professional development in culturally responsive teaching practices and to adopt community-based learning models that leverage Indigenous pedagogies such as oral storytelling, experiential learning, and communal decision-making (Seleke, 2021; Seleke et al., 2019). Additionally, it was recommended that targeted funding be allocated to support Indigenous knowledge initiatives and develop localized educational materials (Zickafoose et al., 2024).

Strengths and Limitations

Several limitations were acknowledged in this review. First, sourcing Indigenous knowledge proved challenging due to its predominantly oral transmission and the limited availability of documented peer-reviewed literature. This constraint potentially resulted in the underrepresentation of certain indigenous perspectives, particularly those from remote or less digitally connected communities. Second, potential publication bias was noted, as studies with significant positive outcomes or those aligned with prevailing academic paradigms were more likely to be published, skewing the available evidence. Third, language barriers may have further limited access to relevant research published in indigenous or non-English languages, which could have provided additional context-specific insights. Lastly, the heterogeneity in methodological approaches and the varying quality of studies, especially within grey literature and community reports, posed challenges for synthesis, potentially affecting the generalizability of the findings. These limitations underscore the need for cautious interpretation of the results and highlight opportunities for future research to address these gaps in the evidence base.

8. Conclusion

The review revealed that integrating Indigenous knowledge into the discourse on inclusive

education significantly enriched the understanding of challenges and opportunities for marginalized groups. It demonstrated that Indigenous epistemologies provided vital insights into community-based learning practices, emphasizing holistic and experiential pedagogies that enhanced engagement and contextual relevance. Moreover, the synthesis showed that while conventional research predominantly focused on structural barriers and quantitative disparities, Indigenous perspectives highlighted the cultural and relational dimensions of educational exclusion and gender inequities. The analysis underscored that culturally responsive interventions, grounded in local traditions and collective wisdom, were instrumental in mitigating systemic biases and fostering more equitable educational environments. Overall, the findings confirmed that incorporating Indigenous knowledge broadened the analytical framework of inclusive education and offered practical and theoretical avenues. By highlighting the integration of traditional knowledge systems with modern policy paradigms, the study evidenced that incorporating indigenous perspectives can strengthen educational reforms by making them both culturally relevant and effective, and offered concrete recommendations for policymakers and educators to adopt integrative, sustainable, and inclusive practices. Looking ahead, future research should focus on establishing robust methodologies to systematically incorporate indigenous practices into broader educational policy

for policy reform, thus contributing to a more nuanced and effective strategy for addressing educational inequities in developing contexts.

Contributions to the Field

This review made substantial contributions to academic discourse and practical applications in inclusive education by rigorously bridging the gap between indigenous knowledge and contemporary educational practices. Thereby, enriching the theoretical framework and informing policy reforms. It demonstrated that indigenous epistemologies provide invaluable insights into community-based learning, holistic pedagogies, and culturally responsive interventions that not only complement but also challenge the conventional educational frameworks, expanding established models such as intersectionality, feminist theory, and social justice with previously underexplored culturally grounded dimensions.

frameworks, emphasizing longitudinal studies to evaluate long-term outcomes, comparative analyses of indigenous pedagogies in diverse contexts, and participatory research methods that actively involve indigenous communities in policy design and evaluation, while also expanding the scope to include non-English sources and underrepresented regions, thereby offering a more comprehensive understanding of how indigenous knowledge can shape contemporary education systems.

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.9>**THE IMPACT OF PATRIARCHAL TSHIVENḌA PROVERBS ON WOMEN'S EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING****Dr Violet Radzilani****Dr Tshinetise David Raphalalani****Dr M Mathabi**

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E-mails: rradzalani@gmail.com;Tshinetise.Raphalalani@univen.ac.zaMashudu.Mathabi@univen.ac.za**Abstract**

This study investigates the emotional and psychological impact of patriarchal proverbs within the Tshivendḍa linguistic and cultural context, focusing on how such expressions influence women's emotional well-being. Drawing on Feminist Linguistic Theory, the research critically examines how Tshivendḍa proverbs encode and perpetuate gender stereotypes that subordinate women and reinforce patriarchal norms. Despite the rich scholarly discourse surrounding African proverbs as cultural and moral tools, limited attention has been paid to their emotional ramifications, particularly for women. Through qualitative methods, comprising textual analysis of selected proverbs and semi-structured interviews with Tshivendḍa-speaking women, the study explores how these proverbs shape gender roles, regulate emotional expression, and contribute to internalised oppression. Thematic analysis reveals that patriarchal proverbs often legitimise gender inequality and have significant implications for women's psychological health, including diminished self-esteem, restricted autonomy and emotional distress. The study recommends the inclusion of proverbs in school syllabi from early grades to promote critical thinking, cultural awareness, and moral development, while enhancing learners' language proficiency and contextual understanding. Emphasising the importance of teaching the meanings, context, and cultural significance of proverbs, the study advocates for their thoughtful and respectful use. By critically engaging with these cultural expressions, the study calls for a re-evaluation of gendered linguistic practices and supports a shift toward a more inclusive and equitable cultural discourse that aligns with contemporary gender justice ideals.

Introduction and background of the study

Language serves as a fundamental instrument for the articulation of emotions and the structuring of social interactions. Emotions encompass subjective feelings such as anger, sadness, happiness, and hatred, which are conveyed through both verbal and non-verbal means, including language and gestures (Morgan, King, Weisz, & Schopler, 1981). While facial expressions constitute a crucial aspect of emotional communication, they frequently interact with language to facilitate effective interaction.

How emotions are expressed and interpreted is

pivotal in human relationships, influencing social cohesion, conflict resolution, and psychological well-being. When inadequately communicated or misconstrued, emotions may engender misunderstandings, psychological distress, and interpersonal discord. Accordingly, the study of language as a conduit for emotional expression is of considerable scholarly importance, particularly within societies where oral traditions and proverbial discourse occupy a central position in shaping cultural norms and social expectations. Within the Tshivendḍa linguistic and cultural framework, proverbs function as a vital repository for transmitting moral principles, societal

values, and intergenerational wisdom. These proverbial expressions serve as didactic tools, offering guidance and reinforcing behavioural expectations. However, a significant proportion of these proverbs are imbued with patriarchal ideologies that delineate gender roles in ways that are prejudicial to women. Such patriarchal proverbs frequently prescribe and legitimise the subordination of women, framing their roles and responsibilities within restrictive parameters that sustain male dominance. Despite their cultural reverence, these proverbs contribute to the perpetuation of gender inequality by depicting women as subordinate, reliant, and inherently inferior to men. The internalisation of such discourse has profound repercussions for women's emotional well-being, shaping their self-perception, psychological autonomy, and broader socio-economic agency. The adverse effects of these proverbs may manifest in diminished self-esteem, internalised oppression, and constrained personal and social mobility.

Although scholarly engagement with African proverbs is extensive, existing research has predominantly examined their linguistic, ethical, and cultural significance, with relatively little attention to their psychological and emotional dimensions. While certain scholars advocate for the preservation of proverbs as a crucial element of cultural heritage and moral instruction, others contend that those embodying patriarchal prejudices ought to be subjected to rigorous scrutiny within contemporary gender discourse. This scholarly debate raises pertinent questions regarding the extent to which such proverbs should continue to be venerated as cultural artefacts or whether they should be reinterpreted or abandoned within the framework of contemporary gender justice and human rights imperatives. The absence of a critical examination of the emotional ramifications of patriarchal proverbs in Tshivenda represents a significant gap in the existing body of research, particularly within the interdisciplinary fields of gender studies, sociolinguistics, and psychology.

This study addresses this lacuna by critically analysing the impact of patriarchal Tshivenda proverbs on women's emotional well-being. By exploring selected proverbs, this research aims to assess their contribution to gendered emotional distress and psychological harm. The study will investigate how women internalise, resist, or negotiate the meanings embedded within these proverbs and how such linguistic constructs influence broader societal perceptions of women. This investigation's central research question is: *How do patriarchal Tshivenda proverbs impact women's emotional well-being?* By addressing this question, the study will generate deeper insights into the interplay between language, culture, and emotional well-being, contributing to wider discourses on gender equality and linguistic transformation in African societies. Ultimately, this study aspires to challenge oppressive linguistic traditions and advocate for a more equitable and inclusive cultural narrative.

Literature Review

Language serves as a powerful medium for shaping societal attitudes, reinforcing cultural norms, and influencing individual psychological well-being. In many African societies, including those that use Tshivenda, proverbs play a significant role in preserving traditional knowledge, guiding behaviour, and instilling moral values. However, some of these proverbial expressions reflect and reinforce patriarchal ideologies, which shape gender roles in ways that often disadvantage women. The existing body of research on African proverbs has predominantly focused on their linguistic, cultural, and moral significance, with limited attention paid to their emotional and psychological impact on women. This literature review critically examines key studies in language and emotion, the role of proverbs in African societies, gender and patriarchal discourse in proverbs, and the psychological implications of gendered language.

Language, Emotion, and Socialisation

Scholars have long acknowledged the profound connection between language and emotion. Language is not merely a tool for communication but also a means through which individuals experience, regulate, and express emotions (*Russell, 1991*). As conveyed through language, emotions are shaped by sociocultural contexts, influencing how individuals perceive and react to situations (*Averill, 1980*). In many cultures, including those within Africa, language is embedded with social expectations that dictate appropriate emotional expressions for different genders (*Lakoff, 1975*). Studies suggest that in patriarchal societies, women's emotional expression is often policed through linguistic norms that reinforce submission and compliance, while men are socialised to express dominance and authority (*Cameron, 1992*).

In the context of Tshivenḁa, where oral traditions are integral to communication and socialisation, proverbs act as a framework through which emotions are constructed and regulated. The encoding of gendered emotions in proverbs plays a crucial role in shaping women's experiences and emotional well-being. Proverbs that associate women with passivity, obedience, and endurance contribute to the internalisation of emotional suppression and gendered behavioural expectations. This process reflects what *Butler (1990)* describes as the performativity of gender, where linguistic constructs actively shape gender identity and emotional experiences.

Proverbs as Cultural and Linguistic Tools

Proverbs are a fundamental component of oral traditions in African societies. They serve various functions, including imparting wisdom, reinforcing ethical standards, and preserving cultural knowledge (*Finnegan, 1970*). African proverbs often encapsulate collective experiences and societal expectations, playing a critical role in shaping behavioural norms (*Gyekye, 1996*). Scholars such as *Yankah (1989)* and *Obeng (1996)* have explored the role of proverbs in African discourse, demonstrating how they serve as tools for social instruction and moral guidance.

Despite their cultural significance, proverbs are not neutral linguistic expressions; they often reflect and reinforce dominant power structures within society. Studies on African proverbs have revealed the extent to which gender ideologies are embedded in proverbial discourse (*Oha, 1998*). In many instances, proverbs perpetuate gender stereotypes that uphold male authority while restricting women's agency. Scholars such as *Balogun (2010)* argue that patriarchal ideologies in proverbs contribute to the marginalisation of women by normalising their subordination within family and societal structures.

In Tshivenḁa culture, as in many other African traditions, proverbs reinforce gendered expectations that often place women in subordinate roles. Proverbs that liken women to property underscore their duties as caregivers or stress their supposed emotional weakness function as mechanisms of social control. These proverbs not only shape interpersonal relationships but also contribute to broader societal perceptions of women's roles and limitations. Research by *Maluleke (2012)* on gendered proverbs in African languages highlights how such expressions serve as vehicles for sustaining patriarchal narratives that disadvantage women.

Patriarchal Discourse and Gender Representation in Proverbs

Feminist linguistic scholars have examined how patriarchal discourse, including proverbs, is embedded within everyday language. *Spender (1980)* argues that language is a primary site where power relations are constructed and maintained, often privileging men while marginalising women. Proverbs, as fixed linguistic structures, perpetuate these inequalities by reinforcing traditional gender roles and restricting alternative narratives that empower women.

Studies focusing on African proverbs and gender have demonstrated that many proverbial expressions depict women as weak, emotional, and dependent on male authority (*Mieder, 2004*). For instance, research by *Hussein (2005)* on gender bias in Somali and Oromo proverbs reveals how

women are frequently associated with negative traits such as deceitfulness, irresponsibility, and excessive emotion. Similarly, a study by Akpabio (2011) on Nigerian proverbs highlights how these expressions often frame women in ways that diminish their autonomy and reinforce traditional expectations of submission and obedience.

In the context of Tshivenḁa, patriarchal proverbs serve as a means of maintaining gender hierarchies. Proverbs that emphasise male dominance and female subservience contribute to the continued marginalisation of women within both private and public spheres. Studies by scholars such as Mojapelo (2015) and Raphalalani (2018) have examined how gendered discourses in African languages, including Tshivenḁa, shape societal attitudes towards women. These studies indicate that while proverbs are valued as cultural artefacts, they also function as ideological tools that reinforce women's inferiority and limit their participation in decision-making processes.

The Psychological Impact of Gendered Proverbs

The influence of language on psychological well-being has been extensively explored in sociolinguistics and psychology. Research indicates that negative or restrictive gendered discourse exposure can have significant emotional and psychological consequences (Boroditsky, 2009). The gendered language that diminishes women's agency and autonomy has been linked to lower self-esteem, internalised oppression, and restricted aspirations (Swim, Hyers, Cohen and Ferguson, 2004).

In African contexts, where oral traditions shape collective consciousness, the impact of gendered proverbs on women's emotional well-being is particularly significant. Women who are constantly exposed to proverbs that depict them as weak, submissive, or dependent may internalise these messages, leading to self-doubt and a diminished sense of agency. This aligns with the concept of linguistic relativity, which suggests that language influences thought patterns and

worldviews (Whorf, 1956). Furthermore, research by Eagly and Karau (2002) on gender role expectations indicates that societal narratives reinforcing traditional gender roles can create psychological barriers that limit women's personal and professional growth.

Studies on language and emotional well-being have also demonstrated that derogatory or restrictive language can contribute to psychological distress, particularly when such language is normalised within society (Schneider, Hastorf and Ellsworth, 2011). The internalisation of patriarchal discourse through proverbs can lead to cognitive dissonance, where women struggle to reconcile their personal aspirations with socially imposed limitations. This tension can manifest in various psychological challenges, including anxiety, depression, and feelings of powerlessness (Bem, 1993).

The existing body of literature on proverbs, gender, and emotional well-being highlights the critical role of language in shaping social norms and individual experiences. While proverbs are essential components of cultural heritage and oral tradition, they are also ideological instruments that can reinforce gendered power imbalances. The psychological implications of patriarchal proverbs remain an underexplored area in African linguistic and gender studies, despite their profound impact on women's emotional well-being. This study seeks to contribute to this growing field of inquiry by examining how Tshivenḁa patriarchal proverbs influence women's emotional experiences and self-perception. By critically analysing selected proverbs and their psychological ramifications, this research will provide a deeper understanding of the intersection between language, culture, and gendered emotional well-being, thereby contributing to broader discussions on gender equality and linguistic reform in African societies.

Theoretical framework

Feminist Linguistic Theory emerged in the 1970s as part of the broader feminist movement, which

sought to challenge patriarchal structures embedded in various aspects of society, including language. This theory is grounded in the works of scholars such as Robin Lakoff (1975), Dale Spender (1980), Deborah Tannen (1990) and Sara Mills (1995), who examined how language reflects and perpetuates gender inequalities. The central argument of this theory is that language is not a neutral medium of communication but a powerful ideological tool that sustains and reinforces patriarchal norms.

According to Lakoff (1975), language is a primary mechanism through which women are socialised into submissive and subordinate roles. Her seminal work, *Language and Woman's Place*, highlights how linguistic structures, including proverbs, idioms, and metaphors, often reinforce gender hierarchies by portraying women as weak, emotional, and dependent on men. Spender (1980) further builds on this idea in *Man-Made Language*, where she argues that men have historically constructed language to maintain dominance over women. She asserts that the exclusion of women from linguistic authorship has led to the development of a discourse that normalises their oppression.

In the context of Tshivenda, proverbs are a powerful tool for transmitting cultural values across generations. However, many of these proverbs are deeply rooted in patriarchal ideologies, shaping societal attitudes toward women and dictating their expected behaviours. Feminist Linguistic Theory is particularly relevant to this study because it provides a critical lens through which these proverbs can be examined. By analysing how patriarchal proverbs construct and reinforce gender roles, this theory enables an exploration of their psychological and emotional impact on women. Mills (1995) emphasises that patriarchal discourse not only shapes women's identities but also limits their agency, often leading to internalised oppression and emotional distress. One of the core tenets of Feminist Linguistic Theory is that language has both a descriptive and prescriptive function; it does not merely reflect reality but actively constructs it (Cameron, 1998). This

aligns with the study's objective of assessing how Tshivenda patriarchal proverbs contribute to gender-based emotional distress. Proverbs such as "*Musadzi u bebelwa u fela nn̄du*" (A woman is born to serve the home) and "*Musadzi ndi thanda ya muṭa*" (A woman is the pillar of the household) reinforce the expectation that women should remain submissive and prioritise domestic responsibilities over personal aspirations. These linguistic constructions have real emotional consequences, as they shape women's self-perception, restrict their autonomy, and contribute to their psychological burden.

Furthermore, Feminist Linguistic Theory challenges the idea that patriarchal linguistic structures are fixed and unchangeable. Instead, it advocates for linguistic reform and re-examining oppressive cultural expressions. This is particularly significant for this study, as it supports the argument that Tshivenda proverbs should not be accepted uncritically but rather be subjected to scrutiny and possible reinterpretation considering contemporary gender equality principles. Tannen (1990) suggests that linguistic change is possible through awareness and resistance, which further justifies the need for this research in addressing the emotional harm caused by these proverbs.

Feminist Linguistic Theory provides the most suitable framework for this study as it offers a comprehensive approach to analyse how language perpetuates gender inequalities and affects women's emotional well-being. By applying this theory, the study critiques the oppressive nature of Tshivenda patriarchal proverbs and contributes to the broader discourse on gender and language reform. The theory's emphasis on linguistic power structures, identity formation, and emotional impact makes it an invaluable tool for understanding and challenging the patriarchal messages embedded in Tshivenda proverbs.

Research Methodology

This study explores the impact of patriarchal Tshivenda proverbs on women's emotional well-being, employing a qualitative research design

grounded in feminist linguistic theory. The research methodology combines textual analysis and semi-structured interviews to examine how patriarchal proverbs influence women's emotional states. Feminist linguistic theory provides the theoretical foundation, focusing on how language mirrors and reinforces gendered power structures that shape women's identities and psychological health (Cameron, 2005). The textual analysis examines a selection of commonly used patriarchal Tshivenda proverbs, analysing how they reinforce gender stereotypes related to subjugation, emotional suppression, and domesticity. These proverbs are scrutinized for their role in shaping societal expectations and influencing women's self-esteem and emotional well-being. For the semi-structured interviews, a purposive sampling method was used to select 15–20 Tshivenda-speaking women from various socioeconomic, educational, and geographic backgrounds, including both rural and urban communities. The final sample consisted of 17 participants, aged between 25 and 60. This diversity was intentional to ensure the inclusion of a wide range of lived experiences and perspectives on the emotional effects of patriarchal proverbs. Participants were selected based on their self-identification as Tshivenda-speaking women with direct or cultural exposure to traditional proverbs. The sample size was determined in line with qualitative research practices, where thematic saturation is prioritized over representativeness, allowing for a rich and in-depth exploration of personal narratives.

These interviews aim to uncover participants' experiences with patriarchal proverbs and explore their emotional impact. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) is applied to identify recurring themes of emotional harm, submission, and gender inequality in the proverbs and interview data. Ethical considerations ensure that all participants provide informed consent and maintain confidentiality. While the study is limited to the context of Tshivenda proverbs and a specific cultural setting, it offers valuable insights into

the intersection of language, culture, and gendered emotional experiences. The qualitative approach allows for a detailed examination of patriarchal language's personal and cultural consequences.

Data presentation, Analysis and Discussion

This study's data presentation, analysis, and discussion focus on the impact of patriarchal Tshivenda proverbs on women's emotional well-being. Through a combination of textual analysis and semi-structured interviews, the study explores how these proverbs, deeply embedded in Tshivenda culture, reinforce gender stereotypes and influence women's psychological and emotional experiences. The findings from the textual analysis of selected proverbs will be presented alongside insights from the interviews conducted with Tshivenda-speaking women, revealing the ways in which these cultural expressions shape societal expectations and affect women's emotional health. The analysis will highlight recurring themes of emotional suppression, submission, and gender inequality, providing a nuanced understanding of how language both reflects and perpetuates patriarchal norms. By linking the data to feminist linguistic theory, the discussion will further explore the role of language in shaping women's identities, self-esteem, and overall emotional well-being, shedding light on the powerful impact of proverbs as a tool for cultural transmission and emotional conditioning.

4.2.1.1

Examples of patriarchal Tshivenda proverbs on women's social being.

Example:

1.

Musadzi muñwe ndi khaladzi (One wife is a sister).

This Tshivenda proverb equates having only one wife to having a sister, which carries significant symbolic weight. In its literal form, a sister is a familial relation with whom romantic or sexual involvement is inappropriate or impossible. By

making this comparison, the proverb implies that a man with only one wife is essentially in a platonic or incomplete relationship as though his emotional, sexual, or social needs are not truly being met.

The proverb suggests that a single wife is not sufficient emotionally, physically or in terms of fulfilling traditional societal roles such as childbearing, domestic work or social status enhancement. It asserts that true masculinity or adulthood is only achieved when a man has multiple wives. From a woman's perspective, this proverb is deeply insulting and emotionally distressing.

It suggests that: her loyalty, love, and commitment are inadequate; she is replaceable or incomplete, no matter how dedicated she is to the relationship; a man's dissatisfaction or desire for more wives is a natural outcome, not a personal choice or moral decision. The proverb forces women into accepting emotional neglect, inequality, or diminished roles within their own homes, all under the guise of tradition.

Example: 2. *Munna ndi luranga u a navha* (A man is a pumpkin plant, he stretches).

In this Tshivenda proverb, a man is symbolically likened to a pumpkin plant, a creeping vine known for spreading widely across the ground, seeking sunlight and space to grow. The metaphor of "stretching" here represents movement, expansion and outward reach. In traditional interpretation, this "stretching" is used to justify a man's need or tendency to form relationships with more than one woman.

Just as the pumpkin plant does not stay confined to one spot, the man is seen as someone who naturally reaches out beyond a single relationship or wife. The plant's stretching is presented as a natural, instinctual process, implying that it is not wrong, but expected and accepted.

The use of the proverb can be deeply harmful to women in that it fosters jealousy, emotional pain, and resentment, especially in cases where a husband's extramarital affairs or polygamous relationships are justified using cultural wisdom. The proverb use could result in women being devalued, as the proverb implies that one woman is

never enough for a man. It can also lead to insecurity and competition among co-wives, which undermines female solidarity and emotional well-being. The message that a woman's emotional needs are secondary to a man's freedom and desires is reinforced by this proverb.

Furthermore, the proverb promotes a culture where women are discouraged from voicing dissatisfaction, as doing so might be seen as going against cultural norms or disrespecting tradition. Example: 3. *Munna ndi ndou, ha tshili nga muri muñwe fhedzi*. (A man is an elephant he cannot live by only one tree).

This proverb draws on the symbolism of the elephant, a majestic, powerful, and nomadic creature. In the animal kingdom, elephants are known to travel across vast terrains in search of variety in food and water sources, avoid remaining under one tree or in one place for too long, represent dominance, independence and grandeur in many African cultures. The proverb metaphorically communicates the belief that a man's needs, particularly sexual, emotional and social are broad and varied, and cannot be satisfied by a single partner. Therefore, having multiple women (wives or partners) is justified, if not expected of men.

The proverb has a psychological and social impact on women in that it is deeply demeaning and emotionally destructive, as it implies that no single woman is enough, thus lowering self-worth and confidence. It also promotes jealousy, rivalry, and insecurity among co-wives or female partners. Negligence of emotional intimacy and loyalty in marriage is normalised by this proverb. Women are discouraged from questioning, resisting, or leaving polygamous or unfaithful relationships. Thus, the proverb perpetuates the notion that men's needs are a priority, while women must adjust, sacrifice, or suppress their own emotions and expectations to keep a family or marriage intact.

Example: 4. *Vhuhadzi ndi nama ya thole ya fhufhuma ri a fhunzhela*. (Marriage is the meat of a lean cow, when it rises, we press it down.)

This Tshivenda proverb uses a vivid metaphor to

portray the nature of marriage, comparing it to the meat of a lean (thin or skinny) cow. In traditional contexts, meat from a lean cow is tough, requires effort to cook and soften, and is generally considered of lower quality. The idea of it “rising” refers to the meat swelling or becoming difficult during cooking, a moment that requires pressing it down, or applying force to manage it. The metaphor suggests that marriage is inherently difficult and filled with challenges. When hardships arise, they must be subdued, suppressed, or endured rather than addressed or resolved. Thus, the appropriate response to marital conflict is perseverance, control and endurance, not escape or confrontation. Women who internalise this proverb may feel trapped in cycles of suffering, believing that their worth is tied to their ability to endure quietly and endlessly.

Example: 5. *Vhiḍa la musadzi li vhuhadzi* (The grave of a woman is where she is married).

At face value, this Tshivenda proverb uses imagery of death and burial to convey a deeply rooted cultural message: once a woman is married, her life, symbolically and literally, belong to her husband’s household. The reference to a grave emphasises permanence, suggesting that marriage is not a temporary commitment but a lifelong and unbreakable bond, regardless of circumstances. This proverb can cause a wide range of negative emotional and psychological effects on women including feelings of entrapment and hopelessness especially in toxic or abusive marriages, resentment and emotional distress, knowing that society expects them to suffer in silence, fear of social rejection or family shame if they choose to leave a troubled marriage, a sense of loss of self and disconnection from their birth families.

This proverb becomes a mental prison, reinforcing the belief that they must stay married even when their health, happiness or safety is at risk.

Example: 6. *Khuhu ya phambo a i imbi mutsho* (A hen does not sing in the morning).

This Tshivenda proverb draws on the natural behavior of chickens to construct a gender-based

metaphor. In literal terms, hens (female chickens) do not crow; only roosters (male chickens) do, especially at dawn, a symbolic time of leadership, new beginnings and announcements. In the context of this proverb, the hen represents a woman, and the rooster symbolises a man.

The proverb is used to discourage women from speaking out or taking initiative, particularly in public or authoritative settings. “Singing in the morning” metaphorically stands for leading, expressing opinions, speaking in meetings, and initiating conversations, especially those considered important or of high status.

The proverb enforces a cultural expectation that women must remain silent, especially in spaces of influence such as royal councils, community forums or other traditional gatherings. By suggesting that only men are permitted to “sing” (speak), the proverb silences women’s contributions to important decisions, marginalises their perspectives even on issues directly affecting them and reinforces male dominance in public and political spheres.

This proverb is also extended into the realm of romantic relationships. Women are discouraged from expressing romantic interest or proposing love. The “hen” must wait silently for the “rooster” to initiate. As a result: women may suppress their feelings out of fear of being judged as inappropriate; gender roles become rigid thereby preventing mutual and equal participation in relationships; women’s agency is diminished portraying assertiveness as unnatural or shameful.

The proverb has a long-lasting psychological and emotional impact on women in that they instil shame and fear in women who wish to speak up or lead, they contribute to low self-confidence, as women internalise the idea that their voices are less valuable, they provoke anger and frustration, especially in modern contexts where women are more educated and aware of their rights but still encounter traditional resistance.

Women who challenge this proverb may be labelled as rebellious or disrespectful, while men who uphold it are often praised for preserving

culture. This double standard continues to fuel gender inequality.

Example: 7. *Musadzi ndi phandamulongo* (A woman is a disruptor in the family)

This Tshivenda proverb presents a highly problematic and derogatory view of women, portraying them as the primary source of conflict or instability within families. The term "phandamulongo" (disruptor) connotes chaos, disorder, and a tendency to create division. When applied to women, it implies that their presence or actions inherently disturb family harmony and peace.

The proverb stems from deeply entrenched patriarchal ideologies, where women are often blamed for familial problems, regardless of the circumstances. Whether it involves disputes, economic hardship, or marital breakdowns, the default cultural assumption that the proverb reflects is that the woman is always at fault.

The proverb reinforces a dangerous stereotype that **associates femininity with conflict**, feeding into broader societal narratives that **distrust women's emotional stability, rationality and intentions**. It normalises the idea that women are inherently problematic or emotionally volatile.

Being consistently labelled as a troublemaker has significant emotional consequences for women. It can lead to: low self-esteem, especially among young girls raised with such messaging; fear of expression, where women suppress their voices to avoid being seen as disruptive; internalised misogyny, where women themselves begin to believe they are inferior or problematic.

Example: 8. *Musadzi ha na gota* (A woman cannot be a headman).

This Tshivenda proverb asserts that leadership roles, particularly those of traditional authority, such as a headman or village chief, are reserved exclusively for men. In this context, the proverb reinforces a belief deeply rooted in patriarchal systems, where power, leadership, and decision-making were traditionally monopolised by men. Women, in contrast, were expected to occupy do-

mestic or supportive roles and remain subordinate to male authority figures.

Historically, the institution of traditional leadership in many African societies was male-dominated. Succession often followed patrilineal lines, and leadership qualities were culturally coded as masculine traits, such as decisiveness, bravery, and rationality. Women were often excluded from such roles not because they lacked capability, but because custom and culture systematically denied them access to power.

The proverb has a deeply marginalising and disempowering effect on women and girls, particularly those who seek to participate in leadership or governance. It fosters a culture of exclusion and silence in the following ways:

- It undermines women's ambitions in that women who aspire to lead are often discouraged or ridiculed, told that they are stepping outside of their place or challenging tradition.
- It perpetuates gender discrimination by framing leadership as a male prerogative, the proverb justifies systemic discrimination, where women are overlooked for roles they are fully qualified to perform.
- It erodes self-confidence in that it can result in self-doubt, making women feel unworthy or incapable of leading, regardless of their actual potential or skillset.
- It reinforces institutional barriers in that whether in traditional settings, workplaces, or politics, women may face institutional resistance rooted in these cultural beliefs, making it harder for them to be accepted or supported in leadership roles.

Example: 9. *Musadzi a shuma munna ndi tshinamo* (When a woman works, a man is a patch).

In this Tshivenda proverb, the employed woman

is portrayed as dominant or empowered, while the man is likened to a patch (tshinamo). A patch is typically a small, secondary, and dependent piece of material used to cover or reinforce a weak or damaged part of a garment. Symbolically, this metaphor implies that the man becomes irrelevant, insignificant, or dependent when the woman is economically empowered.

This proverb stems from deep-rooted patriarchal ideologies, where men are traditionally viewed as the primary breadwinners and women are expected to be financially dependent, submissive, and domesticated. When this dynamic is reversed or even balanced, the proverb suggests that the man's social role and identity are diminished.

This proverb has a damaging effect on women, especially those who pursue careers, education, or financial independence. Women may be pressured to remain at home, even if they are capable and qualified, for fear of shaming their husbands or disrupting traditional household dynamics. By framing female employment as a threat to men, the proverb promotes economic dependence, limiting women's opportunities for growth, security and self-reliance. Women who are successful in their careers are often labelled as arrogant, disrespectful, or too independent, reinforcing the notion that success belongs to men and humility to women. To maintain harmony in relationships or avoid social criticism, many women feel compelled to downplay their achievements or allow their husbands to appear more successful even when they are not.

Example: 10. *Ndau nduna ndi ya tsadzi mbili* (A male lion has two female lions).

In this Tshivenda proverb, the male lion, often regarded as the symbol of strength, leadership, and authority, is used as a metaphor for a man. The phrase highlights that just as a male lion typically leads a pride that includes more than one lioness, a man, too, is expected or allowed to have more than one wife. The imagery glorifies polygamy, suggesting that it is natural, powerful, and even noble for a man to be surrounded by multiple women who serve or support him. The proverb, therefore, does not merely describe polygamous relationships, but endorses and idealises them, portraying them as a symbol of masculine pride and social stature.

In patriarchal societies, such as those found in many traditional African communities, including Vhavenda community, this proverb reinforces the idea that manhood is associated with dominance, control, and multiple romantic partners. The lion is not just a king of the jungle, but also a metaphor for the ideal man: powerful, desired, and above all, entitled to more than one woman.

By equating men to lions and women to lionesses who surround and serve the male, this Tshivenda proverb places men at the centre of the relationship dynamic, while reducing women to supporting roles.

THE TABLE

Patriarchal Tshivenda Proverbs on Women's Social Being

Proverb (Tshivenda)	Translation	Social Impact on Women
1. Musadzi munwe ndi khaladzi	One wife is a sister	Suggests one wife is insufficient, promoting polygamy; implies emotional neglect and reinforces women's replaceability.

2. Munna ndi luranga u a navha	A man is a pumpkin plant, he stretches	Justifies male infidelity or polygamy as natural; fosters jealousy, insecurity and suppresses women's emotional needs.
3. Munna ndi ndou, ha tshili nga muri munwe fhedzi	A man is an elephant; he cannot live by only one tree	Implies no single woman is enough; it promotes polygamy and suppresses women's rights to question unfaithfulness.
4. Vhuhadzi ndi nāma ya thole ya fhufhuma ri a fhunzhela	Marriage is the meat of a lean cow, when it rises, we press it down	Normalises suffering and suppression in marriage; discourages women from confronting marital challenges.
5. Vhida la musadzi li vhuhadzi	The grave of a woman is where she is buried	Implies marriage is permanent regardless of abuse; it discourages women from leaving harmful relationships.
6. Khuhu ya phambo a i imbi mutsho	A hen does not sing in the morning	Silences women in public discourse; discourages leadership and romantic initiative, reinforcing male dominance.
7. Musadzi ndi phanda-mulongo	A woman is a disruptor in the family	Labels women as inherently disruptive; damages self-esteem and reinforces stereotypes of female irrationality.
8. Musadzi ha na gota	A woman cannot be a headman	Excludes women from leadership; justifies gender-based discrimination and diminishes ambition and self-worth.
9. Musadzi a shuma munna ndi tshinamo	When a woman works, a man is a patch	Portrays empowered women as threats to men; discourages financial independence and promotes economic submission.
10. Ndau nduna ndi ya tsadzi mbili	A male lion has two female lions	Glorifies polygamy; portrays men as powerful leaders while reducing women to passive supporters.

Findings

The study found the following:

- Cultural Proverbs as Tools of Gender Oppression

The study reveals that a significant portion of Tshivenda proverbs reinforce patriarchal norms and contribute directly to the subjugation of women. These proverbs promote and normalise practices that limit women's autonomy and reinforce gender inequality. In particular, they perpetuate the idea that men are superior decision-makers, while women are expected to be passive and obedient.

- Encouragement of Polygamy and Male Infidelity

Many Tshivenda proverbs implicitly or explicitly encourage men to engage in polygamy or extra-marital relationships, presenting such behavior as acceptable or even admirable. This cultural messaging creates an environment where women are expected to tolerate infidelity and share their husbands, despite the emotional and physical toll it may take on them.

- Adverse Effects on Women's Wellbeing

The normalisation of polygamy and infidelity contributes to a range of serious consequences for women. These include emotional trauma, strained marital relationships, increased risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), higher divorce rates, and in some cases, premature death due to neglect or mental health issues. The psychological impact of being denied exclusivity and stability in a marriage often goes unaddressed in traditional settings.

- Exclusion of Women from Leadership and Public Expression

Some Tshivenda proverbs actively discourage women from taking up leadership roles or speaking in public forums. They reinforce the belief that women should remain silent, submissive, and confined to the domestic sphere. As a result, women are often marginalised in community decision-making processes and cultural dialogues.

- Dual Role of Proverbs in Cultural Preservation and Oppression

While proverbs are valuable cultural tools that preserve traditions, beliefs, and language, they also have a dual function. Some of them uphold

values that conflict with modern understandings of gender equality and human rights. This dual nature calls for a critical re-evaluation of which proverbs should be maintained and how they are taught and interpreted.

- Silencing and Resilience of Women

Historically, women affected by these proverbs did not have the platform or societal permission to challenge them. They remained silent, resilient in the face of oppression, and often internalised these cultural expectations. The lack of agency among women in traditional societies highlights the need for educational and societal reform to empower them.

Recommendations

The study makes the following recommendations:

- Integration of Proverbs in Educational Curricula

There is a strong recommendation to incorporate proverbs into school curricula, starting from the early grades. This initiative aims to familiarise learners with cultural expressions while creating space for critical discussion around the meaning and implications of these sayings. By engaging students with proverbs in a structured educational setting, schools can help cultivate a generation that understands and questions cultural narratives.

- Promotion of Critical Thinking and Cultural Literacy

Teaching proverbs in schools should go beyond rote memorization. It should involve critical engagement with the content, prompting learners to analyse the messages behind each saying. This approach encourages students to think independently, question traditional norms where necessary, and develop nuanced perspectives on cultural values.

- Development of Moral and Social Awareness

Proverbs can be powerful tools for teaching moral lessons and social behavior when used wisely. By discussing both the positive and problematic aspects of proverbs, educators can help learners develop empathy, respect for diversity, and a strong sense of social justice, alongside an

appreciation for their cultural heritage.

- Contextual Understanding for Responsible Use

To ensure proverbs are used effectively and respectfully, learners and community members must be taught how to interpret them within their proper historical and cultural contexts. This understanding helps prevent the misuse of proverbs and encourages sensitivity toward their impact, especially regarding gender dynamics.

- Encouraging Inclusive and Gender-Responsive Interpretations

It is crucial to promote interpretations of proverbs that align with values of equality, respect, and inclusion. By re-examining traditional proverbs through a modern, gender-sensitive lens, communities can retain their cultural identity while fostering a more equitable society.

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.10>**SPOUSAL AGE DISPARITIES AT MARITAL TIMING AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AMONG WOMEN IN NIGERIA****Azeez A. Oyetunji^{1*}; Tubosun A. Olowolafe;****Martin E. Palamuleni²; Ayo S. Adebawale^{1,2}**¹Department of Epidemiology and Medical Statistics,
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09013942879**Abstract**

Women's empowerment is critical for achieving gender equality but is often hindered by patriarchal norms, early marriages, and regional disparities. Age differences between spouses at the time of marriage can aggravate the barriers to women's empowerment. Therefore, this study examines spousal age differences in marital timing and women's empowerment among women in Nigeria. This cross-sectional design study used the 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey and focused on married women aged 30–49 years (n=7,840). Women's empowerment was measured based on information concerning decision-making, economic participation, and healthcare. Data were analyzed using logistic and generalized linear regression models ($\alpha=5.0\%$). The mean age of the respondents was 35.13 ± 2.73 and 35.5% were empowered. Women's empowerment was high in spouses who married at older ages than those who married early. Staying longer in school before marriage, particularly among girls will improve women's empowerment in Nigeria.

Keywords: Decision-making, Nigeria, Spousal age difference, Women's empowerment**Background**

Women's empowerment is a diverse process that augments women's access to and control over economic, social, and political resources, enabling them to exercise autonomy in decision-making within households and society (Kabeer, 2005; Huis et al., 2017). It promotes employment opportunities, enhances women's autonomy, and reduces men's dominance in household decision-making, thereby facilitating intergenerational benefits to women, their family members, community, and national growth (Ambler et al., 2021; Nwogwugwu, 2019). Empowering women is pertinent to gender equality, social inclusion, maternal healthcare access, education, **women's rights**, and nutrition which are central to achiev-

ing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goal 5 which emphasizes gender equality as an antidote to eliminate discrimination, violence, and exploitation against women (United Nation, 2015). Women's empowerment increases economic diversification and income equality for communal prosperity. Industries are at an advantage when women are granted leadership and employment opportunities. This facilitates organizational effectiveness and growth. The declaration of 2010–2020 as the African Women's Decade and African Agenda 2063, '*The Africa we Want*' reflect continental efforts to enhance women's social and economic status (United Nation, 2017).

Several factors have acted either singly or jointly

as barriers to women's empowerment globally, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. These factors include early marriage, early childbearing, poor school enrolment for a girl child, and discrimination against women (USAID, 2012). The patriarchal nature of African tradition empowers men as the dominant decision-makers in the family and community further aggravating the hindrance to women's empowerment. Marriage postponement provides young women with opportunities to acquire higher education and skills that can facilitate their involvement in the workforce, increase awareness of their rights, and augment their ability to make informed life choices (USAID, 2012). **One in every 10 women worldwide is living in extreme poverty, they have lower chances of accessing social protection** and are more food insecure than men (UN, 2023; FAO, 2022). They **suffer most from the dearth of safely managed water and sanitation including menstrual hygiene (UNICEF, 2023)**. Sub-Saharan Africa remains the hub for women experiencing these attributes (UNICEF, 2023). In Nigeria, only 44% of Nigerian women are engaged in paid employment, compared to a much higher male labor force participation rate (National Population Commission & ICF, 2019). This gender gap highlights structural barriers that hinder women's participation.

Spousal marital age differences in the context of this study are the differences between the ages of husbands and their spouses at the time of their marriage. Social, cultural, psychological, and structural factors contribute to the persistence of spousal age differences, with significant implications for women's empowerment (Das & Das, 2013). The age gap in marital partnership has implications for power imbalances in marriage, maturity, fertility, marital dynamics, biological fecundity, reproductive decision-making, contraceptive use, and female autonomy (Kitila et al., 2020; Das & Das, 2013; Casterline et al., 1986). In most situations in sub-Saharan Africa, husbands are considerably older than their wives and often exercise dominance in household decisions, thereby, limiting women's ability to negotiate their reproductive and economic roles

(Barbieri et al., 2005; Clark et al., 2006; National Population Commission [NPC] & ICF, 2019). In male-controlled societies like Nigeria, age is a critical determinant of authority within relationships. Sizeable spousal age gaps reinforce traditional gender roles, life experiences, financial resources, social status, and often place women in subordinate positions within their households. Contrariwise, age-equitable unions are protective of equality in decision-making and enhance women's economic participation (Barbieri et al., 2005).

The Nigerian government has introduced various policies aimed at improving gender equality and promoting women's economic empowerment. Such policies include gender policy and legal reforms that protect women's rights to own property, access financial services, and participate in the labor market (UN Women, 2019; NPC & ICF, 2019). Sections 15(2) and 42(1) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria prohibit sex-based discrimination. Section 17 of the Constitution outlines the elimination of demographically derived disparities as a fundamental objective of state policy. Section 17(3)(e), focuses on gender-based disparity and accentuates that the state shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there is equal pay for equal work without discrimination on account of sex (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). These policies provide a framework for addressing gender disparities and ensuring that women have equal access to economic opportunities. However, despite the implementation of these policies, gender inequality is still very prevalent in Nigeria (National Population Commission [NPC] & ICF, 2019; UN Women, 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2021). Data indicate that spousal age disparities are widespread in Nigeria, with an average age gap of nine years, underscoring the prevalence of age differences in marriages (Akpan & Ayinmoro, 2024; NBS & UNICEF, 2017). This is even more pronounced in rural areas, where 76% of marriages involve substantial age gaps (National Population Commission & ICF, 2019). Additionally, early marriage remains prevalent, particularly in the northern regions,

where 43% of girls marry before the age of 18 years, restricting their access to education and limiting their chances of achieving financial independence (National Population Commission & ICF, 2019).

Studies previously conducted in Nigeria have assessed the determinants of the age gap in marital partnership, while others explored its association with spousal violence (Adebowale et al., 2018; Antai et al., 2014). However, the relationship between spousal age differences and women empowerment has received insufficient scholarly attention despite its relevance to fertility patterns, marital stability, and gender relations. In Nigeria, the patriarchal norms and early marriage practices are widespread, and large spousal age disparities tend to reinforce gender inequalities and limit women's empowerment. Women who marry older men are constrained in financial decision-making and mobility, further entrenching systemic gender inequalities. Therefore, this study was designed to fill the research gap. The objectives of the study are to; determine the level of women's empowerment, examine the relationship between spousal age differences and women's empowerment, and identify the relevant socioeconomic predictors to the association between spousal age differences and women's empowerment in Nigeria. Investigating how spousal age differences influence women's empowerment is crucial for closing the gap in power imbalances in marriage and assisting policymakers in designing effective interventions to promote women's empowerment in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was based on two relevant theories (Gender Power Theory and Social Exchange Theory) amidst several interconnected theories concerning the relationship between power dynamics and women's empowerment. The narratives as presented in these theories suggest that larger spousal age gaps often reinforce patriarchal structures, limiting women's autonomy and economic participation, while smaller age gaps offer equity in relationships that promote women's

empowerment (Blau, 1964; Kabeer, 1999; England & Kilbourne, 1990). In Nigeria where traditional gender roles are deeply entrenched, these theoretical viewpoints provide important insights into the challenges and opportunities for improving women's empowerment through changes in marital practices, educational access, and gender norms (Alesina, Giuliano, & Nunn, 2013).

The Gender Power Theory was propounded by Connell (1987) and it provides a framework for understanding how power dynamics within relationships are shaped by societal gender norms. This theory postulates that power is unequally distributed between men and women, often reinforced through structural, economic, and cultural mechanisms. Within the context of marital relationships, spousal age differences serve as a crucial factor in strengthening these gendered power hierarchies. Research suggests that in societies where men are significantly older than their spouses, they tend to have greater control over women concerning household decision-making, economic resources, reproductive choices, and leadership roles (Schuler et al., 1996). This power imbalance limits women's autonomy, reducing their ability to make financial and personal decisions independently. Conversely, women in age-equitable unions tend to have higher levels of education, greater financial independence, and increased bargaining power (Gustafson & Fransson, 2015).

Social Exchange Theory was formulated by George Homans (1958) but later revised by Peter Blau (1964). This theory offers a valuable framework for understanding power inequalities in marital relationships. The theory posits that social interactions are shaped by a rational cost-benefit analysis, where individuals aim to maximize rewards and minimize costs in their relationships. In marriages with substantial age gaps, the older spouse in most situations the husbands often have a greater financial opportunity and affluence, thus, creating an intrinsic inequality among spouses regarding decision-making power. This dynamic reinforces traditional gender roles, wherein women become economically

dependent on their spouses, restricting their autonomy and long-term economic empowerment. When women are financially independent, they can participate in the labor force, access financial assets, and contribute meaningfully to household economic stability. Social exchange within such relationships is more reciprocal, as neither partner holds dominant power over the other. In Nigeria, the tradition around marriage and gender roles persists, women marry older men and as such, they may face greater economic dependency and fewer opportunities for education and employment. The social exchange framework explains how such relationships, where the woman is at a power disadvantage, can limit her economic mobility.

This study, therefore, builds upon these theoretical foundations to examine the relationship between the age gap in partnership and women's

empowerment in Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shows the linkages between spousal age difference and women's empowerment. Socio-economic factors such as wealth, education, ethnicity, and religion directly influence women's empowerment. For instance, higher education and wealth increase economic capacity, enabling women to engage in occupational choices and improve their status within society. Place of residence, especially living in urban settings implies access to resources and empowerment, while rural settings or cultural norms might constrain them. Concurrently, demographic factors like spousal age differences, age at first birth, and age at first marriage have a direct link to women's empowerment. However, these variables act as intervening between socio-economic variables and women's empowerment (Figure 1).

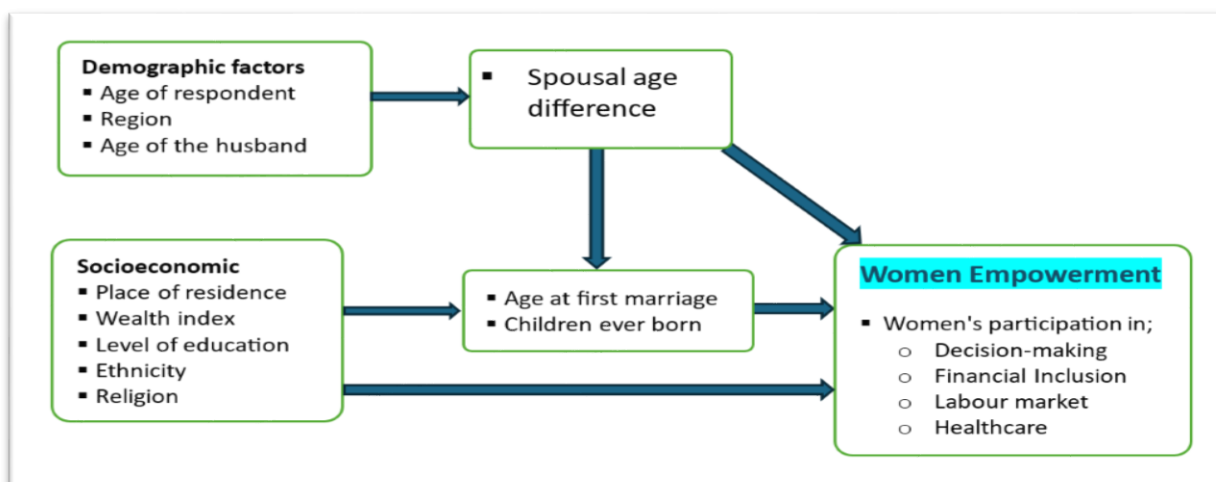


Figure 1: Conceptual Frameworks of Factors Influencing Women's Empowerment

Methodology

Study Design

This research employed a cross-sectional design and used the 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) data. The data was a nationally representative sample of women of reproductive age. However, this study focused on women aged 30–49 years (n=7,840) who got married before age 30 years, thus, capturing long-term empowerment outcomes linked to marital timing. Women in this age range have

typically established their roles within the household and labor market, making it possible to evaluate sustained patterns of empowerment or disempowerment. Younger women, particularly those under 30, may still be transitioning into these roles, making their empowerment status less stable or predictable. Furthermore, the chosen age group includes women who have been married for varying durations, from a few years

to two decades. This diversity enables a comparative analysis of how empowerment levels shift over time-based on marital age gaps, offering insights into whether prolonged exposure to a significant spousal age difference intensifies or diminishes economic and social empowerment.

Study area

The study was conducted in Nigeria, the most populous country in sub-Saharan Africa with a population of above 230 million, and with a growth rate of 2.64% (Population Reference Bureau, 2024). There are 71,345,488 males and 69,086,320 females with a sex ratio of 1.03 and a median age of 18.1 years (NPC, 2006). Nigeria has six geo-political zones namely: South-West, South-East, North-West, South-South, North-East, and North-Central. The country is made up of 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja). Nigeria has over 250 ethnic groups with Hausa-Fulani predominantly in the north, Igbo dominating the east, and Yoruba in the west. In Nigeria, Barbieri et al. (2005) report that 29% of women are married to significantly older men, and Ibisomi (2014) found that 98% of Nigerian women are younger than their husbands, with approximately 43% experiencing an age gap of 10 years or more.

Data Sources

This study utilizes secondary data from the 2018

Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), a nationally representative dataset that provides extensive information on demographic, health, and socio-economic indicators. A two-stage stratified sampling technique was applied: clusters (enumeration areas) were first selected proportionally to population size, followed by random household sampling within clusters. The dataset includes key empowerment variables, such as decision-making autonomy, economic participation, educational attainment, and reproductive autonomy, which are crucial for understanding how spousal age differences at marriage impact long-term empowerment outcomes. Additionally, the NDHS provides contextual factors such as wealth index, urban-rural residence, and regional disparities, allowing for analysis of how marital age gaps influence women's ability to make independent decisions and participate fully in economic and social life.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable for this study was women's Empowerment, assessed using multiple indicators including decision-making, economic participation, and financial autonomy. These indicators are as presented in the Table 1. The maximum obtainable score was 14 and the score was disaggregated into two categories. A score of at least 7 (7-14) was categorized as 'empowered' while 'unempowered' if otherwise (0-6).

Table 1: Empowerment score generation

Variables	Categories					Max . score
	Resp . alone	Joint decision	Part-ner alone	Some-one else	Others	
Decision on household purchases	2	1	0	0	0	2
Decision on visits to family/relatives	2	1	0	0	0	2
Decision on own healthcare	2	1	0	0	0	2
Decision on spending respondent's earnings	2	1	0	0	0	2
Decision on husband's earnings	2	1	0	0	0	2
Decision maker for using contraception	2	1	0	0	0	2

	Yes	No	
Participation in the labor market	1	0	1
Has bank account	1	0	1
Total			14

Resp: Respondent**Independent Variable**

The main independent variable for this study was the spousal age difference, which was measured as the numerical age gap between a woman and her husband at the time of marriage. The following age categories were generated: [<18 wife, <18 husband]; [<18 wife, 18-24 husband]; [<18 wife, 25-29 husband]; [18- 24 wife, 18-24 husband]; [18- 24 wife, 25-29 husband]; [25-29 wife, 25-29 husband].

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) utilized a stratified two-stage sampling technique to select participants. The first stage of sampling involved selecting the Enumeration Areas (EAs). Thereafter, all the households that have the eligible respondents were listed in each EA to form a sampling frame for the study. At the second stage, a systematic random sampling technique was used to select the eligible women from the households list within each cluster (EA). A detailed procedure used for sample selection can be found in the NDHS report. Interested readers should check this report for further exposition on sampling strategies used for the study (NPC & ICF, 2019).

Data Management and Analysis

Data were analyzed using Stata. Due to the complex design (multistage cluster design) used for data analysis, data was weighted to facilitate the extrapolation of findings from this study to other clusters not covered during the survey. Chi-square tests were conducted to examine the association between women's empowerment and spousal age difference. Other variables were examined for their association with the women's empowerment. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test for the differences in mean raw

women empowerment scores across the independent variables. At the multivariable level of analysis, logistic regression was used to identify the key predictors of being 'empowered' while a generalized linear model was used to examine the relationship between the raw women empowerment score and the independent variables. However, all the underlying assumptions of linear regression (linearity, multivariate normality, avoidance of multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity) were tested to ascertain that they comply with the use of LR for the analysis. Scatterplots were used to test the linearity between the women's empowerment and spousal age differences at marital timing. The Q-Q plots of residuals were plotted to assess the normality of the outcome variable. Correlation matrices were constructed to assess the multicollinearity and the scatterplot of residuals versus predicted values did not display any noticeable pattern. All statistical tests were performed at a 5.0% level of significance.

Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to established ethical guidelines for research involving secondary data analysis, ensuring the protection of respondent confidentiality and privacy. The NDHS operates under strict ethical protocols approved by the National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) of Nigeria, which ensures that data collection and dissemination processes meet national and international ethical standards (NPC & ICF, 2019). The data originators sought informed consent from the participants during data collection and they ensured there was no coercion or breach of confidentiality. Permission to use the dataset for this study was obtained from the DHS Program, which requires researchers to submit a

request detailing the study's objectives and intended use of the data. Moreover, all findings derived from the dataset are reported in aggregate form, preventing any possibility of re-identification of respondents. Researchers analyzing NDHS data are also expected to adhere to principles of responsible data use, including accurate representation of findings and avoidance of misinterpretation that could contribute to harmful stereotypes or policy misjudgments (ICF, 2020).

Results

Figure 1 presents the frequency distribution of indicators of women empowerment. The data as presented in Figure 1 shows that 91.3%, 80.8%, and 32.0% of the women were involved in the decision on how to spend her own earning, decision on contraceptive use, and decision on what to do with the husband's earning, respectively. About 78.9% of the women are currently working while 24.5% have a bank account.

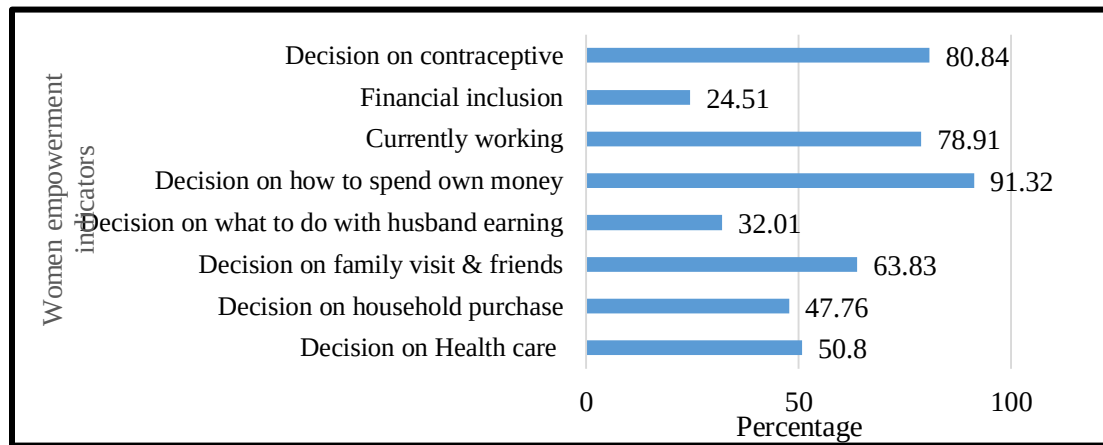


Figure 1: Frequency distribution of the indicators of woman empowerment

The data as presented in Table 2 revealed that 34.5% of the women were empowered, while 58.5% of women who married when their husbands/partners and themselves were aged 25-29 years were empowered. The percentage of empowered women was higher among spouses who married at ages (women vs husband/partner) 18-24 years & 25-29 years (44.2%) and 18-24 years & 18-24 years (44.4%) than those who married at earlier ages <18 years & <18 years (28.4%), <18 years & 18-24 years (27.2%), and <18 years

& 25-29 years (24.9%). The percentage of empowered women increases consistently with increasing levels of education and level of wealth. It increased from 17.6% among women with no education to 62.8% among women with higher education. The proportion of empowered women was higher across the regions in the southern part of Nigeria compared to the northern regions. In all the regions, the percentage of empowered women was highest in the South-South (57.2%) and least in the North-East (17.1%).

Table 2: Percentage distribution of women according to their empowerment status by background characteristics

Background Characteristics	Empowerment Status		Total Women	χ^2 -value	(p-value)
	Not empowered	Empowered			
Total	5135 (65.5)	2705 (34.5)	7840		

Spousal Age Difference				327.213	<0.001
<18 w & <18 h/p	305 (71.6)	121 (28.4)	426		
<18 w & 18-24 h/p	1,884 (72.8)	704 (27.2)	2,588		
<18 w & 25-29 h/p	1,226 (74.1)	429 (24.9)	1,655		
18-24 w & 18-24 h/p	514 (55.6)	410 (44.4)	924		
18-24 w & 25-29 h/p	1,064 (55.8)	841 (44.2)	1,905		
25-29 w & 25-29 h/p	142 (41.5)	200 (58.5)	342		
Age of respondent				84.021	<0.001
30-34	1836 (70.0)	785 (23.0)	2,621		
35-39	1495 (67.0)	736 (33.0)	2,231		
40-44	1036 (64.2)	577 (35.8)	1,613		
45-49	768 (55.9)	607 (44.1)	1,375		
Education				930.436	<0.001
No Education	2944 (82.4)	628 (17.6)	3,572		
Primary	945 (59.4)	647 (40.6)	1,592		
Secondary	1043 (49.0)	1087 (51.0)	2,130		
Higher	203 (37.2)	343 (62.8)	546		
Region				1100	<0.001
North Central	1001 (68.9)	451 (31.1)	1,452		
North East	1196 (82.9)	247 (17.1)	1,443		
North West	1713 (81.3)	394 (18.7)	2,107		
South East	334 (43.0)	442 (57.0)	776		
South Ibis Omi	413 (42.8)	552 (57.2)	965		
South West	478 (43.6)	619 (56.4)	1,097		
Residence				278.473	<0.001
Urban	1520 (53.6)	1316 (46.4)	2,836		
Rural	3615 (72.2)	1389 (27.8)	5,004		
Wealth Index				649.267	<0.001
Poor	2748 (79.9)	691 (20.1)	3,439		
Middle	997 (63.1)	582 (36.9)	1,579		
Rich	1390 (49.3)	1432 (50.7)	2,822		
Religion				696.236	<0.001
Christianity	1775 (49.9)	1779 (50.1)	3,554		
Islam	3299 (78.3)	912 (21.7)	4,211		
Traditionalists	61 (81.3)	14 (18.7)	75		
Children ever born				231.711	<0.001
0-2	319 (47.3)	355 (52.7)	674		
3-4	1023 (56.5)	789 (43.5)	1,812		
5+	3793 (70.8)	1561 (29.2)	5,354		
Ethnicity				914.401	<0.001
Igbo	422 (44.2)	533 (55.8)	955		
Yoruba	440 (41.4)	622 (58.6)	1,062		
Hausa/Fulani	2342 (84.5)	429 (15.5)	2,771		
Others	1931 (63.3)	1121 (36.7)	3,052		
Age at first birth					<0.001
≤18 years	2373 (73.6)	850 (26.4)	3,223		
19-24 years	2365 (62.0)	1449 (38.0)	3,814		
25+ years	343 (47.6)	378 (52.4)	721		

There was significant differences in the mean women empowerment score across the spousal age differences categories. The mean women empowerment score was highest among spouses who married when the women and their husbands/partners were aged 25-29 years (6.62 ± 2.42) compared to those who married at

earlier ages (women vs husband/partner) <18 years & <18 years (4.87 ± 2.68), <18 years & 18-24 years (4.74 ± 2.71), <18 years & 25-29 years (4.67 ± 2.67), 18-24 years & 18-24 years (5.86 ± 2.57), and 18-24 years & 25-29 years (5.77 ± 2.63).

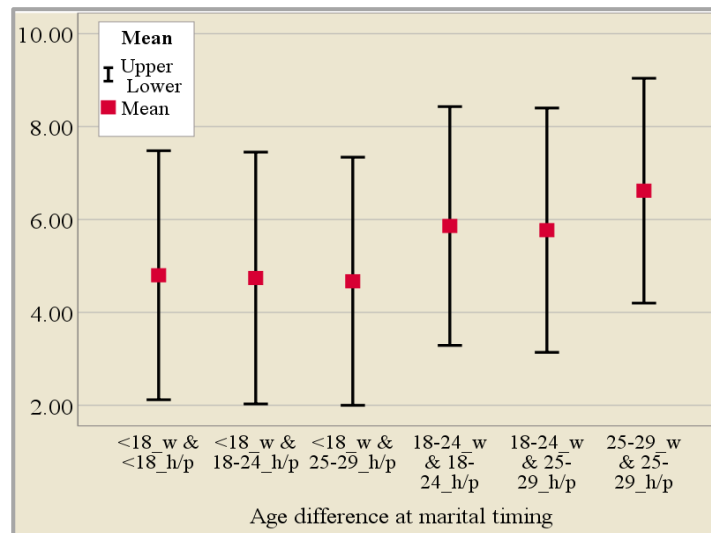


Figure 2: Mean empowerment scores according to spousal age difference (F-value = 78.8, $p < 0.001$)

In Table 3, the bivariate analysis showed that there was a relationship between spousal age differences at marital timing and women empowerment, but this relationship disappeared when other variables were included in the regression model. The odds of being empowered among the women was higher among spouses who married at the age of 25-29 years (uOR=3.55, 95% C.I.=2.627-4.797, $p < 0.001$), when wife was aged 14-24 years & husband/partner aged 25-29 years (uOR=1.99, 95% C.I.=1.584-2.506, $p < 0.001$), and wife was aged 14-24 years & husband/partner aged 18-24 years (uOR=2.01, 95%

C.I.=1.570-2.575, $p < 0.001$) compared to those who married at ages below 18 years. However, the spousal age difference at the time of marriage was not a determinant of women empowerment. The identified determinants of women empowerment included age, education, religion, place of residence, region, wealth index, children ever born, and ethnicity. Higher level of education, higher level of wealth index, and living in the urban areas were protective for women empowerment. The odds of being empowered was 17% (aOR=0.83, 95% C. I.=0.735-0.947, $p = 0.005$) lower among women who live in the rural areas than their counterparts in the urban areas.

Table 3: Logistic regression analysis of the Predictors of women empowerment

Background Characteristics	Unadjusted Model		Adjusted Model	
	uOR	[95% CI]	aOR	[95% CI]
Spousal Age Difference				
<18 w & <18 h/p	1.000		1.000	
<18 w & 18-24 h/p	0.942	0.7501-1.1827	1.121	0.8713-1.4426
<18 w & 25-29 h/p	0.882	0.6955-1.1185	1.077	0.8270-1.4031
18-24 w & 18-24 h/p	2.011*	1.5700-2.5749	1.046	0.7804-1.4012
18-24 w & 25-29 h/p	1.992*	1.5843-2.5055	1.003	0.7609-1.3220
25-29 w & 25-29 h/p	3.550*	2.6274-4.7971	1.118	0.7615-1.6411
Age of respondent				
30-34	1.000		1.000	
35-39	1.151***	1.0190-1.3002	1.285*	1.1185-1.4772
40-44	1.303*	1.1418-1.4860	1.547*	1.3264-1.8053
45-49	1.849*	1.6145-2.1164	2.326*	1.9808-2.7307
Education				
No education	1.000		1.000	
Primary	3.210*	2.8127-3.6625	1.525*	1.3005-1.7886
Secondary	4.886*	4.3289-5.5140	1.834*	1.5413-2.1828
Higher	7.921*	6.5256-9.6145	2.986*	2.3327-3.8216
Region				
North Central	1.000		1.000	
North East	0.458*	0.3842-0.5468	0.825	0.6757-1.0063
North West	0.511*	0.4367-0.5967	1.254***	1.0038-1.5662
South East	2.937*	2.4523-3.5179	2.128*	1.5250-2.9702
South South	2.967*	2.5048-3.5132	2.272*	1.8776-2.7491
South West	2.874*	2.4416-3.3833	1.473**	1.1517-1.8844
Residence				
Urban	1.000		1.000	
Rural	0.444*	0.4030-0.4886	0.8343	0.7351-0.9469

Wealth Index				
Poor	1.000		1.000	
Middle	2.321*	2.0345-2.6489	1.283**	1.1027-1.4916
Rich	4.100*	3.6652-4.5796	1.402*	1.1981-1.6404
Religion				
Christianity	1.000		1.000	
Islam	0.276*	0.2499-0.3043	0.826***	0.7042-0.9683
Traditionalists	0.229*	0.1276-0.4108	0.246*	0.1335-0.4524
CEB				
0-2	1.000		1.000	
3-4	0.693*	0.5803-0.8276	0.722**	0.5863-0.8893
5+	0.370*	0.3144-0.4349	0.654*	0.5274-0.8109
Ethnicity				
Igbo	1.000		1.000	
Yoruba	1.119	0.9379-1.3355	1.596**	1.1296-2.2548
Hausa/Fulani	0.145*	0.1230-0.1708	0.576**	0.4023-0.8253
Others	0.460*	0.3966-0.5326	1.068	0.7907-1.4431
Age at first birth				
≤18 years	1.000		1.000	
19-24 years	1.710*	1.5445-1.8942	0.977	0.8450-1.1299
25+ years	3.077*	2.6064-3.6315	0.851	0.6616-1.0953

* $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.05$

In Table 4, women empowerment score was used in quantitative terms as the outcome variable. The unadjusted model revealed that the mean difference in empowerment of women and husband/partner who got married at ages below 18 years and where the spouses married at ages 25-29 years was 1.75 (95% C.I.=1.372-2.127; $p < 0.001$). This pattern was exhibited by spousal age difference (women vs husbands/partners) 18-

24 years & 18-24 years ($u\beta = 0.989$, 95% C.I.=0.685-1.294; $p < 0.001$) and 18-24 years & 25-29 years ($u\beta = 0.896$, 95% C.I.=0.617-1.175; $p < 0.001$) compared to <18 years & <18 years. The predictors of women's empowerment were age, education, religion, place of residence, region, wealth index, children ever born, and ethnicity.

Table 4 Generalized Linear Regression model

of the predictors of women empowerment

Background Characteris- tics	Unadjusted Model		Adjusted Model	
	u.β	95% C.I	a.β	95% C.I
Spousal Age Difference				
<18 w & <18 h/p	0 ^r		0 ^r	
<18 w & 18-24 h/p	-0.134	(-0.406, 0.138)	0.084	(-0.161, 0.328)
<18 w & 25-29 h/p	-0.203	(-0.485, 0.080)	0.064	(-0.191, 0.319)
18-24 w & 18-24 h/p	0.989*	(0.685, 1.294)	0.004	(-0.290, 0.297)
18-24 w & 25-29 h/p	0.896*	(0.617, 1.175)	-0.125	(-0.398, 0.149)
25-29 w & 25-29 h/p	1.75*	(1.372, 2.127)	0.052	(-0.354, 0.454)
Age Group				
30-34	0 ^r		0 ^r	
35-39	0.319*	(0.167, 0.471)	0.377*	(0.240, 0.515)
40-44	0.543*	(0.376, 0.711)	0.645*	(0.492, 0.798)
45-49	1.017*	(0.841, 1.193)	1.078*	(0.915, 1.241)
Education Level				
No education	0 ^r		0 ^r	
Primary	1.620*	(1.472, 1.769)	0.557*	(0.393, 0.721)
Secondary	2.198*	(2.063, 2.332)	0.775*	(0.591, 0.959)
Higher	2.603*	(2.377, 2.829)	1.106*	(0.839, 1.372)
Region				
North Central	0 ^r		0 ^r	
North East	-1.076*	(-1.257, -0.895)	-0.235***	(-0.426, -0.043)
North West	-0.939*	(-1.106, -0.773)	0.247***	(0.036, 0.458)
South East	1.402*	(1.185, 1.619)	0.765*	(0.385, 1.145)
South South	1.372*	(1.170, 1.575)	0.866*	(0.655, 1.076)
South West	1.561*	(1.366, 1.756)	0.498*	(0.223, 0.773)
Residence				
Urban	0 ^r		0 ^r	
Rural	-1.212*	(-1.335, -1.090)	-0.267*	(-0.401, -0.133)
Wealth Index				
Poor	0 ^r		0 ^r	
Middle	1.151*	(0.997, 1.304)	0.310*	(0.157, 0.463)
Rich	1.946*	(1.817, 2.074)	0.423*	(0.257, 0.589)
Religion				
Christianity	0 ^r		0 ^r	
Islam	-1.896*	(-2.010, -1.782)	-0.450*	(-0.619, -0.282)
Traditionalists	-2.492*	(-3.075, -1.909)	-2.240*	(-2.792, -1.687)
Children ever born				
0-2	0 ^r		0 ^r	
3-4	-0.427*	(-0.663, -0.190)	-0.287***	(-0.515, -0.060)
5+	-1.319*	(-1.533, -1.104)	-0.385*	(-0.617, -0.153)
Ethnicity				
Igbo	0 ^r		0 ^r	
Yoruba	0.327**	(0.109, 0.546)	0.700*	(0.306, 1.094)
Hausa/Fulani	-2.563*	(-2.746, -2.379)	-0.692*	(-1.079, -0.304)

Others	-1.085*	(-1.267, -0.904)	0.039	(-0.305, 0.383)
Age at First Marriage				
≤18	0 ^r		0 ^r	
19–24	0.718*	(0.593, 0.844)	-0.034	(-0.175, 0.107)
25+	1.564*	(1.348, 1.780)	-0.152	(-0.417, 0.114)

* $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.05$

Discussion:

Women empowerment occurs in various forms, including economic independence, improved access to education, and greater participation in governance. The economic hardship and bad cultural practices in most developing nations including Nigeria further heighten the barriers to women empowerment. Several studies have investigated the possible factors that inhibit women's empowerment; however, the current study underscores the need to examine the influence of the spousal age gap at marital timing. A low prevalence of empowered women (approximately, one in three women were empowered) and early marriage (43% of girls in northern Nigeria marry before age 18) is still commonly practiced in Nigeria with women predominantly married to older husbands. Earlier studies observed similar findings to ours concerning the level of women empowerment and early marriage (Akpan et al., 2024; National Population Commission [NPC] & ICF, 2019).

There was a relationship between spousal age differences at marital timing and women's empowerment. However, this relationship was not sustained when we controlled for other factors such as age, education, region, religion, place of residence, etc. Women empowerment was found to be lowest among spouses who married at a younger age and those who married to older husbands. Conversely, the highest women's empowerment was detected among women in marriages where both spouses married at the age group 25–29 years. These findings reflect limited; decision-making, autonomy, economic participation, and reproductive control among young married women and a lengthier spousal age gap in partnerships. This outcome substantiates the earlier

findings where husbands exhibit dominant roles on their young wives, particularly if they are much younger than them (Adola, S.G et al., 2024). Egalitarian relationships, mutual decision-making, and marital postponement as a result of education or skills acquisition could be among the probable explanations for the highest women empowerment experienced by women in marriages where both spouses married at the age group 25–29 years (Akpan et al., 2024).

The role of education in shaping the socioeconomic status of women and women's empowerment has been consistently reported in the literature (Kabeer, 2005; Duflo, 2012; National Population Commission [NPC] & ICF, 2019). In this study, we found that having a higher level of education consistently increased the chances of women being empowered. This outcome was in agreement with earlier studies in Nigeria and elsewhere where increasing the number of years of schooling increased the odds of empowerment (Irshad et al., 2022). Our finding suggests the need to sustain and strengthen the existing government policy on education which underscores the need for all children, especially the girl child to have a basic education and remain in school for at least age 18 years before marriage. Sustaining the law that keeps children out of marriage until they become adults will promote education and subsequently women empowerment in Nigeria. Furthermore, we found that living in urban areas promotes women's empowerment more than residing in rural areas. Our findings have been constantly reported by studies conducted in some countries in sub-Saharan Africa regarding the rural-urban differential in women empowerment (Frola et al., 2024). This outcome is expected as it just resonates with the unswerving rural-urban disparities in access to education, employment, and health information services

(National Population Commission [NPC] & ICF, 2019). The cultural instincts that hamper girls' child education and promote adolescent marriage, and early childbearing which are being eroded by modernization in the urban areas are still very prevalent in the rural areas in Nigeria (Akpan, 2023; National Population Commission [NPC] & ICF, 2019). Advocacies that establish new policies/laws or strengthen the existing policies on early marriage with special consideration for rural women will improve women's empowerment in Nigeria.

Regional disparities in women's empowerment were apparent in this study, with women the likelihood of being more empowered higher among those living in the southern regions compared to their counterparts in all the regions in the north. This north-south difference in women empowerment was particularly prominent in women who reside in the North-East and North-West regions. This finding corroborates the outcome of previous studies conducted in Nigeria by Makinde and colleagues (Makinde et al., 2024). Consistently reporting lower empowerment levels among women in the northern part of Nigeria than in the south could be attributed to lower literacy levels, lower age at marriage, and sustenance of husbands' dominant roles over their wives in the north (National Population Commission [NPC] & ICF, 2019; Adebowale et al., 2018; Akpan, 2023). The diverse ethnic and religious positions regarding early marriage as evidenced in this study in different regions can also justify the reasons for regional variations in women empowerment in Nigeria. A higher empowerment level was found among Christian women than those with Islamic religious affiliation. Religious teachings on gender roles within the family and community could be responsible for the difference (Hellwig et al., 2024). These findings call for regional-specific intervention concerning marriage postponement to adulthood in Nigeria, particularly age 25-29 years for both men women, and men. However, prioritizing attention to the northern region will promote women's

empowerment in Nigeria.

The cross-sectional nature of the data used for this study limits its ability to draw causal conclusions. Although women with larger spousal age differences may report lower levels of empowerment, this relationship could be influenced by other unmeasured factors, such as parental family support or background, cultural norms, etc. Therefore, the relationship between spousal age differences in marriage and women empowerment as reported in this study might not fully capture the contextual factors influencing empowerment. Using qualitative data could provide a richer understanding of how empowerment is shaped by personal, familial, or community-level characteristics. Further research that focuses on context and risk analysis of what needs to change and who will make the changes regarding the eradication of early marriage in Nigeria is strongly recommended.

Conclusion

Nigerian women experience greater empowerment when they and their partners marry between the ages of 25 and 29 years. Child marriage exposes women and their partners to lower levels of empowerment. Factors such as higher education, a rich wealth index, residing in southern regions, and living in urban areas help protect women from inadequate empowerment. These variables should be included in the framework aimed at enhancing women's empowerment in Nigeria. Delaying marriage until ages 25-29 years can serve as a transformative force for empowering women, particularly among those living in Northern Nigeria. Existing regions specific policies aimed at overcoming barriers to education for Nigerian women should be proactive, as this will help delay the age of first marriage and, consequently, augment, their empowerment.

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.11>**CODEINE MEDICINE ABUSE AMONG STUDENTS AT A SEMI-METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA****Mokhomola Temoso**

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Abstract

The focus of this article is on Codeine medicine abuse among students at institutions of higher learning, with a focus on a semi-metropolitan University situated in Limpopo province, South Africa. Most studies in health and social sciences focus on drug and alcohol abuse. Very little attention is ever paid to the abuse of some over-the-counter medicines such as codeine. Codeine medicine is a prescription drug that was created to suppress pain, such as colds and flu. These over-the-counter medicines are abused by young people for fun or to get high. Codeine medicines are some of the over-the-counter medicines that are often abused by young people for this purpose. The study uses the learning theory, which emphasizes that learning can be acquired through experiencing direct behaviour. In this study, the qualitative approach was used to gather in-depth information about the experiences of students in codeine medicine usage among students. Non-probability snowball sampling method was used in this study to select ten (10) students with specific characteristics in such a sample. The population of the study consisted of students who were studying at the University of Venda. Data collection was done using online one-to-one interviews. The data was analysed through the thematic analysis method. Ethical principles were adhered to for confidentiality and to avoid harming the research participants. The findings of the study are that most of the students use codeine medicine to chill out instead of using it for medical purposes. The study recommends that students should have more awareness campaigns against the abuse of codeine medicines.

Keywords: Academic performance, addiction, drugs, codeine medicine, health, student

1.1 Introduction and background to the study

Most studies in the health and social sciences fo-

cus on alcohol and drug abuse as the most significant health hazards of the century. However, there is less attention to the abuse of some of the

over-the-counter medicines. As there is more access to some of the over-the-counter (OTC) medicines, some people, especially the youth, are now increasingly buying these not for medical use. They consume more of these over-the-counter medicines for the wrong reasons. This study focuses on this neglected area by exploring how some university students abuse codeine medicines just to have fun. Other than the abuse of alcohol and drugs, abuse of over-the-counter medicines is also growing at an alarming rate. Mburu (2023) notes that codeine medicines are some of the over-the-counter medicines that are also abused, especially by university students. Heikkilä, Maalouf

& Campello (2021) also argue that the abuse of codeine medicines is associated with social and health problems in many countries, and the major problem is that it can be bought over the counter without a doctor's prescription. Codeine is related to opiate drugs. However, codeine is found mostly in cough syrup (Abdulhareem, 2021). The main purpose of codeine medicine is for pain relief, suppressing coughing, and to prevent diarrhoea (Ravindran, Sharma, and Sankhla, 2024). Codeine addiction problems are mostly exposed in higher education institutions, where codeine is popularly known as 'lean' or 'double cup'. Due to the euphoria that codeine abuse causes, people who are anxious or want to chill out often turn to overdosing on codeine medicine daily. While individuals are getting addicted to codeine without being aware, the development of coping strategies is slow (Weier, Weier, & O'Mara, 2022) since the medical fraternity is unaware of the magnitude of this problem.

The study by Asmall (2023) discovered that South Africans have a high volume of over-the-counter medication that contains codeine. Asmall (2023) further notes that the current regulation of over-the-counter medication seems ineffective. Ravindran et al (2024) pointed out that youth around the age of 18 years were increasingly seeking treatment due to different drugs, including codeine addiction. Razzazi (2023) also pointed out that 15 rehabilitation centres in

South Africa confirmed that students and learners were regularly being admitted for codeine medicine addiction. Pharmaceutical retail outlets such as Dis-Chem, pick n Pay, and Clicks have all confirmed that there is a high rate of purchasing of codeine medicines by young people.

Following the above, this study is necessary because there are limited studies and information on the abuse of codeine medicine by young people in South Africa, as well as exploring the side effects of codeine on the well-being of the young people who abuse this medicine. Furthermore, there is insufficient information or a national database in South Africa, which links all the pharmacies to keep track of the people who are continuously taking /using codeine medicine in high quantities without being regulated by a physician. Furthermore, an individual's details are not recorded when they purchase OTC medicine in most pharmacies. Due to inadequate monitoring of local pharmacies in Thohoyandou, Thulamela Local Municipality, people have easier access to buy codeine without a prescription letter from a physician. As it will be shown later in the paper, Rahaman (2021) argues that academic performance is mostly affected by the abuse of substances and addiction. Also, Ezenwa (2020) indicates that recent statistics in Nigeria reveal that 6% of students in every school abuse codeine cough syrup. Furthermore, Weier et al. (2022) point out that substance abuse has become a serious challenge to many students, and drugs such as codeine affect the decision-making ability of most of the students. Academic performance in higher learning institutions is also hampered by substance abuse such as codeine. These challenges have to be fought head on if we want to create a sober and agile society. Drug abuse, such as codeine, challenges a student's concentration and discourages a student from participating in school activities. 2020).

1.3 Problem statement

Being a student at the university comes with a lot of pressure. The first-year experience at the university can be very stressful and sometimes lead to depression. As opposed to high school, students at university are expected to balance their personal life as well as their academic life. Some

of the stress comes from financial pressure to cope with the economic demands while studying at the university. However, due to such challenges, some students engage in the abuse of codeine medicine to cope with academic pressures. As a result, students unwarily consume large amounts of codeine, which leads to addiction. Then the overdosing of codeine suppresses one's nervous system and alters the mood. Codeine medicine abuse is another form of substance abuse which is on the rise at universities. The effects of codeine abuse have far-reaching implications on the academic performance, health, and well-being of the students. Most of the students who abuse codeine end up neglecting academic activities. Hence, this study aims to explore the experiences of codeine addicts among students at the University of Venda, in Thulamela Local Municipality.

1.4 Aim of the study

This study aims to explore the experiences of students on the usage of codeine medicines at institutions of higher learning, with a focus on the University of Venda.

1.5 Objectives of the study

- To determine the effects of codeine addiction among university students.
- To develop strategies to curb codeine addiction among university students.

1.6 Research questions

- How does abuse of codeine affect university students?
- Which strategies can help to curb the abuse of codeine by university students?

1.7 Significance of the study

The study is of relevance to students as well as institutions of higher learning because it highlights the effects of abuse of codeine by students. This study also benefits researchers as it helps them to gain more knowledge and understanding of the effects of codeine abuse. The study also

ensures that young people become aware of the risk factors regarding the abuse of codeine medicine. The study helps to inform government policy on the regulation of the purchase of codeine medicine in pharmacies. This study is significant as it proposes practical strategies on how to curb the abuse of OTC codeine medicine by university students. The study also raises awareness of the impact of the abuse of codeine medicine by young people, especially university students. Finally, the study will raise awareness among the youth about the risk factors associated with the abuse of codeine medicine and how to seek medical assistance for those who are addicted to codeine medicine.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Codeine medicine is a prescription drug that was created to suppress pain, such as colds and flu. Therefore, the rightful utilisation of codeine medicines is less likely to cause a risk, but the use of codeine medicine without being sick and displaying symptoms can contribute to codeine tolerance, which is an associated side effect (Weier et al., 2022). Codeine medicine, popularly sold in South Africa, includes Broncleer, Benylin, and Stilpane. Codeine medicines are then combined or mixed with soft drinks such as soda to produce a concoction drink or cocktail. Drunk or Dirty Sprite (Tetty et al., 2020). According to Abdulhareem (2021), codeine medicine abuse begins when the abuser fails to go for a day or two without consuming it.

2.1 Prevalence rate of codeine medicine abuse

According to Weier et al. (2022), codeine dependence is taking place worldwide, where many young people abuse it without any fear of being arrested. The codeine medicine abuse was popularised by some superstars who needed a quick buzz. In addition, many Hip-Hop artists believe that codeine makes it easier for them to produce great music (Vaughn, 2024). Codeine comes in the form of tablets and syrup products, but syrup products are more often abused (Ware et al., 2024).

According to Rafique (2023), students from colleges in the United States of America (USA) abuse codeine medicine because it is easily accessible, and some pharmacies do not require a prescription letter from a health practitioner. Nevertheless, it is viewed as a legal drug, and it is affordable. According to Hockenhuil et al. (2022), the research findings state that codeine cough syrup use is entrenched among males in urban ethnic groups. According to Olanikanmi and Isreal (2019) who carried a survey in the USA looking at the abuse of codeine medicine syrup among 2,349 students, the sample which consisted of Whites (69%), African Americans (24%), Hispanic population (3%), Native Americans (3%), and Asian with a mean age group of 20 years), the results revealed that a notable gap in treatment may exist for both Hispanic and Native American students. Therefore, the researchers highlighted that urban male youth of every racial background are potential misusers of codeine medicines.

Currently, in South Africa, codeine medicine is accessible over the counter. Even though the codeine content is claimed to be a low dose, the amount one can buy cannot be controlled, as the purchasing of codeine medicine from different pharmacies cannot be tracked (Ino & Nakazawa, 2022). Although the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAPRHA) urged all pharmacies to record the personal details of patients buying these products, most pharmacies in South Africa fail to practice this. However, it does not limit or prevent patients from obtaining these medicines from different pharmacies.

The study by Razzazi (2023) notes that in the year between 2019 and 2020, there was a significant high percentage of 30% increase in deaths resulting from overdose. This indicates that the problem of drug abuse or medication abuse requires immediate attention. However, in many countries such as South Africa, it seems that there is no firm policy and regulation to deal with the medication abuse pandemic.

2.2 Effects of codeine on academic performance

According to Rahaman et al. (2021), academic performance is mostly affected by the abuse of

substances and addiction. According to Ezenwa et al. (2020), recent statistics in Nigeria reveal that 6% of students in every school abuse codeine cough syrup. Weier et al. (2022) point out that substance abuse has become an intellectual challenge to many students, and drugs such as codeine affect the decision-making ability of students. Academic performance in higher learning institutions is hampered by substance abuse such as codeine (Rahaman et al., 2021). Similarly, Rafique (2023) stresses the point that substance abuse, like codeine, interrupts the reasoning capacity of students. Therefore, education is neglected or less of a priority. Drug abuse, such as codeine, challenges a student's concentration and discourages a student from participating in school activities (Patel *et al.*, 2020).

Substance abuse interferes with student awareness and the ability to study, and students tend to neglect buying the required books, as they misuse their stipends on the purchase of codeine cough syrup. (Rahaman et al., 2021) stated that drug addiction can lead to college students selling stationery and books to fund their habits. Furthermore, students spend more of their time engaging in the consumption of substances such as codeine cough syrup instead of studying. Weier et al. (2022) noted that drugs result in addiction among students, and then this gradual continuation of drug abuse affects the academic performance of students. In addition, such students cause a host of problems on campus.

2.3 Psychological effects of codeine

According to Abdulraheem (2021), codeine is a central nervous system depressant, which makes learning problematic. Ezenwa et al. (2020) pointed out several effects of codeine abuse, including an increase in the heartbeat; it causes the blood vessels to dilate; it causes bad digestion, notably of vitamin B, especially when taken on an empty stomach. It also deadens the nervous system and causes chest or lung pain, hopelessness, selfishness, frequent illness, frequent hangovers, and aggressiveness.

2.4 Social effects of codeine

Shibalika (2021) notes that codeine medicine abuse has a negative impact, such as loss of memory, which could result in physical injury.

Shibalika (2021) further highlights that when an individual is under the influence of a substance such as codeine, they often engage in physical fights due to aggression. Heikkilä, Maalouf, and Campello (2021) argue that abuse of codeine medicine could be responsible for up to 20% of crime in South Africa. Vaughn (2024) substance abuse leads individuals to careless driving and exceeding the speed limit when driving on the road, causing road accidents.

2.5 The Social Learning Theory

The study chose the social learning theory, which explains that people learn by observing others, thus imitating their behaviour. Moreover, the theory emphasizes that learning can be acquired through experiencing direct behaviour. As supported by Bikhchandani *et al.*, (2024), social learning theory is based on the belief that individuals learn by observing others' social context. This theory is generally based on the perspective that behaviour is learned. Observing the behaviour effectively changes people more, especially if the behaviour is favourable. The new behaviours can also be learned by watching and imitating others. This theory explains how people adopt the behaviour from others through seeing and observation. Furthermore, SLT indicates that every behaviour is accompanied by positive or negative reinforcement (Bandura, 1977).

Young people formulate their beliefs about anti-social behaviour from their role models in their environment, especially relatives, teachers, par-

3.2 Location and population of the study

The study was conducted at the University of Venda, in the Thulamela Local Municipality, which is located in the Vhembe District of Limpopo, in South Africa. University of Venda (Univen) is a South African comprehensive rural-based university located in Thohoyandou in the Limpopo Province. It was established in 1982 under the Republic of Venda government. However, the University of Venda is one of the higher learning institutions where codeine medicine abuse is prevalent.

The population of this study was drawn from students who studied at the University of Venda in

ents, and close friends. Individuals with adequate coping skills and high self-esteem can take drugs for the sake of developing friendships with others. However, those with poor coping skills abuse drugs to deal with life problems by reducing tension and to feel better.

Students learn the behaviour of abusing codeine medicine from peers and role models. In addition, some students learn their behaviour through their direct experiences, such as watching other students getting high by abusing codeine medicine.

3. Research approach

The study used a qualitative approach to collect data for the study. Qualitative researchers conduct the study naturally to interpret or make sense of the information people bring to them (Lim, 2024). A qualitative approach involves assumptions as well as the use of theoretical frameworks that appraise the research problems and address the meaning an individual ascribes to a social problem (Lim, 2024).

In this study, a qualitative approach was relevant, as it assisted researchers in understanding the experiences of codeine medicine abuse among students. Moreover, this approach was appropriate to the study because it enabled researchers to gather information by using interviews. The qualitative approach allowed researchers to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations regarding substance abuse (in this case, codeine abuse).

Thulamela Local Municipality. The total population of students who were studying at the University of Venda was estimated to be 14500 at different levels of study.

4. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

Ten students from the University of Venda in Thulamela Municipality participated in one-on-one interviews about their experiences of codeine abuse. This further entails the thematic analysis.

4.1 Biographical information of the participants**Table 4.1: Biographical information of the participants**

Partici- pants	Age	Gender	Degree	Level of study	Schools	Residence
Participant A	21	Male	BAYID	2 nd year	Social sciences	Carousel res
Participant B	19	Male	BAYID	1 st year	Social sciences	F3 res
Participant C	19	Male	BA in Environmental Sciences	1 st year	Environmental sciences	New res (F6)
Participant D	20	Male	BA in education in the foundation phase	1 st year	Educational	F3 res
Participant E	22	Male	BA in education in the foundation phase	2 nd year	Educational	P-west
Participant F	21	Female	Media Studies	2 nd year	Social sciences	F3 res
Participant G	19	Male	Media Studies	1 st year	Social sciences	Carousel res
Participant H	22	Male	BA of Social work	1 st year	Social sciences	New res (F6)
Participant I	20	Female	Media Studies	1 st year	Social sciences	F4 res
Participant J	21	Male	BA of Education, Further Education and Training	2 nd year	Educational	Carousel res

Data was obtained from ten students who studied at the University of Venda. Among the ten participants, eight were males and two were females.

4.2 Data presentation, analysis, and interpretation concerning the objectives

The two objectives of this study were to determine the effects of codeine abuse among university students and to develop strategies to curb codeine medicine abuse among university students. The research participants were asked the following research questions to solicit information on the abuse of codeine medicine by university students.

4.2.1. Can you please define codeine according to your understanding?

The participants were asked to define codeine medicine. This question was posed to the participants

to see if they really understood what codeine medicine is. The following are the participants' responses to the above question.

Participant B: *"Codeine is a medicine meant to cure cold and flu; however, we use it for the sake of having fun. Codeine has the drug within itself, which is capable of making us feel high."*

Participant E: *"Codeine falls under the group*

It is important to note that the participants knew what the codeine medicine was supposed to be used for. They were aware that codeine medicine is an OTC medication for mild to moderate pain relief, which is found mostly in cough syrup products. The medical purpose of this medication is to numb the pain. This was also supported by Ravindran et al (2024), who argue that codeine is a prescribed medicine for the treatment of pain, diarrhoea, and colds and flu. But young people misuse it for the wrong reasons. For example, young people overdose on it just to get "high".

4.2.2 How do you get access to purchase codeine medicine?

This question was asked to check how participants manage to purchase codeine medicine. The following are the statements made by some of the research participants:

Participant C: *"I buy codeine in pharmacies where prescription letters are not required. I can*

of over-the-counter medicine. Therefore, it is a treatment for colds and flu; however, nowadays we, as young people, use codeine medicine when we want to relax just like alcohol."

Participant G: *"Codeine is a street drug made by certain medication found at the pharmacy; therefore, codeine can be made from medication such as Stilpane, Broncleer, and Benylin".*

The above statements made by the participants indicate that they understood what codeine was. The participants knew that codeine is medicine for pain relief. They also knew that this medicine is only used for numbing the pain and treating diarrhoea, as well as for the treatment of colds and flu. Six of the research participants stated that codeine medicine was being used by young people as another form of drug. This reveals the fact that some of the students use codeine for the wrong purpose. Such students take large amounts of codeine without being supervised by a medical practitioner. The students abuse codeine medicine just to chill out, have a vibe, or numb the emotional pain. The participants were ignorant of the fact that they were putting their lives at risk by overdosing on codeine medicines.

get a minimum of 4 bottles per week, and sometimes 7 bottles".

Participant D: *"I buy them in different stores where they do not require personal details or a prescription from a doctor."*

Participant E: *"In some pharmacies, they require a prescription letter from the doctor, but then there are some pharmacies where they do not ask about prescription letters. They do not even give us proof of payment for the product."*

Participant I: *"We used to buy it straight from the counter, but nowadays they require personal details. However, at some pharmacies outside our area, it is not compulsory to bring along a letter from the Doctor."*

Participant J: *"I buy them at a pharmacy store which is located a bit far from my township, where prescription letters are not needed."*

The participants gave different responses on how

they purchase codeine syrup. However, two students mentioned that they use medical aid to buy codeine medicine, and two students used fake prescription letters. Close to six of the participants said that they would go out of town when they want to buy codeine syrup. However, many of the participants stated that they are aware of pharmacy regulations, but they still go the extra mile to buy codeine medicine. Most of the pharmacies that are located out of town sell codeine through the back door, and then they do not even give proof of payment to their customers.

Even though pharmacies are obliged to record personal details of customers when selling codeine medicine, some pharmacies are more interested in running the business rather than adhering to regulations. Codeine is easily accessible, and at some pharmacies, they do not require a prescription letter from a physician to sell it. This is in line with Rafique (2023), many students from colleges in the USA abuse codeine medicine since it is not difficult to obtain.

4.2.3 How do you act when you are under the influence of codeine?

This question was asked to gain an understanding of how participants feel after the abuse of codeine medicine. The responses below were given:

Participant D: *“Codeine makes me forget about my problems, and I do not get nervous at all. For instance, I do not fear anything, especially when doing presentations. Participant D highlighted that codeine helps them in case of coping with stress.”*

Participant H: *“I just act cool and normal when under the influence of codeine. It gives me a relaxed feeling.”*

Participant I: *“Generally, I am a shy person. But this drug makes me more relaxed and unafraid”.*

Participant J: *“Being under the influence of codeine affects my mood swings, especially when I have taken too much of it. Too much of it makes me feel dizzy and powerless.”*

The responses of the participants differ, depending on the amount of codeine they consume. Codeine medicine can suppress the human nervous

system. In this regard, four of the participants have highlighted that they could not control themselves after drinking too much of the codeine medicine. They stated that after consuming too much of the codeine medicine, they remain “high” for a long time. Furthermore, six of the participants stated that codeine causes mixed feelings such as a relaxed mood, calmness, euphoria, drowsiness, and dizziness. Most of the participants also claimed that codeine medicine gives them an incredible feeling of strength. This is in line with Abdulraheem, A. M. (2021), who stated that the Causes and Implications of Codeine Cough Syrup Addiction among Adolescents have risen sharply.

While participants talked about being relaxed, calm, and experiencing feelings of incredible strength, the abuse of codeine has also made them lose control of themselves. Some of them also stated that they felt dizzy and drowsy after they had abused codeine medicine. Loss of self-control, dizziness, and drowsiness do not bode well for the students’ health and well-being. Students who lose self-control or who are always drowsy or dizzy after abusing codeine medicine are likely not to focus on their studies. This may be the case because, as argued by Bronkhorst et al., (2024), the abuse of codeine medicine, just like any other drug, affects the brain receptors from becoming overwhelmed. Therefore, abusers would get lazy and neglect their responsibilities.

4.2.4 How does codeine medicine abuse affect your academic performance?

Participants were asked this question to observe how they were being affected academically by abusing codeine medicine. In this regard, they said the following:

Participant A: *“It delays my study schedule because I spend so much time going up and down in search of a pharmacy store that can sell it to me. I always postpone studying, only to consider this at the last minute or when the exams are approaching.”*

Participant B: *“Sometimes I don’t attend classes because I wake up late in the morning. I even*

forgot to do assignments. Sometimes I study for tests under the influence, so when I go for examinations, I forget everything I have studied. I have failed many of my modules because of my addiction."

Participant C: *"Codeine has affected my relationship with some of the lecturers because sometimes I arrive very late to the lecturer's room to the extent that I get kicked out by the lecturers."*

Participant D: *"I no longer have a good relationship with some of my classmates because I do not cooperate with them"*.

Participant E: *"When I am under the influence of codeine, I can cope in class, but then the problem arises when I am broke, because I might take two to three days without drinking the drug."*

Participant F: *"Because of my mood swings and short temper, I ruined a good relationship with some of my lecturers due to skipping some of their classes and activities."*

Participant G: *"It has affected my studies badly. When I am under the influence of codeine, I do not study enough for tests or exams. However, it also happens that I do not attend some classes, so then if the lecturer awards students with some marks for class attendance, I would be called aside to be told that I failed."*

Participant H: *"After drinking codeine, I focus for a few hours in class, but then the concentration would fade away. This makes me sleep in class when other students are busy."*

Participant I: *"When I am under the influence of codeine, I act weird in class, and then sometimes I would disturb the class by making unnecessary noise or foolish gestures. Some lecturers have reported me to our head of department due to my odd behaviour."*

Participant J: *"When I am under the influence of codeine, it is difficult to study, and it happens that I wake up late and often skip classes. I act so rude to the lecturers when they try to discipline me."*

The responses from the participants during the interviews reveal that participants are academically negatively affected due to their abuse of co-

deine medicine. Therefore, codeine abuse has exposed participants to difficulties such as coming late to class, not attending some classes, missing some tests, submitting assignments late, not cooperating in class, and having conflicts with some lecturers (Ezenwa et al., 2020). Most participants emphasized the fact that they find it difficult to study because of spending too much time drinking codeine with friends. Moreover, participants mentioned that they get tired and sometimes they oversleep. This shows that many students abusing codeine medicine are at high risk of not completing their studies.

The abuse of codeine medicine ultimately hampered the academic performance of students. Most young people who abuse codeine medicine fail to cooperate with teachers and fail to participate in school activities. Such people do not put any effort into their studies. For instance, it is either that such people will submit the schoolwork late, not attend classes, or they do not do their assignments and tasks at all. Many abusers of codeine medicine are careless and do not take their studies seriously. This is also supported by Tettey et al., (2020), who argue that abuse of codeine medicine interrupts the reasoning capacity of students. Therefore, it is not surprising that abusers of codeine medicine tend to neglect or fail to prioritise their studies.

4.2.5 Which strategies can be used to curb the abuse of codeine medicines?

This question was posed to elicit the views of the abusers of codeine medicine. This was intended to come up with strategies to curb the abuse of codeine medicine by university students. As for responses, this is what the research participants said:

Participant A: *"That support from friends and family can be helpful when someone is going through addiction, like drug abuse. However, some of the problems are exacerbated by the family members who do not seem to care."*

Participant B: *The University of Venda should have counselling facilities (and psychologists) so that whenever students have problems, they can*

then utilize their services. Although the SRC (student representative councillors are there to mitigate our problems as addicts, they cannot deal with the depression and anxiety resulting from the abuse of substances."

Participant C: *"Government should intervene by making sure that all the pharmacies in South Africa are linked together, so that when someone is buying medication that contains codeine, he or she will automatically be on the database of all the pharmaceutical stores. If they happen to buy the substance more than once, they can be detected."*

Participant D: *"There should be an awareness campaign against the abuse of codeine at the University of Venda. Campaigns can alert students to the danger of codeine addictions."*

Participant H: *"The government should monitor all the pharmacies in South Africa so that they can check how they sell codeine."*

Participant J: *"Government can help by removing codeine medication from the shelves of the pharmaceutical stores and only authorizing hospitals and doctors to dispense such medication."*

Research participants suggested different strategies that could be helpful in curbing the abuse of codeine medicine. Three participants proposed that the government should intervene by offering medicine that can prevent the craving for codeine. Two students indicated that the support from family and friends can make a great impact in someone's life. Five students suggested that the University of Venda should also consider having a policy on the abuse of codeine medicine. The University should also conduct awareness campaigns about the dangers of abusing codeine medicine.

Since the abuse of codeine medicine is becoming widespread among university students, which is negatively affecting the nation, the government should regulate the sale of codeine medicine. The South African Regulatory Health Authority (SARHAR) is encouraged to consistently observe how these codeine medicines are being sold. In accordance with Vaughn, (2024), pharmacies are the main role players in the control

and prevention of codeine medicine abuse.

5.1 Summary of the findings of the study

The focus of this study was to explore the experience of codeine medicine abuse among students at the University of Venda. The approach of this study was qualitative in nature to get in-depth information from the research participants. One-on-one interviews were used. The study covered two objectives related to the topic.

The first objective focused on the effects of codeine abuse. This study's findings show that codeine abuse indeed affects students academically. Most of the students who abused codeine medicine were often absent from the classes. They also submit their assignments late, and they do not participate in class. Most of them also failed some of the modules. The abuse of codeine medicine also affected their health, as it caused heavy breathing and body exhaustion.

The study findings reveal that awareness campaigns against codeine medicine abuse can be effective. The study also found that abuse of codeine medicine can be curbed through intervention of the government by monitoring local pharmacies, prohibiting the purchasing of codeine medicine without a prescription, and recording the personal details of the clients who purchased codeine medicine.

5.2 Contribution of the study

The study plays a vital role in terms of adding to the body of knowledge in this area of study. In addition, this study will help young people become more aware of the side effects of codeine medicine abuse.

5.3 Recommendations of the study

This study sought to provide practical strategies for dealing with codeine addiction to bring about positive change in the lives of the youths abusing codeine medicine. The following are some of the recommendations of this study:

- Awareness campaigns against codeine medicine abuse ought to be conducted to sensitize students on the dangers of abuse of codeine medicine.

- Government intervention is necessary to ensure that there is a national database of codeine medicine users to trace people always purchasing codeine medicine.
- Youth workers should be asked to provide more information on the dangers of codeine medicine abuse in schools and institutions of higher learning.
- The counsellor should ensure that there are family and friends support systems in place to help individuals who are involved in substance abuse.

5.4 Conclusion

The study explored the experiences of codeine medicine abuse among students. There are a significant number of students who abuse codeine medicine due to peer pressure. This means that many students use codeine medicine for non-medical purposes. They use codeine medicine for the sake of having fun and relaxation. This study shows that overdosing on codeine medicine poses a health risk. Furthermore, the study highlights the fact that abuse of codeine medicine also hampers the students' academic performance.

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.12>**UNLEASHING THE POWER OF PROVERBS: THE IMPACT OF TRADITIONAL WISDOM USED IN “EMAHEMUHEMU” (RUMMERS) SISWATI SHORT STORIES.****Nontokoza Gladys Mdhluli, Lekau Eleazar Mphasha & Sikhumbuzo Khoza***University of Venda, Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education,**Department of African Languages,**Private Bag X5050, Thohoyandou, 0950, Limpopo Province, South Africa**Phone: (Work) 015 962 8238, (Cell) 078 418 8748; Phone: (Work) 015 962 8389;**(Cell) 072 1921 392; (Cell) 0820950299; E-mails: nontokoza.mdhluli@univen.ac.za, Lekau.mphasha@univen.ac.za and Sikhumbuzo.khoza@univen.ac.za***Abstract**

The usage of proverbs in J.J. Nongwane et al.'s 1987 Siswati short tale anthology Emahemuhemu is critically examined in this article. The goal is to investigate how proverbs are employed as narrative devices to communicate traditional wisdom, cultural values, and behaviours. Selected proverbs were identified and interpreted using a textual analysis approach, taking into account their grammatical structure, metaphorical meaning, and place of origin. The results show that Nongwane skilfully incorporates proverbs into story titles as well as conversations to support cultural themes like morality, community, and human interconnectivity. According to the study's findings, proverbs enhance narrative by giving character and plot development more nuance and realism. In order to conserve indigenous knowledge systems and cultivate a respect for Siswati language and culture, it is advised that academics and educators continue to support the usage of proverbs in literature.

Keywords: Behaviour. Control. Education. Identity. Meaning. Observations. Wisdom.

Introduction

Proverbs are a vital part of African oral and written literature because they convey societal ideals, moral lessons, and cultural information. In the Siswati short stories, especially those in the collection *Emahemuhemu* by J.J. Nongwane et al. (1987), proverbs are essential in forming the meaning of the stories and expressing the Siswati-speaking community's worldview. Readers are introduced to ancestors' teachings and communal ideals through these manifestations of traditional wisdom, which also enhance the literary style. With a focus on their grammatical structure, metaphorical connotations, and thematic relevance, this study aims to examine the usage and significance of proverbs in a few chosen short stories. By doing this, the study hopes to demonstrate how proverbs support cultural preservation and provide useful life lessons woven throughout literary works.

J.J. Nongwane's use of proverbs in Siswati short stories has unleashed the power of traditional wisdom, leaving a lasting impact on his readers. His unique style and tone of voice have captivated audiences, drawing them into a world where proverbs are not just words but invaluable pieces of advice. The author's works serve as a reminder of power and traditional wisdom, and the importance of preserving it for the future generation.

However, short stories are made up of plenty of principles called structure. The terms of the plot are as follows: Topic, introduction, setting, conflict, dialogue, complications, lesson, climax, anticlimax, and conclusion. Short stories are written concisely. It can be long, but short stories are useful. A short story is a type of essay written for a general audience (Graver 2021). Also, short stories are read from elementary grades until reaching higher education institutions. This type of text may contain all

the sub-headings or the main points of the structure (Sebone 2022).

Short writers often choose important plot points when writing their short stories. The reason is that the short story is not long, so they will not be able to express all the principles or subheadings of the structure (Nystrand 2023). The important parts of the structure when writing a short story are the following: Introduction, the body of the story, conflict, climax, and conclusion.

Moreover, when the writer jots down the short story, his/her purpose is to send a message to the audience. The characters are the ones who send a message about the things and challenges they are facing in the short story. That is why at the end the learner gets a deep lesson as soon as he finishes reading the story (Vuong 2022). The writer uses his/her characters to convey a message to the audience. The characters have different roles in the story to cause the story to develop up until it concludes (Girsang et al., 2023).

Davis and Maes-Jelinek (2022) supports this statement when he put it like this:

Short story authors see with the light of the body; their creativity is the sole certainty in the present moment. Ideally, they should be able to perform the task without explanation of previous steps or what happens next. Because the short tale does not deal with cumulative events, there is only one discrete moment of truth.

4

However, a writer observes many things that happen in the book and writes about them. Events and messages found in the short story portray what is happening in society because writers wrote about things they experienced in life or heard about. The author expresses this by asking his characters to think about what he wanted to convey in the story, and then the speaker acts out the events that the author taught about. It is important to write about things that affect people's lives because that makes people pay attention and learn more about life. May (2002: 8) suggests that: When discussing the short story, we can all agree that it has density and intensity that demand us to read between the lines, and it takes some work to delve beneath the surface to understand the

text.

4

The study starts by recognizing the cultural and pedagogical significance of Siswati short stories, which frequently depict moral lessons and real-life events (Gasser Dammert and Murphy 2022). These tales give readers insight into the traditions, values, and behaviours of Siswati society and are a wealth of proverbial wisdom (Pato 2023). These proverbs are not thrown in at random; rather, they have a specific meaning and are employed purposefully to enrich the meaning and improve the reader's comprehension of the narrative (Overland 2022). Proverbs. Inter-Varsity Press.). With an emphasis on their function in character development, plot advancement, and thematic emphasis, this study aims to identify and assess the usage of such proverbial idioms in a selection of Siswati short stories (Pato 2023). Since meaning is frequently given through the actions and speech of realistic, relatable characters, a learner must interact with the story in its totality to get the intended message (Begzodovna 2024). To guarantee that readers can learn the intended life lessons from the story, it is crucial to employ clear language and plausible events (Khair, U. and Misnawati, M., 2022).

Aims of the study

The research's goals are described in this part and are divided into two categories: primary goal and broader objectives. The study's main objective is to examine how proverbs are used and what their purpose is in Siswati short stories. Some of the research aims are as follows:

- examine the importance of proverbs in Siswati short stories,
- examine the structure of proverbs in Siswati short stories, and look into the literal and figurative meaning of the short stories.

Methodology

In order to investigate the application and meaning of proverbs in a few chosen Siswati short stories, this study uses a qualitative research approach within a textual analysis

framework. Only literary texts more especially, the anthology *Emahemuhemu* (1987) by J.J. Ncongwane & al. are included in the methodological scope. Purposive sampling of short stories with proverbs was used to gather data, with an emphasis on the proverbs' frequency, context, and thematic significance. The chosen proverbs were taken out and examined for their narrative purpose, cultural importance, and linguistic structure. The researcher was able to categorize and assess the proverbs based on their function in moral instruction, cultural transmission, and character development thanks to the use of interpretive analysis and thematic coding in the data analysis process. Qualitative descriptions backed up by pertinent textual examples are used to present the findings.

Literature review

Short stories are short written texts. Characters range from two to five in the story. The modern short story is a deliberate work of art, and not merely a straightforward tale of one or more events. Although it has a clear structure, it may employ a set of documents or not even include the main character's name Fatma (2012: 6-7) noted that:

Writers of short stories have certain limitations because along with brevity, there should be clarity of expression. The story should keep the reader excited, and instead teach moral lessons or impose any belief on the reader. The story should leave the reader free to judge characters, events, and situations considering his understanding and intelligence.

Gutzeit (2013: 17) describes short stories as:

A short story has three parts: beginning, middle, and end. The story begins by introducing the characters and environment (15, 16). The ending reveals the results. The person telling the story (the narrator) may be one of the characters or someone who narrates the story about the characters. Short stories usually convey something (the message or topic).

Short stories can begin with a discussion or an action and terminate when the activity ends or immediately after it ends. The short story might be on any subject on which the author is comfortable writing. It can have modern or tra-

ditional themes, fair or unfair love affairs, plotted short stories, or psychological short stories. As a result, it is a versatile art form that has yet to be fully defined Shaw (1983: 343) says that:

6

A short story (less than 10,000 words) is intended to convey a single dominant effect, which includes the element of drama. A short narrative focuses on a single character and a single situation in one minute. Many scholars have sought to classify short stories, but the flexibility of their structure frequently creates complications. It is commonly characterized as a work of short fiction that may be read in 30 minutes or less.

Characters

Characters are the people who are found in the story and imitate the life of those who make the story grow and attract the reader. The writer's skill shines by giving the characters different roles in the story. The conversation seems to the characters and lot of events that will take us to the youth, and we will move on with the youth. Malepe (1967: 47) says that characters are representations of persons in the story. They are an important element in fiction which is a projection of human relationships. The author does not only create characters, but he also selects and shapes them to dramatize human life with its varied manifestations. He differentiates them by giving each character certain qualities.

The writer, unlike many of his colleagues, makes up many word masses roughly describing characters giving them names and genders, providing them with believable gestures, and causing them to speak to each other, and perhaps to behave like human beings. Rimmon-Kannan (1983: 31) says that "characters do not exist in isolation, but they are a part of the images and events that keep them alive and develop them in the story, the effort to extract them from the story and be discussed as human beings, requires to read the story with understanding".

The author's opinion above is very different from the other scholar's input presented above. This scholar suggests that the presentation of characters is very close to the action, dialogue,

thoughts, reactions, and opinions of other characters. What he is emphasizing is that the learner must know the techniques used by the writer to portray the characters to know how to distinguish the type of characters found in the short stories and other prose texts.

Proverbs

8

Although some academics have found it difficult to define the term proverb, Kamera (2001: 212) defines proverbs as "terse and self-contained pithy statements or sayings of folk wisdom which enjoy communal acceptance as facts."

Mtumane (2020: 256) communicates that "a proverb is a condensed sentence and has a bearing on life. It has some truth and moral lessons. Proverbs also a collective experience of community."

10

According to Mtumane, et. al. (2020: 254), "proverb presents people's regular life experiences are utilized differently in different contexts." Madumulla (2001: 267)

1 remark that:

Proverbs were once only found in the minds of the elderly, but they may now be found in written texts such as children's books that contain folktales and poems. However, Doyle (2012: 262) joins the quarrel and stresses that: Proverbs are considered oral tradition, however they have a tight tie with written sayings.

1

Although proverbs have long been acknowledged as sources of moral guidance and cultural wisdom (Sandoval 2024), empirical research demonstrates how they are used as didactic and rhetorical strategies in African literature. Bara (2021), for example, studied Zulu folktales and discovered that using proverbs in storytelling greatly improved students' capacity to deduce cultural values and moral precepts. Similar to this, Masala (2022) looked at how proverbs were used in Siswati play and found that characters who used them were frequently depicted as cultural leaders or knowledgeable elders, which strengthened the flow of information between generations.

In a comparative study, Okigbo (2010) examined the prevalence of proverbs in three Nguni

languages and found that proverb frequency and context were closely associated with traditional themes including resilience, respect, and communal cohesion. These results are consistent with the interpretation of *Emahemu-hemu* in the current study, where proverbs provide social and moral teachings that are pertinent to the Siswati-speaking population in addition to being stylistic elements.

This study contributes to the body of data demonstrating that proverbs in literary texts are not only ornamental but play important functions in cultural preservation and education by being consistent with these empirical findings.

Theoretical framework

2

Relevance Theory underpins this research study. Toews (2019: 34) summarizes the Relevance Theory, which posits that language alone cannot always convey the intended meaning of an utterance. Therefore, processes are necessary to assist people in deducing such meanings. Sperber and Wilson (1995: 260) propose two relevant principles. The first emphasizes how human cognition is focused on maximizing relevance. Wen. and Imamizu (2022):

explains that this principle means the major goal of the human brain is to break down into perceptions in a way that will make sense to the individual. The second principle states that every act of ostensive communication conveys a presumption of optimal relevance. According to Toews, this indicates that when a speaker attempts a communication act, it is worth the cognitive effort to analyse it since there is an optimally appropriate interpretation.

However, when a proverb is spoken, for example, the hearer will interpret it as best suited to the current context, and while it may appear unimportant on the surface, there may be a deeper meaning that the speaker wishes to convey. This approach is suitable for this study due to its proven effectiveness and the focus on figurative phrases. It also works through implicit and explicit communication and recognizes the relevance of context.

Implicit and explicit communication

According to Toews (2019: 17), the Relevance Theory proposes that communication utterances carry meaning through explication and implication, which are closely related to what is expressed and implied in the utterance. According to Sperber and Wilson (1995: 182), an explicator is a statement derived from the logical form conveyed by the utterance, whereas an implicature is premises or conclusions communicated by the utterance but not developed from the logical form of the utterance.

According to the Relevance Theory, both semantic and pragmatic processes are:

The role of the context, there are two steps involved in determining explicators and implicature. Doyle (2012: 90) gives an example of an English proverb, "I've eaten breakfast," which implies that the speaker ate today or lately. As a result, the speaker does not intend to express that he ate breakfast two weeks ago or the previous year. According to Mtumane, Makhoba, and Mojapilo (2020: 23), the time reference is an explicator since it follows logically from the utterance.

2

Williams and Le Billon (2017: 45) state that context unaccompanied can transform the message. Toews (2019: 32) also contends that all communication occurs at an exact time and place and between exact people. Therefore, all these factors will influence the clarification of what is said.

Hornby (2015: 34) notes the flaws of most proverb collections, which are primarily lists of solitary statements taken out of context. He also points out that, while the meanings in these compendiums are visible, the range of their potential applications is not. He observes that these collections concentrate on the base meaning, which is the non-figurative paraphrase of the proverb, the stable general truth of the proverb as accepted by the linguistic community.

Discussion

2

The author creatively utilizes proverbs in his short stories; thus far, no study has been undertaken. examining this field in Siswati's short stories. Proverbs that are found in the short stories are:

Proverbs that reflect hard work

1

(i)
senga lotilusako (You milk those you herd)

1

(ii)
cwembe sewugubudzele (The wooden tray has been toppled over now)

(iii)
Vuka Ngwane emacandzeni (Wake up Ngwane people from eggs)

1

(iv)
ijaha sisu (A real man is a stomach)

Proverbs that reflect confidence

(v)
nhlanga temuka nemonya (¹Dry maize stalks are blown away by the wind)

1

(vi)
ive limbonywe ngemahlaha (The country is enclosed by overgrowth)

(vii)
agoncoka umhlaba (The earth is toppling over)

1

(viii)
ohlindzako utfola ematjotjo (The butcher pinches small pieces of meat for himself)

Proverbs that reflect greediness

(ix)
ogubhela kwesakho (Those who dig into their stomachs)

(x)
Liyakokola liya ngekutjeka (It is hopping and gradually losing its balance)

Proverbs that reflect independence.

(xi)
inyosi tidla lujw lwato (Bees are eating their honey)

(xii)
ndvodza idla umgwaja wesagila sayo (A man eats a rabbit of his sjambok)

(xiii)
ntfo yemuntfu ngumhluti wemphisi (Things of a human being is the sweat of a hyena)

2

Analysis of the proverbs

The following is an analysis of proverbs identified in the short story called

Emahemuhemu (rummers) written by J.J Nconwane. Because of limited space, only

2 a few proverbs are going to be examined in this article. They are chosen because of their crafty input to the plot, theme, climax, anticlimax, and the theme of the short stories.

1

(i)

Usenga lotilusako (You milk those you herd)

This proverb describes the rural lifestyle of youthful boys. This was the traditional education for all boys strengthening them for manhood. This is because they learned survival skills in the veld prepare them for the future. Boys in the countryside continue to care for cattle on grazing grounds and socialize in their own unique way.

Moreover, they would play games, tell stories, and do a variety of naughty things, such as milking cows informally by squeezing the milk into their mouths. The proverb is written in the second person and suggests that it is easy to bargain where one works since he is familiar with the atmosphere and the way things are done.

Some other people recompense themselves for their hard work.

1

Literary, the proverb is about milking cows, which is a well-liked between Swati people. Typically, there is an exclusive tie that is developed to a boy and his herd of cows as he shepherds them. Daily ties become greater and there is some contact and understanding between the

two factions. So, when the formal milking occurs at home, the boys would promote that by calling their names so that the process can be quicker and easier.

1

Figuratively, the proverb is a symbol of bad behaviour, which is related to theft, misusing, and mishandling of funds wherever a person has been appointed to work.

The act of milking us is a symbol or euphemism for theft. Meanwhile, it is a boy who milks the cows, he has a unique tie with, therefore, the procedure runs effortlessly, and even when he does it unlawfully, in the field, the cows do not oppose because they are familiar with him. That is exactly what occurs in a working environment where people know everything.

1

(ii)

Umgcwembe sewugubudzele (The wooden tray has toppled over)

1

This proverb projects the Swati traditional routine. Back in the day, kitchen utensils were created of wood and clay. Some of the utensils are regularly utilized during parties where meat is abundant, such as *buganu*, (amarula festive), *Incwala* (first fruits celebration), *butimba* (royal hunt expedition), and many other ceremonies.

1

Gubudzela means to fall over, indicating that the contents have been swallowed fully. When the children eat from a bowl, they frequently race to get as much food as possible, turning the bowl over in their desire and greed. This happens when the food is good, such as *emasi* (sour milk) or *inyama* (meat).

Literary, the term "umgcwembe" refers to a situation where a large number of hungry individuals rush to consume delicious food. Figuratively, this implies that there is a great deal of selfishness going on, as everyone is rushing for himself without considering others.

Furthermore, it appears that whatever is being pursued is in enormous proportions and everyone needs a larger share for themselves.

1

(iii)

Vuka Ngwane emacandzeni (Wake up Ngwane people from eggs)

The proverb stems from an in-depth examination of people's lifestyles. The name Ngwane was given to the previous king of the Dlamini clan who ruled in Eswatini until the present.

When someone tells another person to wake up by saying 'vuka emacandzeni' (wake up from the eggs), the sentence can be either invigorating or provocative. The first proverb has an authoritative tone and demands action from those who are not taking it. It's as if Ngwane is being told to 'wake up from the eggs.' Also, the person speaking has a strong voice, and it appears that he is bored of seeing a lethargic person.

Literary, 'waking up from the eggs can be compared to removing a hen from its eggs. The hen hatches her eggs every day until they hatch. This is how it lives until the eggs hatch into chicks on day one. Sometimes, when the hen is incubating the eggs, chicken parasites that drink its blood attack without notice. The owner of the hen will see that it is growing skinny and powerless, which indicates that something is wrong.

Also, in during this phase, the hen may be unaware that the eggs are unhealthy and continue to incubate them without hatching. The hen does not realize it is incubating eggs, and no hatching occurs. The hen is unaware that it is in peril while it sits incubating the eggs of developing chicks. In addition, the hen's owner removes it from the nest, sterilizes the nest to kill parasites, and discards the destroyed eggs. Figuratively, telling someone to get up or get away from eggs represents stepping outside of their comfort zone. Incubating eggs on a daily basis, similar to a hen, results in a warm environment and habitual behavior. Similarly, even a human being might become accustomed to old well-off practices, failing to see that the customs are no longer beneficial to him or her and may result in dangerous situations. That is why the proverb is used as a wake-up call to encourage people to observe and see things differently. The proverb can be used to put anyone's rigid logic to the test. Furthermore, the

act of getting up is equivalent to the behavioral change that is envisaged.

1

(iv) Lijaha sisu (A real man is a stomach)

The proverb is a contradiction, derived from observing people's manner of life and behavior. Food is essential for survival and has a significant impact on people's lives. Swati people, who practice small-scale farming, prioritize food in their daily lives. The proverb is concise and in the present tense, implying that it is unquestionably true. A young man is typically lively and robust, thus in order to carry out his obligations, he must be well fed, which is why his stomach is necessary. In metaphor, the word *lijaha* (bachelor) and copulative *sisu* (stomach) represent food. Indeed, every human being requires food.

(v)

Inhlanga temuka nemonya (Dry maize stalks are blown away by the wind)

This proverb is derived by viewing nature. *Tinhlanga* are dry maize stalks that are easily swept away by the wind since they are not lighter in weight than when they were green. The noun *tinhlanga* is synonymous with *emahlanga* (dry maize stalks). However, during the harvesting period, which occurs around April when the maize cobs are dry and ripe, the corn stalks can be cut off and bundled together to allow the hazelnuts to be harvested.

The proverb is usually dedicated to a person who does not seem to be cooperating or care about any advice or instruction provided to him. This is typically young people.

The word *kuhlanga*, the term "kwaba *tinhlanga*" refers to corn stalks. The proverb describes dry corn stalks being swept away by the wind due to their light weight. Something taken away by the wind is usually powerless or without substance. The adage metaphorically compares young people's irresponsible behavior to maize stalks being swept away by the wind. It depicts *tinhlanga* (maize stalks) as a metaphor for anything useless. Because no one cares what happens once the maize cobs are removed from the stalks, *tinhlanga* (maize stalks)

are effectively dead.

(vi) *Live limbonywe ngemahlahla* (The country is covered by overgrowth)

1

This proverb begins after looking the nature. It represents the status core of the country. There are plenty of Siswati proverbs that begin with the noun *live* (country) such as *live liyeng-cayelwa* (you respect yourself in society). However, this proverb is connected to the idiom '*kuvalwe ngelihlahla*' (it is a terrible or pitiful state) this normally refers to disaster-stricken homesteads that are believed to be the result of bad luck or witchcraft. This occurs when all family members have died or when essential members, such as elders, have passed away, leaving only the children behind. So, when the neighbors lament the loss, they would use the idioms and say: '*Kuvalwe ngelihlahla*', meaning that the home is just deserted.

1

Literarily, Burying the country under emahlahla (overgrowth) would be an irresponsible act, as it would prevent the country and its inhabitants from breathing together. Another literary idea supported by the proverb is that the bushes grew quickly, covering the entire land, and no one was notified to it, therefore there is no one to manage this giantism. The proverb employs hyperbole and metaphor.

However, the optical image of a country buried in shrubs depicts a collapsing state in which no human being can exist.

This is both exaggerated and metaphorical, implying that the country has been abandoned and natural vegetation has taken over. This implies that the people who live in the country have no sense of order, affection, or concern for what is going on around them. This demonstrates that they have lost their moral compass and are unconcerned about their surroundings. This selfish behaviour threatens the livelihoods of others.

1

(vii)

***Wagoncoka umhlaba* (The earth is toppling over)**

2

The proverb above expresses uncomfortable truths gleaned by viewing nature. The verb *sewuhleli* (it is now supported) in the present perfect tense depicts the earth's current state. It demonstrates that this is an issue of agency because anything is possible due to the earth's unpredictability. The thing by which the ground is believed to be backed (*ludzengelo*) is a small piece of clay kept after breaking a clay pot. This piece has many purposes in the Siswati traditional culture, including serving as a dog or cat dish, as well as a plate for crushing bones, herbs, and roots.

However, literary the bottom meaning of this proverb states that the world's manner of doing things is changing from good to terrible, implying that people are gradually losing touch with humanity or moral ideals. Literally, the adage depicts the earth's look as imbalanced since it is fortified with small objects that can be broken at any time.

The proverb metaphorically refers to the passage of time and a shift in how things are done. The graphic is being used to represent the changing times and ways of doing things on Earth. The earth is a metaphor for the humans that live on it. The ambiguity, depicted by the optical image of the clay object, represents the impacts of the circling times and unusual ways of doing.

Recommendations

In light of the study's findings, which demonstrated the proverbs' cultural, linguistic, and pedagogical relevance in Siswati short stories, the following suggestions are offered:

Proverbs used into the curriculum of schools
The formal inclusion of proverb study in the Siswati language and literature curriculum for elementary and secondary school students should be taken into consideration by the Department of Education. Learners' vocabulary and cultural awareness would be enhanced, and indigenous knowledge systems would be supported.

Resource Development and Teacher Training

Proverb interpretation and instruction should be a specific focus of training for teachers of

Siswati literature. To improve classroom instruction, educational resources like workbooks, teacher guides, and annotated readers that highlight the context-specific meanings and applications of proverbs should also be created.

Promoting Local Language Literary Analysis

By promoting literary study of regional works, universities and other academic organizations could promote greater research in indigenous languages like Siswati. Such studies should investigate the sociocultural significance of proverbs in addition to their stylistic elements.

Oral Traditions Are Preserved Through Documentation

Before they are lost to modernization, proverbs from oral sources must be recorded and preserved by cultural organizations such as language boards and heritage councils. To encourage further cultural education, these archives ought to be made available to academics, educators, and the general public.

Integration with Contemporary Media

The usage of proverbs in Siswati radio programs, television shows, and social media platforms should be promoted to media professionals. Particularly among young people who interact with digital content more frequently, this will help maintain the language alive and current.

Initiatives for Storytelling and Community Engagement

Elders offer folktales full of proverbs at traditional storytelling gatherings, which should be revived by organizing communities. These programs will foster intergenerational communication and guarantee that youth recognize and value their cultural heritage.

Comparative Research in Different African Languages

To investigate cross-cultural parallels and discrepancies in indigenous knowledge systems, future scholars are urged to compare proverbs from different African languages. The comprehension of proverbs as a pan-African literary and linguistic device may be expanded by such research.

Encouragement of Native Authors

To promote the ongoing creation of literature that is culturally relevant, funds, publication opportunities, and literary awards should be provided to authors who write in Siswati and other regional languages.

This will guarantee that the timeless lessons found in proverbs continue to be included in stories told today.

2

Conclusion

In conclusion, this article examined certain proverbs that enunciate the view expressed by J.J Ncongwane in his short story anthology. He conveys his anxieties, worries, and attitude concerning the Swati people, diverting from their culture and tradition in society. It's jeopardizing is dominant to the point that they are seen by the present youth. In addition, the author utilizes proverbs as stylistic devices to expose his skills and talents as a poet and as a social regulation method to impart order in his society.

This article analyzes proverbs from J.J. Ncongwane's two short stories, Emahemuhemu (rummers). It has been discovered that these proverbs are used by writers to complement the context of the plot, theme, and subject matter. Some of the proverbs reveal certain character traits that Swati people appreciate or dislike, while others symbolize societal ideals and standards that are gradually fading but are still cherished by some.

Furthermore, it has been observed that the writer uses these proverbs as a channel through which he repairs the dominating concerns in his society, as a means of establishing a path forward towards the predicted change in the gender subject.

Moreover, the writer gets a stage to vomit his opinions, attitude, and concerns on problems that jeopardize the society he lives in.

Furthermore, he effectively represents particular norms and traditions, allowing future generations to profit from and continue to practice them. He also rejects some of these practices, which he believes are out of date and no longer benefit the people.

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PARENTAL ABSENCE AND TEEN CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR: INSIGHTS FROM A YOUTH CARE CENTRE IN VHEMBE, SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

A large part of how teenagers learn to become law-abiding citizens in their societies comes from interactions and communications with their parents and parental figures (socialisation). Through interactions with such figures, they imbibe not only specific societal norms and values, but also develop a sense of purpose and belonging, that helps them navigate the different challenges of their society. Yet, little is known in the Youth studies literature regarding how absence of such figures in children's life can impact disposition to criminal activities in South Africa. The current study addresses this research gap, drawing from the experiences of teenagers and employees of selected correctional youth and childcare centre in Vhembe district (Limpopo Province of South Africa). Based on a semi-structured interview data of twelve 'troubled' teenagers in the centre, four Parents, two social workers and two police officers and two educators, (selected through a non-probability purposive and snowball sampling technique), the study establishes how absence of parents at the early stage of the children's life particularly, enables disconnection and detachment from their communities. Operating in such contexts the study concludes, teenagers easily become disposed and susceptible to criminality and different social vices in situations of "no parenting."

Key words: *Absence of parents, Adolescence, Attitude to social life, Behaviour, Neglect, Parenting styles, Teenagers, Rural communities, Sense of belonging.*

INTRODUCTION

Teenagers are often the product of how they are raised ((Roman, 2014; Twenge, 2014). In other

words, how teenagers turn-out in life, are the result of the parenting they primarily receive prior and during teenage-hood. Through parenting, children imbibe certain values, norms and attitudes about their society, and develop interests

and skills needed to navigate the different problems within their communities. In the absence of such interactions however, they can lose some sense of purpose, and a good understanding of how to deal with some of the problems within their communities (Makwakwa, 2011).

The above theoretical assumption underlies the current study. Drawing on the experiences of teenagers from a selected Child and Youth care centre in Limpopo Province of South Africa, the study aims to explore how disposition to criminality is connected to “absence of parenting²” prior and during the teenager’s teenage-hood. More specifically, the study first, examines troubled teenagers’ (with absent parents during childhood) lack of sense of belonging and connectivity to their communities, and secondly, highlights the different ways in which such attitudes could predispose them to criminality³ in their community.

Understanding the relationship between criminality and parental absence during childhood is largely motivated by one of the researcher’s personal experiences as a former youth worker. Working in a secure care-facility in a rural community in South Africa, meant that the researcher had witnessed (first hand) how many young people, whose parents were absent during their childhood, struggle to deal with the minor challenges during teenage age within their communities. On many occasions, the researcher had observed that

the teenagers had struggled to conceptualise a positive attitude towards their community and life. Yet, it was often not clear whether these developments are connected to the absence of parenting during the teenagers’ childhood. A scientifically based analysis is therefore adjudged to be a good way to offer more nuanced understanding.

² The concept “absence of parenting” in this context is purposefully broad, and accommodates all situations of abandonment, disappearance, incapacitation, death, as well as financial and emotional inability, within which it is not possible for a parent(s) to be in the life of their children (Demuth & Brown, 2004). Such conceptualisation recognises that such “parental absence” may not necessarily be

2. PARENTING AS AGENT OF SOCIALISATION

Previous research is laden with discussions regarding the importance of parenting in children’s behavioural patterns (Lim et’al., 2019). Parenting represents the socio-psychological activities, involved in raising children. It represents the totality of actions/inactions employed by parents or adult care givers, for ensuring children’s healthy development into adulthood (Harms, 2013). Such actions often provided by parents, play fundamental roles in modeling how children relate to their environments and societies (Bornstein, 2000; Griffin, 2003); (Wessels, 2013). In their absence, children struggle to build good and positive connections with their communities (Fuemmeler, 2012).

A 2012 study by Fuemmeler (2012) makes this connection very clearly. Using the activities of “law abiding parents” particularly, Fuemmeler (2012) argues that parents are the essential source for nurturing people’s good behaviour within their societies. Growing-up under their parents’ wings and having seen how their parents conform to the societal norms, children are likely going to be motivated to conform to societal norms in line with their parents. They would also likely have positive dispositions that makes them want to interact positively to the laws and value systems within their communities, at different stages of their lives. This means, parenting and associated variables provides both developmental and socialisation processes. Children’s developmental trajectories are influenced by their interactions with the parent, particularly at home environments. In such spaces, the developing child is largely afforded the opportunities and experiences necessary to acquire the fundamental skills, behaviours, values, beliefs, and knowledge that enable him or her to engage successfully in social relationships and become competitive in other spaces such schools and

intentional or come as a result of parents’ selfish reasons, but also because of inevitable social circumstances, beyond the parents’ control (Stettin, 2012). Presented with an impossible social situation, parents absent in the life of a teenager may in other words become inevitable.

³ Criminal disposition here primarily refers to interest to crime and other social vices.

other social spaces (Maccoby, 1992). When this is absent (parental absence), children experience far-reaching consequences for their entire development (Roman, 2014; Stettin, 2012).

Conversely, parents, especially during childhood, play vital roles in the socialisation of certain traits in children. Through direct and indirect modelling, parents can impart crucial social norms and ideas that help children navigate social expectations, regulate emotions, and engage with others. Parental responses to challenges, their approach to discipline, and their demonstration of empathy can significantly shape how children manage their own emotions and conflicts within their environment (Lim, Eres & Peck, 2019).

Elements such as positive reinforcements, communications, and active involvement in children's during this period—whether through shared play, educational support, or emotional care—reinforce desirable behaviours, while discouraging maladaptive ones. Parents presence also often creates a “coherent narrative” that determine the choices children make through their lifetime (Puffer, 2017).

Research in South Africa have also demonstrated how teenagers' outlook and social behaviour are dependent on parenting. Focusing on the different stages of the children's lives, Makwakwa (2011) discussed associational positive and negative qualities. While in early childhood, the research argues, parenting could motivate conformity to acceptable behaviour for children, during the adolescence period, the ability of parents to directly induce compliance reduces. However, parents are still able to motivate and induce conformity through negotiations and emotional connections. This means, parenting is important for modelling and determining the decision-making ability of children in different stages of their lives (Moyo, 2014). Whatever the stage the teenagers are in their life, parenting remains important element that determines their social behaviour.

Ultimately, the presence and engagement of parents during children's childhood serve as a powerful mechanism for transmitting values, foster-

ing emotional intelligence, and instilling confidence in children and teenagers. Parents provide the material and non-material elements (norms, cultures, value systems) which help children and later teenagers develop both the sense of purpose, and the social skills, with which to deal with the different challenges encountered within their communities (Hooper, 2019).

Interestingly, parenting is not the only source of socialisation for teenagers; it can also intersect with other environmental factors to affect how children and teenagers interpret the world around them (Brown, 2015). Thus, while parenting remains at the base, exogenous factors such as peers and friendship can influence teenagers' impulsive attitudes and criminality (Tylor, 2017). In such cases, teenagers can become prone to violence, abuse of any kind (emotional, physical or verbal) and high risk of mental sub-development, because the parental base is not strong enough or is weakened. When confronted with social challenge in the midst of environmental factors, teenagers may unconsciously seek means of gaining control, by engaging in activities, which provide them with sense of escape from the environmental pressures, leading to engagement in over-compensating behaviours such as violence and criminality, which goes against the previously embedded norms (Diamond, 2013).

Admittedly, the above explanation is useful, as it sheds light on why teenagers who are neglected by their parents during childhood, could have inclination towards criminality and violence in the case of environmental pressure. Coming from a background of low self-esteem, stress and poor social engagement, neglected teenagers would likely succumb to the environmental pressure. In the face of such pressure, their little parental base is easily weakened, making it easier for them to succumb to the social pressure. However, such explanations do not explain the fluidity that characterises how the environmental pressures interact with the parenting style in the socialisation process. Without making these connections, it is difficult to ascertain how certain teenagers from neglected homes turn to criminality, while others within the same environment do not.

To highlight the connection between parenting and exogenous factors in teenagers' disposition

to criminality, the current study has drawn from the classical Albert Bandura's (1977) social learning theory. Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) explains how individuals acquire behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions through observation and imitation of others. The theory bridges behaviourist and cognitive learning perspectives, emphasising the role of social influences and cognitive processes in learning. The theory is built on the five Key Principles of Social Learning Theory. These includes: Observational Learning Modelling, which argues that individuals learn by watching others, rather than solely through direct experience.

3. METHODOLOGY

Given that the study aims to explore the relationship between criminality and "absence of parenting" in childhood, a qualitative research approach is adopted. Within the qualitative research framework, it is possible to analyse how teenagers are shaped by their experiences during childhood. (Hiver et al., 2022).

3.1. Data Collection

The primary method used for data collection was in-depth, semi-structured, interviews through a set of questions that are meant to prob for depth and understanding of the research subject (Gibbs, 2020). Within the framework of such question, participants are able to freely articulate "their" realities and experiences, which otherwise would be difficult in structured questionnaire setting (Hiver et al., 2022).

Twenty-two (22) participants were selected, based on a combination of purposive and snowball sampling technique. Selection and identification of participants started with social workers and people who had worked or still worked at the secure-center. These participants were previously known by the first researcher, through her job as a child and youth worker in the neighboring secure-center within the region. The assumption was that these participants had rich and relevant information about both the secure-center and the teenagers. With the first set of participants selected, it was possible to recruit more

participants through the snowball sampling technique. This sampling technique (also known as "referral") simply entailed recruitment of other potential research participants through referral from previously identified participants (De Vos et al., 2011). Using this method makes it easier to locate people of specific population. Normally no list is required. The method also saves time and serves as a complement to purposive sampling by providing participants that the researcher would not have known.

Before the interviews, conversational reports were developed with the participants to create a friendly environment for the discussions to occur. Trust, rapport, and comfort between participants and the researcher are important in establishing a successful qualitative research process (Bless et al., 2013). These factors create an environment that enables participants to easily recount their lived experiences.

Given the sensitivity of the research, efforts were made to anonymise the participants. Real names or anything that gives away the identity of the participants were removed both in this document or in any other document of the research. Also, ethical considerations such as informed consent, which includes provision of detailed information of the study's objectives and aims were made. Only participants who willingly expressed interest to participate in the study were used, without any compulsion. Such participants were also asked to sign consent forms before commencement of the interviews.

An interview guide containing key interview questions for the study was also developed before the interview process. However, this guide was not followed rigidly, as the questions were meant to allow the participants to go back and forth on their experiences with behavioural adjustment, with the interviewers building on responses from the participants.

The interviews covered essential aspects of the participants' challenges, especially how challenges connected to absent parenthood contribute to negative attitudes and a disposition to criminal activities, in the participants' communities. Each of the interviews lasted between 30 to 45 minutes.

3.2. Population and Sampling Procedure

The study included - teenagers in secure centers, social workers, legal guardians, teachers, and police officials, who worked in one way or the other, or have been in contact with the teenagers at the secure-centers. These individuals have extensive information about these teenagers' situations, the teenager's attitude towards life, their communities, as well as their dispositions towards anti-social activities.

The total number of participants were twenty-two (22) - twelve abandoned teenagers (eight boys and four girls); four (4) parents; two (2) police officers; two (2) teachers, and two (2) social workers. Of the four (4) parents interviewed, three (3) are unemployed and have no matric certificate, however, one of them has a N6 certificate and is employed.

While all the teenagers were meant to have had some problems with the law, the parents and other professionals (social workers, police officers and teachers) used in the study, were meant to have vast experience in dealing with young people within the Secure-centre. They were selected based on their expertise and their understanding of both the environment and the situations of the teenagers. The police officers specifically had dealt with several criminal cases pertaining to young people within the Secure Centre.

3.3. Data analysis

For the analysis of the data, the study relied mostly on Braun and Clarke's (2022) six steps approach in thematic data analysis. These include (Step 1) familiarization with the data; (Step 2) generation of initial codes, (step 3) searching for themes; (Step 4) reviewing of themes; (step 5) Definition of themes; and (Step 6) Writing-up.

The familiarization with the data started with a detailed transcription of the interviews and observational data from audio to written format, by the first researcher. With the transcription of the data done, it was easier for other researchers to read and re-read the data. The generation of initial codes and searching of themes followed. Here, statements which stood out for the research

were identified and categorized in a simple Microsoft document, with colours. Major issues were also recognized and organized as codes, separately by three of the researchers. The generated codes by the three researchers were constantly compared to ascertain objectivity and dependability of the data. As these codes synchronized, it became easier to categorize them in terms of how they related to the research questions. Furthermore, we proceeded with the fourth step, reviewing of themes. This involved categorizing all significant responses and all the recurring arguments from the participants' statements in a way that relates to the research questions. These responses were further arranged and reviewed as the main themes in relation to the research questions, as the fifth step. Finally, the data were written up (sixth step) in line with the developed themes.

Understanding Absent parenting (Presentation of Data)

Three major themes emerged from the data. Namely:

- a) Managing without parents,
- (b) Socio-economic challenges, and
- (c) Living as a stranger.

Managing without parents:

A critical reading of the data demonstrates that the teenagers at the Centre have a general impression that they have not fared well and have always been in a state of "management without their parents." For them, living without their parents meant that they had no opportunity to bond with their parents and learn directly from them, on how to navigate the different challenges of their society. Everything learnt had been through reluctant distant relatives, friends and peers who knew very little like them. This left them without the right skills or little social skills to deal with the common challenges of their community. Below are some of the significant expressions by the participants:

"Life without parents is very

difficult, it is not easy to wake up and not know where help will come from and that you need to get up and do something in order to survival. At times I don't use my brain I just do what needs to be done in order to survive." (Participant 11)

"I believe that if my parents were part of my life I wouldn't be arrested today, I'm here because I had no one to look out for me even to show me love and care." (Participant 5)

Also, both teenagers and the social workers interviewed expressed how lack of parenting in their lives meant lack of basic needs such as clothing, housing, food and others during their childhood and teenage years. Because of these, the teenagers were left in harsh and poor living economic conditions where they have to find means, just to sustain themselves. To survive, teenagers had to find ways to get what they needed. Below are how the teenage participants expressed the point:

"It is difficult for me to support myself and because of that I ended up going out to steal because I want to look nice like my peers which then turned me into a thief because the demands keep on coming and one finds oneself going back to steal more and more." (Participant 1)

"Facing life without the parental support is hard because there are so many things that you find yourself in because you are trying to

survive. I had to learn stealing from friends because it was the only way that seemed easier for me to cover the needs that I have." (Participant 3)

The teenagers' views were corroborated by more thoughtful opinions by the adults, who express that:

"Neglect refers to when parents do not respond or provide their children with basic needs. When this happens, teenagers are likely to become in activities that are contrary to the social norms in order to survive." (Participant 15)

"Being a parent is not just a matter of giving birth to a biological child, but it entails huge responsibilities such as providing basic needs, advice and guidance to your children, and even ensuring that your child is surrounded by good company."

Satisfying Basic needs is crucial for survival. There is always a high risk attached to failure to provide people with basic needs. People, particularly teenagers, can be lured into different dangerous activities when they lack basic needs. The survival instinct can lure people (even adults) to steal food, steal money and get involved in other activities or associations that make them do things that are contrary to the societal norms.

Socio-economic challenges: Challenges such as substance abuse (alcohol and drug addiction) and dropping out of school emerged as important themes expressing the teenagers' struggle with socio-economic challenges. Due to a lack of parental guidance, most of the participants were introduced to alcohol and drug addiction, particularly as early as at 11-years. They started with the smoking of cigarette and then escalated to other

types of drugs - marijuana, cocaine, *nyaope* and crystal meth. This is how one of the participants presented it:

“Alcohol was my life, and it motivated my reasons for going out at night, and that is the kind of life that I enjoyed because I felt it made me move easily at times. I don’t have to worry about buying my own liquor, my friends will buy for me, but at the end of it there is always a catch, nothing is for free in this world.... I mean, when you finish drinking, you may be asked to do something that is not right, like starting a fight with other people for quarrels that you were never part of and that creates enmity with people and the community as a whole.” (Participant 5)

Similarly, the teenagers also dealt with dropping out of School, which was related to alcohol abuse. Being always in a state of drunkenness, most of the teenagers found it hard to maintain a healthy school life. In most cases, they behaved in an insolent manner towards the authorities, teachers and other learners. For this, some of them were kicked out of school. This situation has affected other aspects of the teenagers’ lives:

“I was trying to get a job, and it took me time to settle, but when I came back, my child had stopped going to school, and I found out when it was time to get the results. I am shocked that he will have the same problems that I had because of dropping out of school.” (Participant 21)

“I do not have any support

to fund my alcohol addiction. At times, I find myself having to go out and date older men in order to get someone who can provide for my needs. I do not have time to go to school” (Participant 11)

The consumption of alcohol and banned substances during childhood and early teenagerhood can have lasting effects on brain functions (Ning, 2020; Schinke et al., 2010). The earlier people start drinking alcohol, the more likely they are to experience a determinate impact on cognitive functions, memory, and school performance, over time and even to adulthood (Ning, 2020).

Psychological Challenges: Psychological challenges identified from the analysis of data include poor self-esteem, feelings of neglect and feelings of independence. These common problems, particularly poor self-esteem, was shared by teenagers who lived in the SC. Previous studies, such as Lambert (2018) and Maslow (1943) show that what contributes to substantial internal self-esteem are support, love and care that teenagers experience and which can assist them to be highly confident (Lambert, 2018). In contrast, teenagers can easily develop low self-esteem when they do not feel loved and appreciated. Below are significant quotes from the participants:

“When you come from a poor background, people tend to despise and undermine you. As a teenager, I feel like the standard that life is expecting is very high and I always feel Inferior.” (Participant 3)

“What I have seen from my own experience from working with these teenagers is that children who have no parental support seem to lack self-esteem. They tend to be very isolated, and others avoid making meaning-

ful relationships.” (Participant 13)

The social needs on the third level of Maslow’s hierarchy (1943) relate to human interaction and are the last of the so-called “lower needs”. Among these needs are friendships and family bonds (both with biological family members (parents, siblings, and children) and chosen family members (spouses and partners). Physical and emotional intimacy, ranging from sexual relationships to intimate emotional bonds, is important in achieving a feeling of kinship, thus, membership in social groups contributes to meeting this need.

“The presence of a parent does a lot in the life of a teenager as it boosts their self-confidence, help them understand their talents, strength and life goals which are critical for every teenager.” (Participant 14)

“Mostly young people who are from organised family seem to have confidence in themselves; they are able to stand and express themselves well even amongst their peers.” (Participant 15)

Similarly, feelings of neglect, which relates to the idea of loneliness and neglect experienced by teenagers also arose as a result of the teenagers’ experience of absence of parents in the teenagers’ lives. 10 out of the 12 teenagers expressed how life became difficult, and how they felt being left alone to navigate through the different spheres of life. When they compare their lives, with that of other young people within their community, they felt neglected and abandoned by the “people who mattered most to them”; this is one of the most painful experiences that any young person should have, as Participant 3 remarked. Below are some significant expressions by the participants:

“It’s hard when there is no one who is there for you, I

rely only on friends for survival. I feel lonely and left out in most of the issues in the community.” (Participant 12)

“At school things were hard I didn’t have the uniform and I felt like I am wasting my time so I quit school. All these is because I am all alone. In fact, I am abandoned. There is no body to assist me and guide (Participant 4).”

“My presence alone has a great impact on the life of my teenagers”. (Participant 21)

It seems that children who lack parental presence are likely to fare worse than the children living with both parents when it comes to self-confidence, ability to fit into society and realization of their future goals. The support they get from their parents can help them deal with many social issues, including social anxiety (Meng and Yamauchi, 2017). The primary care they receive provides them with a sense of security and love that helps them navigate different social realities within their communities (Wiley, 2015).

Living as a Stranger: Operating as strangers in their communities emerged as one of the principal themes in the data in relation to the second research question. The theme represents the participants’ explanation of their own personal experiences before they came to the Centre. The idea is not to validate whether these experiences/feelings were necessarily ‘accurate’ or ‘false’, but rather, to understand them as representative of the teenagers’ interpretations of reality and shaping of their social outlook and corresponding behaviours during their adolescent age. The question focused on how the teenagers view themselves in the context of their connection with their communities and the meaning that they attached to such feelings that are mostly internal and manifested by their behavioural patterns.

The reading of data revealed common sentiments that teenagers do not feel any sense of belonging with their communities and that has left a void and an intense rage within them towards their communities. Below are some of the significant quotes from the participants:

“It is easy to become a stranger in your own community. Living a night life and no guts to face life during the day because I already know what the community think when they see me. I do not care any more about what people think of me.” (Participant 5)

These show that the feeling of disconnection had a direct consequence on how the teenagers relate to people within their community. The data showed that the teenagers’ sense of disconnection from their society has also resulted in them having no sense of owing any obligation to anyone within their communities. Without many connections, the teenagers felt that they owed no one kindness, good behaviour or respect. In fact, the teenagers have developed what I will refer to as “a thick skin” with a negative attitude of not owing anyone anything. In other words, the teenagers did not care how people look at them as they live their lives the only way they know how.

“I do not have any support and at times I find myself having to go out and date older men in order to get someone who can provide for me and buy me clothes.” (Participant 11)

“It is hard when you don’t feel any attachment to the community. You don’t care what people say about you. You can do anything you like, even breaking the law.” (Participant 6)

The absence of parental interactions tends to make children lose some sense of purpose, as care, support, love and affection are not portrayed. This does not happen only when parents are not at home, but it can still happen to those parents who are present physically, yet emotionally detached, (Davis 2018). In other words, parent might be present but fail to meet the emotional needs of the teenager, such as helping them to understand who they are and setting healthy lifestyles.

More feelings of being strangers in their community is captured in the following sub-themes:

- ✓ I owe no one
- ✓ It’s me against them
- ✓ Finding my own crew (gang membership)
- ✓ Need for aggression and violence
- ✓ Police arrests

I owe no one: Feelings of not being indebted to anybody in their societies are expressed in the following statements:

“It is easy to become a stranger in your own community. Living a night life and no guts to face life during the day because I already know what the community think when they see me. I do not care any more about what people think of me.” (Participant 5)

These expressions have direct consequences on how teenagers relate to people within their community. Without many connections, the teenagers felt that they owed no one kindness, good behaviour or respect

“I do not have any support and at times I find myself having to go out and date older men in order to get someone who can provide for me and buy me clothes.”

(Participant 11)

"It is hard when you don't feel any attachment to the community. You don't care what people say about you. You can do anything you like, even breaking the law."

(Participant 6)

It is me against them: This sub-theme indicates how the teenagers internalized and justified becoming rebellious toward the community and other people, including caregivers who look after them even in SE. Given their situation, their estimation is that they had to constantly fight their way out of every situation. They always believed that they were alone, and no one cares about their situation. Below are the comments made by teenagers on their view that the communities are against them:

"Well, I don't care about what others think about me, it doesn't matter anymore."

(Participant 6)

"I believe in myself and whoever gets in my way of achieving what I want will always get hurt." (Participant 4)

"I steal and do all sorts of things in the community because it doesn't matter; they are all the same; there are no go people in this world; it just a survival of the fittest."

(Participant 7)

Finding my own crew (gang membership):

The reading of data presented by teenagers, has illustrated that children or teens whose parents were absent usually longed to belong to something. In teenagers' situations, this longing forced them to search for some attachment amongst their peers by joining gangs and dangerous groups.

"Because of lack of support and protection as my grandmother was away, life was

hard; I then decided to go stay with some friends and that is when I was lured to a gang and given tasks to do. I won't say a lot but in gangs there is a certain lifestyle that one is expected to live or the kind of clothes to wear. This seemed easy to access with this gang, and because of my desperation I did not see anything wrong with it,"

(Participant 12)

Physical neglect is characterised by failure of parents in providing physical needs, such as food, water, clothing, shelter and adequate hygiene. This means that a teenager who must provide for himself/herself is physically neglected because a teenager is still under the care of parent or guardian and their needs should be provided for, at all times. Maslow's (1943; Nelson, 2017) hierarchy of needs outlines the importance of these needs to the extent of categorising them under 'survival needs:

"It's hard to live a life without a mother and only to know that she is alive but chose marriage over me, that is hard to accept and I have to join gangs just so I can survive and get the basic needs." (Participant 2)

'I wanted to belong and have people who will accept and embrace me and I thought I found that before things got bad and fights with rival groups started.' (Participant 1)

Need for aggression and violence: This sub-theme indicates how violence became prevalent among teenagers as a result of their parental absence. Operating in their difficult situation, teenagers themselves felt that they had to be tough in order to survive, since there is no one to defend them. These views of teenagers are captured in the following statements:

"I have been expelled from

school because of fights and somehow I felt like I have no one to stand for me so I have to defend myself and protect my interest.” (Participant 11)

“The lifestyles of groups are harsh and violent and that is what I used to do. One has to do what he needs to do to survive” (Participant 6)

Engaging in these activities was also about survival and getting by in the business of the day.

Police Arrests: The data shows that teenagers fall out with the law and run the risks of arrest as a result of their survival tactics. Teenagers create shortcuts to generate fast money by means that are illegal - shoplifting, smuggling/ selling substances, robbing shops and breaking into people's houses with the intent to steal. Indulging in different criminal activities eventually had led to their arrests. The data provided by the police officials and teenagers themselves revealed that breaking the law becomes a lifestyle and it is only a matter of time before getting caught. Immediate gratification of their wants was also revealed as leading to teenagers conducting themselves in ways that were contrary to the law. The data also revealed that most of the teenagers were arrested while they were below 18 years of age and more than once for different offenses. Below are some of the responses from the participants:

“I have come across young people who have come into the system because of the crimes they have committed. The challenges that lead these teenagers to be in conflict with the law and get arrested are mostly associated with lack of parental support.” (Participant 13)

“I have been arrested 3 times for house-breaking and that is not the life I want but only trying to survive.”

(Participant 4)

These descriptions of the arrest situations are supported by the social learning theory, which views troubled teenagers' problems with the law as reciprocal determinism. The understanding is that such children and adolescents are active, thinking beings who contribute in many ways to their own development. They are likely to come into conflict with the law as a result of their difficult socio-environmental realities.

Charting the Relationship between Parental Absence and Connectivity to the Community (Discussion)

The above data shows that the teenagers at the SC did encounter a variety of socio-economic challenges because of their parents' absence. These include a lack of new and basic social skills, a lack of basic economic needs, and a harsh socio-environment, which are necessary for survival and navigating the different social situations in their communities. In the contexts where being without biological parents meant that teenagers lived in homes or institutions owned by states for safety, or living with their relatives, who reluctantly welcomed them into their homes, teenagers became easily vulnerable to two main areas: self-esteem and a sense of disconnection from their communities.

A. Self-esteem: The term 'self-esteem' in the current study refers to how teenagers felt about themselves in the midst of others. Such feelings come from several factors such as a perception of self that comes from validation from role models and feedback from other members of one's community. Such perceptions can have lasting effects on people, in different stages of their lives (James, 1892). This negative self-perception created a cycle of self-doubt and lack of confidence that contributed to engagement in social vices - substance abuse, irresponsible sex life, teen-pregnancy, depression and suicidal thoughts.

This internalization of lack of parental love and support amid difficult social-economic experiences re-enforces Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of

needs argument on the fourth level that the human social needs include accomplishments and respect. Other than the basic needs of shelter, food, water clothing, human beings also need other elements such as achievements and mastery of events for its formation of positive self-worth. Possessing human internal positive self-esteem results in support, love, reputation, status and prestige. These elements provide the necessary conditions for people to feel confident and form positive self-worth (Lambert, 2018).

These findings seem to corroborate recent studies that neglect and lack of support for teenagers may result in low self-esteem. If 'self-esteem' is understood here as how one feels about him/herself amongst others, and as phenomenon that has a lasting effect even on teenagers' adult life, (McLeod, 2017), it remains a very important element that determines teenagers' social outlook and engagement in social activities. Having low self-esteem can create a need to engage in many social vices, such as sexual promiscuity, substance abuse, depression and have suicidal thoughts (Boden, 1996; Ralph, 2014). It can also lead to feelings of inferiority complex, which makes it easier for teenagers to seek social validation in bad companies.

Children who grow up with their caring and loving biological parents on the other hand have been proven to excel in many social aspects of life (Jamiah 2013; Manap et al., 2015). The presence of their parents can help them feel safe, loved, and carefree. These elements are essential for positive social outlook, support and guidance that children need to find their own identity (Hall and Samsu, 2018).

B. Disconnection with their community

Other than facilitating a poor sense of self, going through the different social challenges also played a crucial role in shaping the teenagers' perception of their place within their communities. The inability or the lack of pre-requisite resources to deal with some of the challenges resulted in feelings of isolation and alienation, which made it difficult for teenagers to form meaningful connections within their community.

Rather than see themselves as part of the nuclear community, they saw themselves as outsiders (strangers) within the community.

The above findings are in line with Makwakwa's (2011) study, which emphasises the importance of parental support/presence. Focusing on parenting styles, parental behaviour and their effects on children's behaviour, Makwakwa's (2011) shows that there is a relationship between parenting styles and children's social behaviour outcomes. Parents are the primary agents of the socialization process and contribute significantly to the development of children. They play fundamental role in modelling the behaviour of children, whether directly or indirectly, and positively or negatively (Bornstein, 2000; Griffin, 2003).

The finding also reiterates Stettin's (2012) study, which showed that parenting and associated variables do contribute to both developmental and socialisation processes in teenagers' positive conformation to societal norms. In simple terms, parental presence serves as not only a milestone for development of positive view of the society, but also influences the process of conforming to the existing norms of the society, hence, how teenagers interact, relate, and make sense of the world around them are dependent on the parenting they receive (Roman, 2014).

Implicitly, the parents-children relationship provides the enabling environment for the development of children's sense of security and belonging in most communities (Canavan, 2014; Cheryl, 2012). The relationship creates elements such as support, involvement, warmth, approval and setting of firm boundaries, through which children conform to norms and aspire for different things within their community (Cheryl, 2012). These elements also provide opportunities for children to forge bonds within the larger community, for without them, children will find it difficult to engage with others and actively participate in community activities.

PARENTAL ABSENCE: A MEDIUM FOR CRIMINALITY AND OTHER ANTI-SOCIAL ACTIVITIES (Discussion)

The lack of connection to the community and poor self-esteem developed from experience of absent parenting had significant implications in the teenagers' engagement in anti-social activities, according to the data. These behaviours include - a) associations and gang memberships, b) alcohol abuse and drug additions, c) dropping out from school, d) engagement in crime and petty criminal activities and e) violence and aggressive behaviours towards authorities and ordinary people within their communities.

A. Associations and Gang Membership: As the study revealed that most participants were involved with unsavoury people and gangs as means of creating protective walls for themselves. This, in turn, forced them to become involved in anti-social behaviours, frowned upon within the society, although, generally accepted within the gang/associations, engagement in them becomes easily justified by the teenagers. The idea that absent parenthood can motivate engagement in gang membership and anti-social behaviours is in line with the existing knowledge and theoretical background. Children who develop with absent parents are more likely to cultivate behavioural problems that goes contrary to the social norms. Usually, these problems tend to be a defence that children use to protect their deep feelings of abandonment, fear and insecurity (Merritt, 2018).

Lack of parental supervision is said to be a contributing factor in associating with the wrong people and this is in line with the different theories used in this study - the social learning theory and Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Social learning theory, proposed by Albert Bandura, emphasizes the importance of observing, modelling, and imitating the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. The theory considers how both environmental and cognitive factors interact to influence human learning and behaviour. As the findings indicate, there is high level of gang activities amongst these participating teenagers as absence of parents creates the

"need to belong." This need is accomplished by gang membership.

An understanding of the importance of parental attachment strengthens the fourth level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs' elements - self-worth, accomplishments, and respect. Maslow's inclusion of the desire for reputation or respect from others (status and prestige) as the second category of self-esteem needs, is a demonstration of other people's validation. Teenagers who are neglected are said to suffer from low self-esteem and lack of confidence. Maslow explains that internal esteem comprises of support, love and care that teenagers experience and which can assist them to be confident (Lambert, 2018). Lack of these elements, consequently, leads teenagers to feel a lack of love and unappreciated. This in turn, affects their self-esteem, as well as how they value and see their place and others within their society.

B. Alcohol Abuse and Drug Addiction: The study revealed that neglect or absence of parents lead teenagers to indulge in substances abuse which was aggravated by the fact, that most parents have alcohol problem, therefore, lack the ability to care and supervise their children and sobriety to their children. Majority of teenagers interviewed, hence, are heavy drinkers.

These findings are in line with a study conducted by Moyo (2014) which indicated that parents used mainly an authoritative parenting style across ethnic groups. Another study that focused on parental behaviour and its effects on children's behavioural outcomes, suggested that - parental control, non-monitoring and non-limit-setting predicted high rates of substance abuse among teenagers, (Barbera & Ericson, 2006). Parents with little empathy often neglect their children and just lack caring aspects as parents, which in turn leaves children feeling lonely and questioning their own self-worth, (Chandler, 2015). This indicates that neglectful parenting has lifelong effects on the well-being of teenagers as it catches up with them one way or the other, and can be manifested through different behavioural patterns.

The findings of this study revealed that majority

of teenagers are into different types of substances which they started experimenting with at an early age. Glue, thinners, petrol and cigarettes are started with as early as 11 years and are at their highest amongst neglected teenagers. It was revealed that substances like dagga, cigarettes, *nyaope*, crystal meth and cocaine are the most common and easily accessible type of drugs by the teenagers. Some of the teenagers sell them in school which led them to conflicting with the law and being expelled.

C. Dropping out from Schools: The present researcher's findings also revealed that most teenagers who are neglected or unsupervised tend to drop out of school more than the children who live with their parents full time. This aspect is associated with other several behavioural problems ranging from substances abuse and teenage pregnancy for girls.

This is in line with Ralph, (2012) who indicated that residents of rural environments are exposed to unique stressors absent in urban environments, such as geographic isolation, restricted social networks, and limited community resources (Ralph, 2012). These stressors are associated with increased rates of risky adolescent behaviour, therefore, compared to urban and suburban youth, rural youth are more likely to abuse substances, bring weapons to school, and have sexual inappropriate sexual relationships.

According to recent studies, parent support is connected to positive outcome, such as, good self-esteem, advantages in adolescents' health and wellbeing (Hoeve, et al., 2009; Scheier & Hansen, 2014; Tol, Songs & Jordons, 2013), in contrast, lack of support is related to delinquent behaviour.

D. Violent and aggressive behaviour towards authorities and ordinary people within the community

As indicated by the data, teenagers who grew up without their parents have high level of aggression. As a result of this, most of them had become involved in different criminal activities including assaults, vandalisation of properties (in homes or other social environments. Engaging in such activities becomes a way of expressing their lack of connection to the community, as they are less inhibited by societal values and social norms.

This finding is in line with Hoeve (2009) who indicated that there is a correlation between parental care/ and positive outcome, such as, good self-esteem and in adolescents' health and wellbeing (Hoeve, et al., 2009; Scheier & Hansen, 2014; Tol, Songs & Jordons, 2013). In the absence of parental support, children find it easier to engage

in delinquent behaviour, as there is limited social inhibitions. While parental support makes children feel safe, loved, and cared for, its absence empowers engagement in delinquent behaviours, which are carried over into the teenage years.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings, two significant recommendations can be made

To Vhembe Local Communities: There is a need for awareness campaigns that can serve as information-sharing amongst parents. As many parents do not value parenting styles as such, and little attention is paid to positive parenting among teenagers, educating parents so that they can provide early learning experiences could be an important empowerment to motivate more parental engagement in the life of children.

To Policy-Makers: There is need for new policies and legislation that prioritise children's rights. In the absence of many cases of absense of parenting, legislation could force parents and communities devote more resources to being involved in children's lives. Legislation could also ensure that there is congruence between children's rights and parental responsibility/expectations.

CONCLUSION

In exploring how parents' absence in the lives of teenagers motivates disposition to engagement in criminal activities, from the experience of selected teenagers at a child and youth care centre in the Limpopo Province, few key issues stand out. Firstly, that living without parents in South Africa in the early stages of teenagers came with significant challenges.

Some of such challenges include - poor economic living conditions, lack of new and basic social skills, economic needs; the remedying of which are necessary for survival and navigating the different social situations in teenagers' communities. Secondly, that the presence of these challenges substantially brings about feelings of neglect and abandonments; development of poor self-esteem, lack of connection to the community, which made it easy for the teenagers to detach themselves from their community and develop a social outlook that easily justifies becoming part of inappropriate associations (gangs).

These conditions predispose teenagers to engage in criminal activities, as well as in other anti-social activities such as alcohol and drug addiction, dropping out from school, engagement in criminal activities, as well as in violent and aggressive behaviours towards authorities and ordinary people within their communities.

These can that unavailability and absence of parents in the lives of children have the ability to create negative emotional, psychological and physical impact on the well-being of teenagers. At teenage years, people can draw on their childhood experiences for a sense of belonging within their communities. Living without their parents at childhood can particularly create a feeling of abandonment and lack of connection to their community which can make teenagers feel as strangers in their communities and encourage engagement in different social vices.

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.14>**(DIS)ENABLERS OF POWER AND/OR POLICY: THE TWO-FOLD INFLUENCE OF TEACHER UNIONS ON SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND PROFESSIONAL MANAGEMENT****Thembinkosi Zwane**University of Johannesburg
zwanetrevor01@gmail.com**David Matsepe**University of Johannesburg
DMatsepe@sadtu.org.za**Abstract**

The continually evolving dynamics of educational governance on a global scale have led to increased involvement of teacher unions in both school governance and professional management. This study investigates the two-fold effects of teacher unions, positioning them as both facilitators and obstacles within the dynamics of school leadership processes. Utilizing instructional theory as a framework, this study examines the ways in which union operates and power dynamics that influence the formation of schools, particularly regarding decision-making processes, professional accountability, and the stability of leadership. Grounded in a qualitative framework aligned with the principles of the constructive paradigm, this study employed semi-structured interviews and document analysis conducted in selected public schools. The findings indicated that although unions are expected to engage collaboratively in advocating for teacher rights and ensuring compliance with policy, they often hinder leadership functions through politically motivated interventions and unclear role delineations. These tensions reveal policy uncertainties and highlight the necessity for a robust framework to manage union involvement while preserving the integrity of school reform initiatives. The conclusion of the study presents recommendations for enhancing professional collaboration strategies.

Keywords: Policy influence; power relations; power dynamics, collaboration and obstruction; union participation

Introduction and background to the study

The evolution of South African education following the establishment of democracy in 1994 has led to significant changes in school governance and professional management. The focal point of this transformation is the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, which was enacted to decolonise educational processes that appeared to undermine and exhibit unfair treatment towards stakeholders who should equally share in the benefits of education (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Consequently, the Schools Act sought to enhance democratic participation in school governance by transferring authority to the school governing bodies (SGBs). While the

concept aimed to improve accountability and foster community engagement, new participants emerged within this governance frame work, notably the teacher union, which has experienced significant growth in the post-apartheid era (Davids, 2023).

Historical evidence indicates that teacher unions have significantly contributed to the advocacy for educators' rights, leading initiatives focused on social justice, and influencing educational policies in the post-apartheid context (Khumalo, 2019). However, their participation, particularly in the management and governance at the school level, presents both opportunities and challenges.

On one hand, unions serve as significant stakeholders, contributing to transparency, professional development, and collective bargaining. On the other hand, their participation and intervention in managerial, administrative, and governance processes frequently result in confusion, conflict, and tension, particularly in instances where the distinctions between management and governance are not clearly delineated (Kezar & Dizon, 2021).

The role of teacher unions in professional management and governance presents two-fold aspect: it can act both as a facilitator and an obstacle, influencing collaborative decision-making while potentially undermining leadership and the fundamental operations of the school (Msila, 2022). This duality warrants a thorough investigation. Thus, this paper explores the intricacies of how unions engage in governance and management within public schools, examining the factors that enable and constrain their participation. This study examines the perspectives of principals, teacher union representatives, SGB members, and school management team (SMT) members to investigate the intersections of policy, power, and professionalism in practice.

There has been an increasing concern among educational stakeholders regarding the role of teacher unions in school governance, particularly in relation to staff appointments for curriculum delivery and the disciplinary procedures implemented within the school (Mafisa, 2017). Subjective evidence primarily indicates that union representatives may exert undue pressure on principals and SMTs, particularly in under-resourced or politically volatile school environments (Myburgh, Poggenpoel & Kgabo, 2017). This approach to governance compromises the autonomy and stability of school leaders, frequently undermining transparency and accountability. Yet, research indicates that when unions engage constructively, they can reinforce the democratic ethos of schools, enhance governance practices, and promote teacher participation in school governance (Stevenson, 2014).

The insufficiently explored impact of teacher unions is further complicated by the intersection of

roles between the aims of policy and actual practice. While the Schools Act distinctly delineates the roles of governance and professional management for stakeholders, in practice, these boundaries are frequently blurred and contested, as adherence to these guidelines is often lacking (Cowen & Strunk, 2014). Stakeholders, including principals, SMTs, and union representatives, must navigate these boundaries while contending with limited resources, high accountability pressures, and conflicting mandates (Constantinides, 2022). Some educational institutions demonstrate that union activity enhances responsiveness to the needs of educators, thereby fostering a sense of shared responsibility. In contrast, at other educational institutions, the presence of teacher unions contributes to uncertainty, exacerbating mistrust and fostering a sense of institutional disinterest (Msila, 2022).

From a methodological standpoint, this study employs a qualitative approach situated within the social constructivist paradigm to produce context-sensitive data. The objective is to transcend superficial descriptions of union conflict and delve into the lived experiences of school leaders and stakeholders in governance. This approach recognizes that knowledge and the operation of teacher unions are influenced by social, historical, and institutional contexts. This investigation is positioned as both concerning and constructive in its orientation, as we contend that unchecked union dominance and leadership indifference can significantly compromise the functionality and quality of education within schools (Mincu, 2022). It is constructive in that it aims to highlight conditions under which union and school leaders operate within a professional governance model that fosters mutual respect, enhances learner outcomes, and promotes a shared vision (Greany, 2018).

We target to identify the factors that inform policy development and governance protocols, which facilitate a professional and collaborative relationship between the union, SGB, and SMT, as well as the availability of a training framework. Therefore, this research significantly enhances the existing literature on school governance by exploring the influence of teacher unions

in shaping both governance structures and professional leadership within educational institutions. It is essential to understand that the influence of the teacher union cannot be perceived in binary terms; rather, it should be comprehended through a clear lens that considers institutional interactions, policy interpretations, and power negotiations (Lyon, 2023). As the education system worldwide continues to grapple with issues of poor performance, low quality, inequality, imbalances, and governance instability, understanding the dual role of teacher unions as both protectors and disruptors becomes increasingly important.

Research Aim and Objectives

Research aim

To explore critically the two-fold influence of teacher unions as both enablers and disablers in the governance and professional management of public schools, with specific focus on policy, institutional and power dynamics shaping their involvement.

Research objectives

1. To inspect how teacher unions influence decision-making process in school governance and professional management at a public school.
2. To explore the institutional and policy factors that enable or disable effective collaboration between teacher union, school leadership and professional management of public schools.

Main research question and sub-research questions

Main research question

How do teacher union teacher unions function as enablers and/or disenables of power and influence in the governance and professional management of public schools?

Sub-research questions

1. What are the effects of teacher union involvement in school leadership, decision-making and accountability in public schools?

2. How do norms and policy frameworks in institutions shape the way teacher union engage with school governance and professional management?

Literature review: Making sense of the relative significance of dual influence of teacher union of school leadership

The influence of teacher union in education: international and local perspective

On a global scale, teacher unions are perceived as advocates for the rights of educators, striving to enhance working conditions and establish a foundation for equitable access to education (Medadi & Mahdavi, 2024). In countries such as Canada, Finland, and various regions of the United States, teacher unions have demonstrated a constructive role in enhancing education by contributing to the maintenance of professional standards, curriculum development, and systematic improvement (Darling-Hammond, 2017). In these countries, unions are frequently perceived as working alongside the government to ensure that school improvement initiatives are rooted in the realities of the classroom, while also drawing upon professional expertise. However, the influence on teacher opinion varies across different nations. In certain jurisdictions, including the United States and the United Kingdom, detrimental frameworks of labour relations have generated conflict between the interests of unions and the demands of policy (Lucio, Koukiadaki & Tavora, 2019). Consequently, this leads to strikes, absences, negotiations, and concerns regarding deadlocks. In Latin America, unions have historically exerted significant political influence; however, this has often resulted in resistance to performance improvements and weakened teacher accountability (Ross Schneider, 2022).

In South Africa, teacher unions have played a crucial role in both political and professional spheres since the constraints of apartheid have been relaxed. Thus, their role in the post-1994 era has expanded beyond labour representation to include participation in policymaking, engagement in transformation agendas, and advocacy for ed-

ucation (Mafisa, 2017). The South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) is recognized as the largest teachers' union and has played an important role in shaping discussions surrounding professional codes and standards, curriculum, and school governance (Sibiya, 2017). However, both emerging and seasoned scholars in this domain contend that this influence is not consistently beneficial. There is an increasing concern regarding union-led disruptions within educational institutions, encompassing issues such as interference in staff appointments and resistance to disciplinary actions, particularly in no-fee schools situated in township and rural regions (Myburgh, Poggenpoel & Kgabo, 2017).

The effect of teacher union on school governance

Within the South African educational framework, as outlined in the Schools Acts, the responsibility for school governance is entrusted to the SGBs. However, teacher unions are not members of the SGBs, which leads to confusion as they exert considerable informal influence over the management of schools without a formal accountability mechanism (Msila, 2014; 2022). This dynamic is also observed in the international context. For example, in countries like the United Kingdom, school governors operate independently from unions; however, union mobilization, lobbying, and consultation processes do indirectly influence decisions made within the school (Dobbins & Christ, (2019). In Finland, teacher participation in governance is institutionalized through professional councils, facilitating collaboration rather than contention (Wallenius & Varjo, 2024). In South Africa, the participation of unions in school governance is frequently evident through formal structures, particularly when union representatives have served as teacher representatives on SGBs and even on SMTs (Davids, 2023).

Individuals aligned with unions often intersect between governance and professional management, particularly when significant decisions regarding employment and the allocation of school resources are made (Brunner, Hyman & Ju, 2020). In such context, union interference creates

tension, particularly during promotional opportunities, thereby undermining democratic processes and fostering perceptions of nepotism and bias. It is essential to recognize that collaboration can enhance participatory governance by intensifying teachers' voices and ensuring that governance decisions are reflected in the realities of the classroom (Samson, 2019). In effectively operating schools, unions are observed collaborating successfully with the SGBs to foster inclusive decision-making and to mediate conflict. The outcomes are primarily influenced by the political culture of the school, the institutional context in which governance occurs, and the leadership capabilities of the principals.

Assessing the degree of support or interference of teacher unions in professional management

A significant concern in the field of literature is the influence of teacher unions on the management of professional practices. In South Africa, the responsibilities of professional management, including teacher performance evaluation, curriculum planning, and school development planning, are regarded as the duties of the SMT under the leadership of the principal (Tapala, 2021). Nevertheless, their engagement in the affairs of professional management schools is shaped by the pressures surrounding management decisions, particularly concerning issues such as teaching timetabling, professional development initiatives, and disciplinary actions (Ntuli & Mahlangu, 2023). The significant literature, although occasionally rooted in valid labour issues, can at times undermine the autonomy of school leadership and obscure the lines of accountability.

Msila (2022) discusses this parallel leadership, wherein union actors function alongside formal leadership structures, often leading to confusion and challenging established authority and power. Similar findings are reported even on a global scale; for instance, in the United States of America, unions are perceived as hindering principal-led reforms in school classifications, which are viewed as underperforming and consequently contributing to delays in implementation and leadership turnover (Cash, 2018). Concurrently, it is important to recognize that unions should not

be perceived as inherently negative due to their contributions. Teacher unions are recognized for their knowledge and professional insights that, when effectively utilized, can contribute to and strengthen school reform initiatives (Gindin & Finger, 2013). In high-performing systems such as those implemented in Ontario, Canada, unions play a necessary role in professional learning committees (PLCs) and significantly enhance data-driven decision-making (Osmond-Johnson, Campbell & Faubert, 2019). This suggests that the issue lies not in union involvement itself, but rather in the absence of a robust framework that adequately defines boundaries, collaborative norms, and expectations.

Policy uncertainties and school tensions on the precepts of institutional theory

Institutional theory emphasizes the significance of formal norms, rules, and structures in influencing organizational behaviour. In South Africa, the role of teacher unions in school leadership is not clearly defined, highlighting the need for further research in this area (Msila, 2022). Although policies like the Schools Act and the Employment Equity Act delineate the responsibilities of SMTs, SGBs and unions, the implementation of these roles is inconsistent (Van Wyk & Marumolola, 2012). The situation is exacerbated by inconsistent enforcement, gaps in leadership capacity, and political alliances that often protect union representatives from accountability, resulting in a pervasive sense of unfairness in leadership overall. The identifiable policy gaps observed are not exclusive to South Africa; similar tensions exist in Brazil, where the union-led processes for appointments and promotions create a cycle of support that undermines or diminishes the value of educational reforms (Do Vale, 2016).

In Kenya, teacher unions have been accused of undermining the teacher appraisal system due to perceived threats to job security (Otieno, 2022). These cases highlight the significance of institutional clarity and the necessity for robust oversight mechanisms. Growing scholarship emphasizes the need for a renewed focus on regulatory frameworks that allow constructive union engagement while safeguarding the professional

autonomy and independence of schools (Stevenson, 2020). Consequently, proposals are formulated regarding the establishment of governance protocols that elucidate stakeholder roles and provide structured platforms for dialogue between unions and principals. This framework can function as institutional cushions, thereby reducing the risk of politicization and fostering a shared commitment to learner outcomes (Kruger, Beckman & Du Plessis, 2024).

Teacher unions play a fundamental role in educational leadership and governance, while also having the potential to disrupt professional governance. Their influence is largely shaped by the political and cultural contexts that dictate how power is utilized and negotiated within schools (Dobbins & Christ, 2019). While their engagement in educational settings can enhance equity and democratic participation, their participation in professional matters necessitates clear policy articulation and strengthened leadership capabilities (Kruger, Beckman & Du Plessis, 2024). By integrating both national and international perspectives and inputs, this study aims to contribute to a more cohesive understanding of union influence, thereby providing insights for improvements in policy and leadership development, particularly within the public school system.

Theoretical framework: Towards institutional theory

This study is based on institutional theory, which provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how structures, norms, and power relations influence behaviour within educational organizations (Lammers, Garcia, Putnam & Mumby, 2014). This theory is particularly relevant for examining the complex role of teacher unions in school governance and professional management, as it offers insight into how formal and informal structures coexist within schools as institutional systems (Diehl & Golann, 2023). At the core of this concept is the understanding that organizations do not operate in isolation; instead, they are situated within a broader institutional environment that includes regulatory, normative, and cultural-cognitive elements. These elements influence the behaviour of individuals and

groups, not solely through explicit mandates, but through a collective understanding of what is deemed appropriate, authentic, and expected (Tolbert, 2022). Within the realm of public education, this suggests that the practices of governance, the decisions made by leadership, and the involvement of unions are influenced by both formal educational policies and the informal norms that have developed over time.

Consequently, the application of institutional theory allows for investigation into the functioning of teacher unions within the educational framework. While teacher unions may not exist as a formalized structure within school governance, their ongoing involvement with school leadership frameworks establishes them as significant contributors whose actions significantly influence institutional legitimacy, leadership dynamics, and the implementation of policies (Bingham & Burch, 2023). This theory elucidates the mechanisms through which teacher unions can exert influence in decision-making arenas, even in contexts where their participation may not be formally sanctioned. It also highlights the constraints that principals and SGB may experience because of these dynamics. Institutional theory is particularly pertinent when analysing the dual role of teacher unions as both facilitators and impediments to power and influence in the governance of schools (Matos, 2022). Unions support institutional objectives such as equity, participatory governance, and fair labour practices. They serve to enhance professional identity, promote teacher agency, and occasionally act as intermediaries in disputes between staff and school administration (Rajendran, 2025). As disablers, they foster a challenge to managerial authority, engage in the politicization of school-level appointments, and undermine accountability policies. This theory addresses these contradictions by recognizing that multiple and sometimes conflicting institutional logics can co-exist within the same environment. Moreover, institutional theory highlights the ways in which stakeholders react to institutional pressures (Dhanda, Sarkis & Dhavale, 2022). Some principals believe it is essential to establish stages for

engaging in negotiation adaptation, thereby striving to balance professional management with union expectations in a manner that maintains both organizational stability and stakeholder relationships.

To advance beyond a simplistic dual narrative, institutional theory is appropriate as it examines the institutional conditions and power dynamics that allow for the persistence of dual roles (Castellanza & Woywode, 2023). This highlights the ways in which teacher unions maintain their influence in the professional realm and the strategies leaders employ to navigate institutional uncertainties (Yreck, 2023). By concentrating on both documented and undocumented rules that shape organizational behaviour, institutional theory provides essential perspectives for understanding the inherent tensions and potential for transformation within public school governance (Diehl & Golann, 2023).

Research Methodology

Research design

We employed a qualitative case study approach to thoroughly investigate the influence of teacher unions on school governance and professional management. The case study methods allow researchers to gain a more profound understanding of the dynamics present within specific schools and the ways in which teacher unions impact decision-making processes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

Sampling

These refers to the process of selecting a subset of individuals or observations from a larger population to make inferences about that population. It is a fundamental aspect of research methodology, allowing researchers to draw conclusions without the need to study the entire population (Maree, 2020). The chosen sample should ideally represent the characteristics of the population to ensure the validity of the findings. The study employed purposeful sampling to select participants who are significant stakeholders in school governance, professional management, and teacher unions (Patton, 2015). We incorporated the school principals, who serve as the heads of their institutions and are anticipated to engage with the

teachers' union. Additionally, we consulted teachers who are members of the SMT and SGB structures within their respective schools. We also gathered insights from union representatives who offered perspectives on the role of unions in school governance and professional management. This sampling strategy ensured that participants possessed relevant experiences that enhance the understanding of the dual impact of teacher unions.

Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with carefully chosen participants. The interviews were facilitated with questions designed to investigate the perceptions, experiences, and opinions of stakeholders concerning the impact of teacher unions on school governance and management practices (Bryman, 2016). The questions addressed themes such as the involvement of unions in decision-making processes, the challenges and opportunities present in collaborative initiatives, and the effects on leadership dynamics. Furthermore, a thorough examination of documents was conducted, including those pertaining to governance processes, union agreements, minutes from the SMT and SGB meetings, as well as school policies related to teacher union participation, to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the formal roles and influences involved (Bowen, 2009). The significance of these documents lies in their role in data triangulation and in elucidating the alignment of union policies with school governance structures.

Gatekeepers' considerations

Participants were made aware of the objectives and intentions of the study, and their consent was secured before the commencement of data collection. Confidentiality standards were strictly followed to safeguard the identities of participants. Additionally, we ensured the anonymity of the information provided and maintained the confidentiality of sensitive data (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without facing any consequences.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to examine the transcribed interviews, which were presented in

verbatim quotations (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This enabled us to discern themes, patterns, and similarities concerning the dual impact of teacher unions on school governance. Specific themes centred on the role of unions in school leadership, the equilibrium between union influence and the autonomy of school management, and the implications for school reform. Documents were analysed in conjunction with the interviews to triangulate findings and to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the formalized relationship between teacher unions and school governance.

Validity and reliability

We implemented triangulation from various data sources to strengthen the credibility and reliability of the study's findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants selected were requested to review the preliminary findings to ensure accuracy and precision regarding their perspectives and to confirm that these are transcribed correctly (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell & Walter, 2016). A peer review process was employed to assess the methodology and interpretation of the findings, thereby ensuring the robustness of the analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Limitations

The research focused on four schools situated in the Limpopo, Sekhukhune region, which were categorized as public primary and secondary schools, thereby constraining the ability to generalize the findings (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Considering the qualitative nature of the research, there is a potential for researcher bias. To mitigate this, strategies such as member checking and debriefing are employed to ensure a more accurate interpretation of the data (Shenton, 2004).

Discussion of findings

The following sections show discussion of findings which will be done through identified themes as outlined in table 1 below. The verbatim responses from participants will be shown in *italics* to highlight their inputs. The code used to identify principals is PSCH-1 which means principal of school 1 et cetera; SMT-1 meaning school management team member of school 1 et cetera; SGB-1 which means school governing body of school 1 et cetera and Union1 for union

representative of school 1 et cetera.

Table 1: Themes
1. <i>Conflicting views on union interference and/or support.</i>
2. <i>Disruptions in professional management of SMT authority</i>
3. <i>Ambiguous lines between unionism and governance.</i>
4. <i>Teacher unions as enablers of empowerment and protection.</i>

Theme 1: Conflicting views on union interference and/or support

Unions are acknowledged as essential entities in promoting transparency, championing the rights of educators, and facilitating professional growth. Researchers including Kezar and Dizon (2021) and Msila (2022) emphasized that unions function as platforms for teacher advocacy, thereby empowering educators to participate in decision-making processes. This holds significant relevance in contexts where the rights of educators are jeopardized, as unions are also urged to play a role in fostering an inclusive and accountable educational framework. Participants did reflect this perspective, particularly in cases where unions are regarded as supportive. The Unionist-2 remarked that *“unions are essential as they prevent principals from acting solely according to their own discretion. They provide us with protection.”* This underscores the significance of unions in protecting teachers from managerial overreach, thereby ensuring that principals do not unilaterally impose decisions without considering the interests of teachers. Furthermore, participants emphasized that unions serve as a protective shield against potential abuses, particularly in educational settings where principals may be perceived as unjust. For instance, SMT-1 noted that *“There are principals who engage in bullying behaviour towards teachers.”* The absence of the union would jeopardize the survival of many individuals, underscoring the crucial function that unions serve in safeguarding

and advocating for their rights. This is particularly evident in challenging school environments where obstacles to effective work persist. In a similar vein, a principal from school 3 expressed their perspective on this dynamic, noting, *“Sometimes you feel like you are not the leader of the school; the union has the final say,”* thereby highlighting the significant impact of union influence on the role of school leadership.

While unions can be perceived as enhancing school governance by promoting democratic methods, their participation in disciplinary actions, staff appointments, and decision-making processes can lead to conflict and confusion, particularly when their influence compromises the autonomy of school leadership. Mafisa (2017) and Myburgh, Poggenpoel, & Kgabo (2017) illustrate how union interference can undermine leadership by infringing upon the decision-making authority of school leaders, particularly when the boundaries between union influence and professional management are not clearly delineated. This assertion is clearly reflected in the participants' comments regarding the challenges that unions present in the context of school governance. PSCH-4 indicated that *“The union representatives participate in meetings; however, they do not advocate for the best interests of the learners Their actions often shield educators, even in instances of misconduct”*, highlighting the frustration experienced by the principal when union representatives prioritize the protection of teachers over the welfare of learners. PSCH-D also observed that *“If I wish to take disciplinary action against a teacher, I must first consider the potential response from their union. It is quite tiring”*. This highlights the complexities encountered by school leaders in asserting their authority, as they contend with union pressures and the potential repercussions of disciplining staff.

While teacher unions serve to protect and empower educators, their involvement in decision-making processes can undermine the authority of the principal and foster an environment characterized by tension. Participants indicated that unions serve as protectors while simultaneously posing challenges to effective leadership within

the context of school decision-making. Therefore, it is essential to establish clear boundaries and enhance collaboration between unions and school leadership to ensure that teacher rights are respected and effective management within schools is maintained.

Theme 2: Disruptions in professional management of SMT authority

The participation of teacher unions in school governance significantly influences the professional management of the SMT. One of the most significant consequences is the disruption that unions create in clearly delineating the distinctions between roles related to school governance and professional management. Msila (2022) highlights that unions obscure the boundaries of governance, leading to ambiguities regarding roles, authority, and accountability. This disruption presents a significant challenge to the effectiveness of SMT which are designed to concentrate on the daily management of the school and to ensure that teaching and learning proceed without interruption. The involvement of unions in management responsibilities frequently leads to a substantial undermining of the authority held by SMT. Participants emphasized this concern, as SMT-3 remarked, “*We cannot manage teachers professionally.*” Inquiring about their work inevitably leads to a discussion of union-related matters, highlighting the influence that unions exert on the management of schools. This sentiment was also reflected in School 1, where a teacher in SGB remarked that “*SMTs have to tread carefully or face union backlash,*” highlighting the caution that undermines leadership independence and decision-making. This reflection aligns with the findings in the reviewed literature, which indicate that union interference in critical aspects of school management, such as disciplinary procedures and staff appointments, is perceived as a barrier to effective leadership (Myburgh, Poggenpoel & Kgabo, 2017; Tapala, 2021).

The intersections between union and SMT roles create ambiguity and diminish the authority of SMT in their professional management functions. For instance, PSCH-2 remarked, “*Our*

SMT has good intentions, but when union members decline, we encounter a significant obstacle.” This statement highlights the challenges that principals and SMT encounter when implementing policies or making decisions, often facing resistance from unions. This power struggle is crucial as it undermines the capacity of the SMT to act decisively, which is essential for sustaining a stable and effective school environment. In their overlapping roles, unions frequently establish an environment in which the senior management team finds itself ineffective in its efforts to propel the school toward improvement. A further complication was highlighted by the SMT-3, who noted that “*unions are sometimes behaving as if they are part of the SMT,*” despite not holding formal positions within it. This emphasizes the way unions exert influence, thereby not only undermining the authority of the SMT but also distorting the clear roles and responsibilities essential for effective school governance.

In essence, the informal involvement of unions in school management undermines the effective operation of the institution. In politically volatile environments, school unions can significantly delay important decisions related to school management (Ntuli & Mahlangu, 2023). In situations where resources are limited for effective management, union interference exacerbates the challenges encountered by school leaders, hindering their ability to execute their responsibilities effectively. In more severe instances, this may lead to an increased turnover rate within leadership, serving as a significant indicator of inadequate governance and reduced leadership capacity (Cash, 2018). Therefore, the involvement of unions in school leadership has the unintended consequence of disrupting professional school management. The challenges faced by senior management teams in leading effectively due to union influence result in a governance structure marked by confusion, fear, and a lack of accountability. Consequently, these disruptions not only erode trust and communication between school leadership and unions but also jeopardize the capacity of schools to make decisions that positively benefit both teachers and

learners.

Theme 3: Ambiguous lines between unionism and governance.

It is widely recognized that governance and educational management function along distinct lines, with SGBs tasked with governance responsibilities while SMTs oversee professional management. However, in practice, particularly within township schools, this is not the reality, as unions frequently assert influence in governance matters, utilizing their presence in the SMT or their closeness to the school environment to shape significant decisions (Msila, 2022; 2024). This results in ambiguity regarding accountability, power dynamics, and decision-making processes. The impact of unions is primarily evident in informal positions, particularly when teachers affiliated with unions assume leadership roles or serve as union representatives during governance meetings. The Unionist-3 articulated that “*Unions provide us with a voice.*” Previously, educators were merely instructed on their responsibilities.

This contribution highlights the historical transition in authority from independent school leadership to increasingly contested spaces, where unions are perceived as advocating for their rights, occasionally at the expense of collaborative school governance. While unions have contributed positively to the empowerment of teachers and the promotion of transparency, their participation in school governance has resulted in tensions and unclear jurisdictional boundaries. In certain instances, unions provide significant support and interpretation of policies. SMT-2 noted, “*They [unions] train us about our rights and even on school policies,*” while PSCH-2 affirmed, “*In some cases, unions assist with school policy clarity. Conflicts do not occur consistently*”. These insights suggest that union contributions are not inherently adversarial, as they can provide professional guidance and enhance policy comprehension when partnerships are effectively managed. Nonetheless, these insights exist side by side with the growing concern that unions are overstepping into governance and management roles. While the protective function of unions is both necessary and valuable, as noted by

Unionist-1 who states, “*When teachers are victimised, it's the union that steps in and says, 'this is not right',*” it also prompts an examination of the boundary between advocacy and interference. The presence of unions within governance structures leads to role confusion, diminished accountability, and conflicting priorities (Dobbins & Christ, 2019; David, 2023).

Union representatives are urged to prioritize employee wellness, which may impede their ability to remain attentive to school development goals, consequently undermining governance processes. This influence thus becomes problematic, particularly in politically influenced schools where resources are limited, and there is instability in leadership along with a lack of formal oversight mechanisms that facilitate unions in filling leadership vacuums. The model of union integration within governance structures likely necessitates the implementation of transparency through professional councils. This approach promotes collaboration while maintaining accountability, like practices observed in countries like Finland (Wallenius & Vario, 2024). In contrast, South Africa exhibits a more informal engagement in which unionism disrupts the educational process rather than complementing governance. Therefore, although the involvement of unions is both significant and crucial, challenges persist within schools that are not solely related to the presence of unions. Rather, the lack of structured collaboration among the various frameworks hinders the ability of unions, SMT and SGB to function synergistically instead of competitively.

Theme 4: Teacher unions as enablers of empowerment and protection.

Although teacher unions frequently face criticism for their impact on governance and management within schools, they play a crucial role in supporting and empowering educators. Unions are not merely isolated entities; they play a vital and transformative role in promoting professional development, influencing educational policy, and advocating for teachers' rights in ways that can enhance teaching and learning outcomes (Gindin & Finger, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2017). In regions like Ontario, Canada, unions

are recognized as significant participants in professional learning committees (PLCs), collaborating effectively with administrators and policy-makers to develop progressive policies grounded in professional learning (Osmond-Johnson, Campbell & Faubert, 2019). Such examples illustrate that when unions are integrated into the broader professional landscape, they can function as a powerful vehicle for the attainment of high-quality education.

Unions like the South African Democratic Teachers Union have played a pivotal role in advancing educational improvement and enhancing teacher development. They have ensured that teachers are not only protected but also actively involved in shaping the educational landscape (Sibiya, 2017). Additionally, Mafisa (2017) and Kruger, Beckman, and Du Plessis (2024) assert that unions function as gatekeepers, holding the education system accountable while enabling teachers to assert their professional agency. However, these beneficial contributions are accompanied by certain complexities. The participant acknowledged that challenges emerge when union representatives occupy dual roles in both union and school leadership, leading to potential tension. PSCH-3 emphasized the question, *“Are they [union leaders] teachers or administrators?”* At times, their behaviour appears to embody characteristics of both roles. This sentiment was similarly expressed by SMT-1, who remarked, *“There are too many hats.”* On one occasion, an individual holds the position of SMT, and on another, they serve as a union representative. It is perplexing. These quotations illustrate the complexities arising from role dualism and the lack of distinct boundaries. The challenge lies not only in the existence of unions but also in the lack of clarity surrounding the roles of professional and governance spaces.

SMT-2 articulated the necessity of *“clearly defining the role of the union”*. Currently, there exists a degree of ambiguity; this confusion extends to daily administrative operations. In this context, PSCH-3 noted that *“Even when you call a meeting, the union wants to approve the agenda. That does not align with their designated respon-*

sibilities” These comments highlight the necessity of balancing union empowerment and teacher advocacy with clearly defined roles that do not encroach upon the domain of school management. Ultimately, teacher unions possess significant potential to serve as facilitators of professional empowerment. The historical role in labour advocacy, along with the ability to enhance professional development and impact educational policy, renders them essential stakeholders in the educational process. However, in the absence of well-defined boundaries, their participation is likely to compromise professional management and obscure accountability. In progressing ahead, it is important to develop a framework that fosters collaboration between union and management while ensuring the autonomy of school leadership, thereby sustaining both teacher empowerment and effective school governance.

Conclusion and recommendations

The research explored the dual impact of teacher unions on school governance and professional management, analysing both the facilitators and obstacles in their role in shaping and influencing school leadership and decision-making processes. The findings indicate that teacher unions occupy a complex position within school governance, often serving as both facilitators and obstacles to effective management and leadership. Furthermore, teacher unions have demonstrated the capacity to enhance governance by promoting the professionalization of school leadership and supporting collective bargaining, which contributes to improved working conditions, equitable resource distribution, and fair practices. Unions play a crucial role in providing a voice for educators in the decision-making process, thereby fostering a collaborative environment that can enhance school governance and the way teaching practices are implemented.

Unions are occasionally perceived as obstructing decision-making due to their intense focus on bargaining power, which may conflict with the overarching goals of educational institutions. In certain instances, the participation of unions may lead to power imbalances that disrupt the effective functioning of school leadership between

union representatives and school administrators, consequently undermining and hindering the progress of school development. The study highlighted that teacher unions frequently impact the power dynamics within school leadership. While their role is to empower teachers regarding their rights, an increased union influence in management decisions may create tension, particularly when interests conflict with the strategic objectives of the SMT or SGB. Teacher Union has the potential to either endorse or impede school reform initiatives, primarily influenced by how closely their involvement corresponds with the overarching objectives of educational enhancement.

When unions collaborate with school management and donors, they can significantly enhance the effective implementation of school improvement reforms. Indeed, opposition from unions regarding matters like curriculum changes may hinder progress. Therefore, the following recommendations are presented: Schools' ought to strive for a governance model that fosters collaboration, enabling the active involvement of teacher unions in decision-making processes while preserving the autonomy of the SMT. This can be accomplished by formulating clear policies that delineate the roles and responsibilities of unions within school governance, while also promoting a culture of mutual respect and understanding. To reduce conflict and improve the effectiveness of unions in school governance, it is essential to prioritize the professional development of union leadership. This would equip them with the necessary skills to participate in constructive dialogues with school leaders and ensure that union activities are in harmony with the overarching educational objectives. It is essential for educational institutions to delineate distinct

roles between union representation and school administration. While it is important for the union to participate in decision-making, it is essential to ensure that their influence does not overshadow the leadership responsibilities of the Senior Management Team.

This can be accomplished by establishing governance mechanisms that allow for balanced participation while maintaining the operational independence of school management. Regular monitoring and evaluation of union involvement in school governance should be conducted to assess its impact on school performance and leadership effectiveness. This will aid in pinpointing areas where union involvement proves advantageous and highlight aspects that necessitate a redefinition of teacher union roles to guarantee effective functioning. This study illustrated that teacher unions can play both positive and negative roles in school leadership. By fostering collaboration, clarifying roles, and supporting professional development, unions can become powerful allies in driving school improvement reforms rather than obstacles. The recommendations provided aim to balance the benefits of union participation with the need for effective, independent school leadership, ensuring that school goals align with the broader mission of educational advancement.

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.15>**CONCEPT ANALYSIS: A COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT MODEL FOR HOME-BASED CARE WORKERS IN NORTH-WEST AND GAUTENG PROVINCES.****Motswasele-Sikwane Lily Keneilwe***Department of Nursing Science,
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Pretoria, South Africa.*<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7178-6130>**Abstract****Background**

Home-based care workers (HBCWs) are a vital component of efficient health systems. They provide a service to individuals in their own homes and communities who need caring assistance. They further ensure that the individual is receiving the full amount of care, and that the standard remains high with dignity and respect being always kept. Furthermore, the standard remains high with dignity and respect being always kept for patients.

Objectives: *The study aimed to develop a comprehensive support model for HBCWs who provide care to the community.*

Methods: *In-depth, semi-structured interviews were employed in an exploratory qualitative approach to collect data from managers and outreach team leaders in the Madibeng area of the North-West province and the Northern Tshwane region of Gauteng. Six managers and fourteen outreach team leaders were chosen for data collection using purposive sampling. Data was gathered until there were 17 participants, or saturation. Participation was completely voluntary, and discussions were held in secret.*

A concept analysis was done to explore the support attributes, clarify meaning, and understand its use within HBCWs, and context in Madibeng and Gauteng Sub Districts situated in the North-West and Gauteng province of South Africa.

Findings: *A positive work environment, effective resources, support, supervision, and compassion were findings of comprehensive support.*

Keywords

Work environment, resources, support, supervision, caring, home-based care workers, and concept analysis.

Introduction

The Well-being of Home-Based Care workers is essential for the effective functioning of health systems. The purpose of this study is to conceptualise the main concepts that emerged from the empirical data and literature review. The main concepts central to the development of a comprehensive support model for HBCWs who render

care to the community were identified from the emerging themes as a positive work environment, effective resources, support, supervision, and caring (UNAIDS, 2019). As a result, HBC has been proposed as part of a comprehensive, integrated, and flexible strategy for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWH) and their families' care, management, support, and therapy. (Iacono & Allen, 2011). HBC emphasizes the importance of family unity. It also highlights

a strong fundamental tenet of keeping traditional care patterns, which encourages family members, such as spouses, parents, and friends, to have a vital role in patient care (Olorunfemi, Ogunsola, Salako, and Alausa, 2012). The family

Home Based care workers (HBCWs), who are recruited from inside and around the local community by home-based care (HBC) organizations and trained to provide basic services as volunteer caregivers to persons in their homes, aid families in providing care (Sips, HaeriMazanderani, Schneider, Greeff, Barten & Moshabela, 2014).

Although many people recognize their value in bridging the social, cultural, and economic gaps that exist between the community and the formal healthcare system, the specifics of HBCWs' manage care are frequently misunderstood, and they are frequently declared to have substandard service delivery (Bhutta, Lassi, Pariyo, Huicho, 2010). There is also an idea that HBCWs' work is standardised and structured, as implied by the concept of 'packages of care' in the literature. HBCWs' caregiving patterns may vary depending on the client's gender, employment, and living conditions (Sips, Haeri Mazanderani, Schneider, Greeff, Barten, & Moshabela, 2014).

The emerging themes identified the main concepts central to the development of a comprehensive support model for HBCWs who provide community care as a positive work environment, effective resources, support, supervision, and caring. Following the clarification of all usages of the concept, important attributes were determined, as well as model cases, antecedents, consequences, and empirical referents. In this study, selected concepts are discussed with definitions of their attributes, antecedents, and consequences, and their attached conceptual meaning is then presented.

Furthermore, antecedents are conditions required to promote community support for HBCWs

is aided in accepting the patient's problems and giving them the required care and support, such as adherence to medical and nutritional requirements, in their households.

HBCWs are increasingly recognized as an important part of the healthcare human resource pool, particularly in resource-constrained situations. Several studies have shown that HBCWs play an important role in sharing the burden of care with the formal healthcare system and in improving specific health outcomes (Amoran *et al.* 2012).

providing services. To evaluate the model's success at the end of model implementation, consequences or outcomes are used as criteria for the continuous assessment of comprehensive support for HBCWs. The primary accomplishment of concept analysis is determining the defining attributes. It entails taking notes on the characteristics of the concept that appear repeatedly. Watson's theory of human caring, which served as a framework for this study, was included in the concept analysis (Watson, 2015). Clarifying the concept allows for the proper application of knowledge regarding comprehensive support for HBCWs and the development of a related theory.

Method of Concept Analysis

Phase I of the initial study involved gathering data through individual interviews with HBCWs and focus group interviews with outreach team leaders and managers and analysing data. The study aims to address their psychosocial, emotional, economic, and spiritual needs of HBCWs, and outreach team leaders and managers. Phase II involved using an exploratory, descriptive, and contextual phenomenology design with a qualitative approach to examine the participants' subjective experiences of support in a community setting. The natural setting for the study was health centres in Madibeng and Gauteng Sub-

Districts in the North- West and Gauteng provinces; these health centres were chosen because they are associated with comprehensive support; the relevant information was then obtained by reading and rereading thirty-two randomly selected articles from a large pool of search results, guided by data saturation

Key elements of the concept analysis: results
Walker and Avant (2019) have delineated multiple stages that ought to be employed in the process of concept analysis. Each stage will be explained in detail in the paragraphs that follow.

Selection of the concept of interest

The creation of a thorough support model for HBCWs operating in community healthcare settings was based on these key ideas. Sequeira (2014) defines conceptualization as the process of transforming abstract notions into useful and useful thoughts. The results of the study showed a lack of resources, supervision, and a healthy work atmosphere. A need identified by HBCWs is caring, which is at the heart of Watson's theory of human compassion.

Building a comprehensive support model for HBCWs who provide community care requires a supportive work environment, effective resources, supervision, and care, all of which were identified by the emergent themes. Additionally,

there is a chance that the idea could be constructed in several ways; in this case, the researcher must consider the conclusion of the analysis and determine which interpretation would best serve the study's objectives (Walker & Avant, 2019).

According to the 2010 Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary and Thesaurus, support is both a verb and a noun. Support is a verb that implies encouraging or assisting. It is showing someone that you approve of them and helping or supporting them. Another way to define support is as offering or being ready to help someone who needs it, in psychological, social, physical, and financial aspects, among many others (Akintola & Hangulu, 2014). Support is providing or being ready to help someone if they need it (Hornby, 2015).

In this study, support refers to the total support received by HBCWs. According to Moremi (2012), HBCWs experience distress and anxiety during home visits. The support of healthcare facility professionals and nurse managers is critical because it may affect the standard of care.

The following defining attributes of HBCW's support were obtained from these explanations: Defining attributes of HBCW's support are essential criteria in encouraging communication, reducing fear, controlling interaction, coping with esteem, and competence. The attributes of support are summarised in Table 6.2.

Table 1.1 Summary of attributes of support

Support	Defining attributes
Helping or encouraging somebody with supportive efforts Showing that one approves of somebody Providing or being ready to assist somebody if he or she needs help	Assisting in making it easier to achieve a goal Keeping in contact with others to exchange information Helping someone emotionally to deal effectively with challenges Having the necessary skills, information, help, and other resources to succeed Increasing the value, quality, or extent of something
Emotional support	Offering empathy, concern, affection, love, trust, acceptance, intimacy, encouragement, and caring
Informational support	Providing advice, guidance, suggestions, or useful information to someone Displays warmth and nurturance and has the potential to help individuals with problem-solving in difficult times
Companionship support	Increasing the skills and effectiveness in accomplishing tasks, including: Communication between individuals Outlining key opportunities Building relationships Facilitating interactions that result in outstanding performance Producing results from the direct efforts
Attributes	Good communication and interaction Encouraging Honesty Caring Friendliness Respect
Antecedents	Development and training of staff in relationship and communication skills Positive staff attitudes Empathy Reduction of occupational stress Improved working conditions that will translate into job satisfaction
Consequences	Enhanced sense of belonging Feeling secure and valued Employees challenge themselves more by undertaking tasks that initially seemed difficult to achieve Instilling confidence and self-efficacy Reduced turnover for the healthcare facility Improved patient care

Effective support increases HBCWs' self-esteem and confidence in their ability to handle a problem or provide care to patients.

The attributes of comprehensive support in this study include good communication and interaction between managers, outreach team leaders, HBCWs, and staff members in a variety of institutions. This may serve as the guiding principle for communication between healthcare facility staff, non-governmental organizations, and the Department of Health. HBCWs require assistance from the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and health facilities (Department of Health, 2011b).

The first definition states that support is defined as verbal and nonverbal communication between recipients and providers that reduces fears about the environment or situation and aids in decision-making (Mishra, 2014). Support serves as a link between community members, family, friends, health personnel, the government, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to obtain psychological, physical, and financial assistance (Department of Health, 2013). This definition is like the one used by Christensen and Grönvall (2011) in their study on the effects of support on anxiety levels during home-based care, where they define "support" as financial or spiritual assistance given to a person experiencing stress by community members and other family members, and friends.

Emotional support, esteem support, network support, tangible support, and informational support are all types of support (Anthony, 2015). Expressions of care and concern that meet people's emotional or affective needs are referred to as emotional support. When a need arises, support enables HBCWs to attend to patients in the community. According to Liveng (2010), support reduces stress and anxiety experienced by HBCWs during home-based care services. Lustbader et al. (2017) emphasize that clinic staff and supervisors must support HBCWs' psychological well-being and self-confidence to alleviate stress and

anxiety. According to Janakiraman, Parish, & Berry (2011), managers and outreach team leaders should encourage and support HBCWs to continue providing care to the community (Aantjes, Quinlan, & Bunders, 2014).

Antecedents

Furthermore, because work values are linked to work as shown in the defining characteristics, some values are targeted, such as particular patterns of behaviour (Bonnenberger, Aikins, Akweongo, & Wyss, 2014), including behaviours like working with people (Amoateng, Kalule-Sabiti, & Oladipo, 2015); the type of work and the environment, or the conditions and situations that people and organizations want.

Antecedents of Support

Effective patient care requires collaboration across healthcare facilities and between HBCWs and staff (WHO, 2011). Support cannot exist in the workplace unless there is a positive culture. Positive attitudes, empathy, interpersonal and communication skills training, occupational stress reduction, and better working circumstances are all components of a positive organizational culture, and they all contribute to increased job satisfaction (Moux, Juan, Marcos, & Soler, 2014:556). Training as a support will enable HBCWs to gain knowledge or skills through study, experience, or instruction, which can take the form of formal or informal training development (Akintola & Hangulu, 2014). The findings in the study were used to train the participants in this study. Effective support boosts HBCWs' self-esteem and belief in their ability to handle a problem or provide care to patients, which includes communication that demonstrates HBCWs are not alone in whatever state they are in. This type of assistance emphasizes the availability of organizations such as NGOs to help. Moremi (2012) defines informational support as communication that provides HBCWs with useful information to empower them (Malale, 2011). To preserve a work environment that motivates present employees to remain with the company, institutions must put retention measures into place (Takasugi & Lee, 2012). If the Department

of Health and non-governmental organizations provided support to HBCWs, staff retention in this study would be successful (Moremi, 2012). Managers, the Department of Health, outreach team leaders, and others worked together to solve the overcrowded and overworked of HBCWs (DENOSA, 2013; and Mishra, 2014).

Consequences of support

Assistance has a variety of effects. The Department of Health, NGOs, HBCWs in home-based care and health care facilities, and patient care have all been demonstrated to benefit from support. Positive work experiences will result from supported HBCWs feeling like they belong (Department of Health, 2011). Strengthening HBCWs' sense of belonging will make them feel safer and more appreciated. They will consequently challenge themselves more by taking on things that first seemed challenging, fostering confidence and self-efficacy. Employee job satisfaction will lead to lower employee turnover

and better patient care for the healthcare facility (Ritter, 2011:29).

Supervision

Attributes of supervision

Effective supervision in the community healthcare context requires the ability to collaborate and communicate. The effective and efficient elements that promote the supervision of HBCWs, outreach team leaders, and managers in community centres include coaching, training, and employee development.

In addition, supervision entails the following duties: (1) fostering and upholding moral standards in the workplace; (2) creating the best possible environment for patients; (3) overseeing and controlling procedures; (4) instructing; (5) achieving the intended outcomes; (6) defining the environment; and (7) coordinating practice with policies to ensure the effective and seamless functioning of the community health care setting.

The attributes of effective clinical supervision from the dictionary and literature definitions are summarised in Table 1.2

Table 1.2: Summary of attributes of the concept of effective supervision

Effective	Supervision
Successful	Observing and guiding actions
Achievement of the desired results	Watching a person or activity to see that it is done correctly
	Monitoring and regulating of processes, activities, responsibilities or tasks
	Sustaining good practice
	Effective supervisor
	Motivated HBCWs
Attributes	Promoting and maintaining ethical standards of work Best patient environment Direct management and regulation of processes Teaching achievement of desired results Characteristics of the environment Coordinating practice with policies for the efficient and smooth running of services

Effective	Supervision
Antecedents	Motivation Commitment Proactiveness Self-directedness Trustworthiness Honesty and openness Listening skills Competence Friendliness Being non-judgemental Providing emotional support Giving positive and constructive feedback
Consequences	Enhanced self-efficacy Enactive mastery experience Self-assurance Independence Competence Emancipation

Antecedents of supervision

The Department of Health (2011a) states that institutional practices and resource availability are necessary for successful supervision. To guarantee effective supervision, institutional procedures involve making sure that both people and material resources are available as well as establishing an educational period.

To make clear the responsibilities of management, outreach team leaders, and HBCWs as well as the results of patient treatment, open channels of communication should be established between the medical facility, the NGOs, and the Department of Health. The expectations of managers, outreach team leaders, and HBCWs must be acknowledged and agreed upon by the Department of Health and NGOs before successful supervision (Aantjes, Quinlan & Bunders, 2014). Managers, outreach team leaders, and HBCWs can actively participate in problem-solving techniques to motivate HBCWs to take charge of their workplace by being present (Mitchell, Wynia, Golden, McNellis, Okun & Webb, 2012). The presence of supervisors who possess the necessary skills, training, and personal attributes is essential to the efficacy of supervision. According to Dale et al. (2013:3), an effective supervisor should set an example for HBCWs by being

dependable, honest, open, and a good listener, competent, dedicated, kind, and nonjudgmental. In addition, the supervisor needs to give constructive criticism and emotional support to the HBCWs (Department of Health, 2013).

Consequences of supervision

According to Peters (2013), effectiveness is defined as accomplishing or achieving the desired outcome. "Having or involving the job of watching a person or activity to ensure that everything is done correctly and safely," says Reynolds (2010). According to the Macmillan Dictionary and Thesaurus (2013), supervision is a process in which a manager meets and interacts with employees regularly to review their work to hold both the supervisor and the supervisee accountable while also exploring practice and performance. According to the Collins English Dictionary, the activity of managing something, such as a department or project, and ensuring that things are done properly and by the rules (2017).

Overseeing something and ensuring that everything is done correctly and safely is what supervision entails (Hornby, 2015). A supervisor's role is to oversee an activity or course of action to ensure that everything is done correctly and safely. Employee responsibilities at work are beneficial

in all healthcare centres, providing the opportunity to clarify and resolve issues and dilemmas presented by clients (Peters, 2013). According to Peters (2013), effective supervision is effective, works well, and produces the desired results.

Effectiveness, according to Peters (2013), is defined as succeeding or achieving the desired result. Reynolds (2010) defines supervision as "having or involving the job of watching a person or activity to verify that everything is done correctly and safely." According to the Macmillan Dictionary and Thesaurus (2013), supervision is a process in which a manager meets and interacts with employees regularly to review their work to provide accountability for both the supervisor and the supervisee, while exploring practice and performance. The practice of managing something, such as a department or project, and ensuring that things are done appropriately and in line with the rules, according to the Collins English Dictionary (2017).

To prepare HBCWs for a smooth transition into the patient care position, supervision is a risky component, claims Franklin (2013:39). Effective supervision is necessary so that HBCWs can gain practical skills while providing home-based care under the guidance of managers, outreach team leaders, and other staff members without worrying about making a mistake or hurting patients. It has been determined that competent supervision is the most significant factor in determining a positive work environment (Franklin, 2013:39). The supervision of HBCWs was impacted by their lack of expertise. According to HBCWs, their inability to effectively care for patients was caused by a lack of knowledge. HBCWs should receive training while employed to provide them with the needed abilities.

The purpose of supervision is to give managers, outreach team leaders, and HBCWs the responsibilities and resources they need to accomplish their goals. Managers, outreach team leaders, and HBCWs receive training on how to use tools and do their jobs properly to get the most out of them. Pottie et al. (2014) state that managers, outreach team leaders, and HBCWs can establish and preserve a team atmosphere with a supervision strategy (Department of Health, 2011d). It is important to retain monitoring in the workplace. Career advancement is facilitated by supervisors (Camargo & Royce, 2013:3).

According to this study, supervisors and outreach team leaders who watch HBCWs giving patients in-home care in a relationship based on trust are engaging in effective supervision.

Attributes of supervision

The ability to communicate and build teamwork in the community healthcare setting is essential for successful supervision. Coaching, training, and employee development are just a few of the effective and efficient factors that encourage the supervision of HBCWs, outreach team leaders, and managers in community centres. In addition, supervision entails the following:

(1) promoting and maintaining ethical work standards; (2) providing the best patient environment; (3) direct management and process regulation; (4) teaching; (5) achievement of desired results; (6) environmental characteristics; and (7) coordination of practice with policies for the efficient and smooth operation of services by HBCWs, outreach team leaders, and managers in the community health care setting.

Supervision is viewed as an activity in which a manager oversees the activities and responsibilities of HBCWs and other staff members in the workplace. The attributes of effective clinical supervision from the dictionary and literature definitions are summarised in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3: Summary of attributes of the concept of effective supervision

Effective	Supervision
Successful	Observing and guiding actions

Effective	Supervision
Achievement of the desired results	Watching a person or activity to see that it is done correctly
	Monitoring and regulating processes, activities, responsibilities, or tasks
	Sustaining good practice
	Effective supervisor
	Motivated HBCWs
Attributes	Promoting and maintaining ethical standards of work Best patient environment Direct management and regulation of processes Teaching achievement of desired results Characteristics of the environment Coordinating practice with policies for the efficient and smooth running of services
Antecedents	Motivation Commitment Proactiveness Self-directedness Trustworthiness Honesty and openness Listening skills Competence Friendliness Being non-judgemental Providing emotional support Giving positive and constructive feedback
Consequences	Enhanced self-efficacy Enactive mastery experience Self-assurance Independence Competence Emancipation

Antecedents of supervision

The Department of Health (2011) states that institutional practices and resource availability are necessary for successful supervision. Making sure that material and human resources are available is one of the institutional practices. Every research participant reported that their ability to succeed at work was being hampered by a lack of resources. An education period should be set up to guarantee efficient supervision.

To make clear the responsibilities of management, outreach team leaders, and HBCWs, as

well as the results of patient treatment, the medical facility should have open channels of communication with the NGOs and the Department of Health. The expectations of managers, outreach team leaders, and HBCWs must be acknowledged and agreed upon by the Department of Health and NGOs before the implementation of effective supervision (Aantjes, Quinlan & Bunders, 2014).

To be active participants, HBCWs, supervisors, and outreach team leaders need to be driven, ded-

icated, proactive, and self-directed. To encourage HBCWs to take responsibility for their job, supervisors should employ a range of instructional techniques and problem-solving techniques (Mitchell, Wynia, Golden, McNellis, Okun & Webb, 2012). The efficiency of supervision depends on the presence of supervisors. An effective supervisor should set an example for HBCWs by being dependable, honest, and transparent; they should also be a good listener, knowledgeable, dedicated, kind, and nonjudgmental, according to Dale et al. (2013:3). Along with giving constructive and encouraging criticism, the supervisor must also offer the HBCWs emotional support (Department of Health, 2013).

Consequences of supervision

Effective supervision results in increased self-efficacy, active mastery experience, and self-assurance (Department of Health, 2011). Effective supervision is also linked to improved client outcomes and the creation of a secure environment. With the assistance of a supervisor, people may manage problems. It has been shown that effective supervision reduces stress and anxiety at

work, which is why HBCWs are under supervisory oversight. This leads to a greater sensation of control (Department of Health, 2013).

Effective supervision among HBCWs has been associated with positive learning experiences, motivation to learn, self-confidence, and accomplishment of learning outcomes (Dale et al., 2013:3). Effective supervision is a prerequisite for this subject because it will enable HBCWs to have satisfying practical experiences.

Caring

Additionally, when providing patient care, HBCWs may encounter the following types of care: (1) moral imperative; (2) affect; (3) interpersonal interaction therapeutic intervention; (4) connecting with patients by entering their worlds; (5) and being resilient to uncertainties regarding the state of health of patients in the community (Watson, 2015a). There is more to patient care than just the medical side of nursing. Medical illnesses, traumas, procedures, operations, or recuperation can all induce worry in patients. The attributes of caring from the dictionary and subject definitions are summarised in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4: Summary of attributes of caring

Caring	Defining attributes
Kind-hearted	Caring through physical contact
Thoughtful	Caring by nurturing communication
Sense of mutuality	Joy and laughter in care
Mutually oriented	Sense of mutuality
Being humane	Uncertainties in each patient's state of health
	Connecting with patients
Attributes	Honesty Connecting with patients and entering their worlds Being resilient to possible uncertainties in each patient's state of health Moral imperative Affect Interpersonal interactions Therapeutic intervention

Caring	Defining attributes
Antecedents	Patience and sensitivity Self-confidence Security and love Compassionate nature Desire to help others Determination to give
Consequences	Healing Satisfaction Growth Attentive listening Comfort Patience Sensitivity Respect Security Love Trust

Antecedents of caring

In addition to expecting to be handled with tact and humility, patients turn to HBCWs for support. The presence of caring and committed HBCWs is beneficial to patients who are going through a difficult time. Sensitivity and patience were other personal qualities that emerged from the study's narratives. Winters, Langer, Nduku, O'Donovan, Robson, and Geniets (2018) state that patients find comfort in meeting brave caregivers who are prepared to stick by them in their hour of need.

Meeting HBCWs with personal qualities like compassion, empathy, and bravery gives patients hope and strength. Additionally, these interactions may be regenerative. Patients gain confidence and begin to have faith in HBCWs. Patients are treated in these circumstances.

Because they are dependent on HBCWs, patients anticipate receiving care from them. To deliver high-quality patient care, HBCWs, managers, and outreach team leaders need to have access to both human and material resources. The provision of counselling and debriefing sessions for professional nurses before experiencing psychological trauma and stress is beneficial, and they will ultimately feel cared for (Department of

Health, 2013). Supervisors must be able to assist and care for staff, outreach team leaders, and HBCWs, always motivating and encouraging them to deliver confident patient care (Akintola & Hangulu, 2014). Providing awards and incentives to encourage employees, such as supervisors, outreach team leaders, and HBCWs, boosts morale.

Consequences of caring

According to Walker and Avant (2011), consequences are instances or events that arise because of actions taken. Consequences can assist in locating frequently disregarded concepts, factors, or connections that may result in productive new lines of inquiry. The impact of caring on professional nurses, which results in better clinical patient care, is a good illustration of the benefits of caring. The readiness of nurses from different healthcare facilities to follow the planned rotation policy has an additional impact.

To provide caring services, HBCWs must be competent, show interest, and identify patients' vulnerabilities by showing compassion and reaching out through listening intently, providing comfort, being patient, being sensitive, showing

respect, making educated decisions, addressing patients by name, and refraining from classifying patients according to the condition they are experiencing (Department of Health,

HBCWs should provide care by establishing trusting relationships, committing to, and being willing to care for the patient in need of care and support. Healing, satisfaction, and growth are the outcomes of caring in home-based care. Caring can have an impact on patients, managers, outreach team leaders, and HBCWs.

Patients who receive care are more confident and trust HBCWs. In a compassionate setting, patients are treated like human beings with meaning and purpose in life. Patients fully surrender to their HBCWs because they feel protected and loved by them. Meeting brave HBCWs who are bold and dare to stay with patients when they are in a chaotic medical state, in pain, or grieving is a relief for patients, according to Watson (2015b).

The dictionary definition of resources

According to the Merriam-Webster Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2008), resources are ready for use or can be drawn on for assistance or to meet a need. Resources can be money, property,

wealth, or assets that are readily available.

A resource is anything that can be used for a specific purpose. Tools and materials, for example, are examples of resources. All materials, personnel, facilities, funds, and anything else that can be used to provide healthcare services are considered healthcare resources (Reynolds, 2010).

For HBCWs, managers, and outreach team leaders to effectively care for patients in their homes, they need resources, especially equipment. According to WHO (2011), resources are personal traits and skills that are believed to be able to help or sustain one in trying situations. Managers, outreach team leaders, and HBCWs providing home-based care services must possess sufficient resources and clinical expertise and be cognizant of the requirements of the patients and their families.

HBCWs should have access to the tools and supplies they need, and the referral system should be sufficiently operational to guarantee that patients with serious problems are treated. To guarantee that management and financial performance continue to be good, such measures ought to be implemented (WHO, 2017). The attributes of resources are summarised in Table 1.5.

Table 1.5: Summary of attributes of resources

Resources	Defining attributes
Differentiated by the type of usage agreed upon	Activity, especially an activity of a practical or technical kind Used for the diagnosis or treatment of disease Used for rehabilitation following disease or injury
Human resources	Sufficient HBCWs Managers Outreach team leaders
Material resources	Transport Food provision Medicines and supplies/equipment Food supplements Home-based care kits
Attributes	Conducive working environment Motivation Training Staffing Recruitment

Resources	Defining attributes
Antecedents	Sensitivity Confidentiality Empathy Access to the health care system is required to obtain the care that maintains or improves the health to patients in their households Improvement of the practice environment, with adequate staffing levels and appropriate allocation of physical resources.
Consequences	More positive attitude towards work Better performance Work being valued by the community Good quality services with effective resources can save patients' lives Appreciation for and valuing the services, leading to adequate utilisation Cost-efficient, quality home-based care services

Antecedents of resources

The results of the study showed that HBCWs, managers, and outreach team leaders experienced a great deal of frustration when caring for patients. They were compelled to labour in challenging conditions because of a shortage of both people and material resources. Employee performance is influenced by a variety of factors, including employee goal orientations, the calibre of leader-member interactions, and the results of job performance and job happiness (Saeed, Mussawar, Lodhi, Iqbal, Nayab & Yaseen, 2013). Supervisors oversee making sure staff members have the tools they need to perform well and encourage them to give patients in the community effective and efficient treatment.

Participants in this study raised the issue of a shortage of healthcare workers because of insufficient production, insufficient recruitment, particularly in rural areas, poor retention, and staff mismanagement (Manyisa & Van Aswegen, 2017). According to Van Rensburg (2014), inaccessibility of resources is a barrier to improving patient conditions and mitigating the effects of

HIV and AIDS. Staff shortages are most noticeable in community health care and patients' homes, as HBCWs are expected to provide efficient and effective health care to communities with limited resources (Van Rensburg, 2014).

Financial resources are the most important tools in overcoming the challenges of HIV and AIDS in home-based care programs around the world. Since HBCWs receive a merger stipend from the government, finances have become the most difficult resource for most home-based care programs. Without financial support, it is impossible to carry out the work of home-based care programs. The Department of Health (2011) states that HBCWs' inability to form active organizations is often attributed to a lack of time and money for developing quality patient care.

Consequences of resources

“High-quality services will boost the morale of HBCWs, managers, and outreach team leaders.”

“When they receive the resources and support, they need to provide essential services, and when their work is valued by the community, they are more likely to have a positive attitude toward their work and perform better.” “Most importantly, high-quality services supported by adequate resources can save patients' lives.” Health

care that maintains or improves the health of patients and their families requires access to the healthcare system (DENOSA, 2013).

When HBCWs, managers, and outreach team leaders have adequate resources and other support, they will be able to manage health problems more effectively, resulting in fewer deaths and chronic illnesses. This will result in a sense of community, feeling loved and accepted.

Constructed case

Walker and Avant (2011:163) state that to show that a concept is understood, a model example should be used to illustrate its distinguishing characteristics. A model case should be a compelling illustration of the idea under study and possess all its distinguishing features. A favourable work atmosphere, the creation of complete support, effective supervision and leadership, caring, and effective resources are the five principles that the researcher examined and implemented into a model scenario. Below is an example of this case.

Model case

A model case, according to Walker and Avant (2011), is "an example of the use of a concept that demonstrates the concept's defining attributes." The model case should be either a pure example, a paradigmatic example, or a pure case of the idea. Walker and Avant (2011:163) suggest that a model case adheres to the concept's defining characteristics to show that a concept is understood. Wilsons asserts that the model case can be constructed (as referenced in Walker & Avant, 2011). A model case should be a compelling illustration of the idea under study and possess all its distinguishing features. All five of the principles that were examined are included in the model that the researcher developed, which is displayed below as

Constructed case

At a peri-urban clinic, Nomsa, Charity, and Pauline are three newly hired HBCWs. On their first day of work, the clinic supervisor greeted them. She greeted them, saying she had been anticipating their arrival. She promised to keep an eye on them while they were in the clinic. After getting coffee for them, she welcomed them to her office, where she gave each of them a chance to introduce herself and shared her hopes for a new

job. To understand more about their histories, the clinic supervisor also asked them to discuss their prior employment experiences.

The supervisor observed the HBCWs' emotional outbursts as they related their stories and realized they had been scarred by their past experiences; they claimed that their income was insufficient to cover their personal expenses and transportation, that their working conditions were unacceptable, and that they were therefore regularly required to walk, even in the rain, to get to work. The HBCWs were reluctant to discuss their experiences because they believed they would be victimised, and that the information would be used against them in court.

Additionally, they lacked the necessary resources, which made it difficult for them to carry out their community service duties efficiently. They said they were treated cruelly by other staff members who told them the clinic was too small for them. Because there was no running water or electricity in the village, they were compelled to look for shelter there. Where they were staying put, their safety was at peril. They were frightened of sexual abuse and were victims of burglaries because they were women. The supervisor was impacted by their stories. She stated unequivocally that as their manager, she would ensure they received all the help they required and that their previous experience would not be repeated.

Following the formal introductions, the clinic supervisor greeted the patients. Day 1 entails familiarizing oneself with the clinic's surroundings; Day 2 entails meeting with all stakeholders; Day 3 entails meeting and collaborating with leaders of outreach teams and seasoned HBCWs; Day 4 entails HBCWs' practical's to assess their level of confidence; and Day 5 entails familiarizing oneself with the community and patients' homes. The clinic supervisor provided a copy of the orientation program to each HBCW so they could become acquainted with it. After they finished their paperwork, the clinic supervisor told them she would show them around the facility, show them to their sleeping quarters, and introduce them to other staff members. The HBCWs were ecstatic and impressed with the quality of their

accommodations. The large living area included a separate kitchen, living room, and workspace. The restrooms were spotless and included flowing hot and cold water. The supervisor informed them that they might leave early to unpack and prepare for the following day.

Day Two

To discuss the new HBCWs, the supervisor convened a meeting with community leaders, clinic committee members, and NGOs. Before the meeting began, the supervisor provided a brief overview of its objectives. She presented a quick introduction of the HBCWs to each of the in-attendance stakeholders. Each stakeholder was then permitted to introduce themselves and discuss their positions at the clinic with the supervisor. A forum was made available to the HBCWs so they could ask questions about their jobs or anything else they were unsure about. It was suggested that they should not be afraid to express their opinions or to speak at all. The supervisor assured everyone that all was well.

Day Three

The supervisor and other stakeholders organized transportation for HBCWs to meet with community leaders and receive an orientation to the community. The HBCWs were tasked with visiting several hospitals and patients' homes to familiarize themselves with the area. The HBCWs were very pleased and grateful that the supervisor and area managers had talked with them earlier and allowed them to freely express their concerns. To prepare for returning to the clinic the following day, they returned home.

Day Four

In-service training sessions were provided by more experienced HBCWs to better prepare the new HBCWs for their responsibilities of providing in-home care under strict supervision. HBCWs, managers, and outreach team leaders met and discussed several procedures that should be used with patients in community home settings. HBCWs were assigned in groups of seven to communal homes. Participating in social interactions would let HBCWs share their own sto-

ries. Outreach team leaders, managers, and supervisors provided HBCWs with practice sessions to give back as a form of guidance and support.

Day Five

The HBCWs were assigned to different operations on the fifth day after they arrived at the clinic, and once they had acquired knowledge, information, and skills and were able to work independently to demonstrate their competency, they began working in the community the following week, equipped with everything they needed, including uniforms with watches, jackets, name tags, and shoes; community clinical workbooks that detailed their responsibilities; and kit bags full of gloves, dressings, equipment, wound dressing packs, and antiseptics.

The outreach team leaders, managers, and supervisors provided the HBCWs with instructions outlining their responsibilities for providing home-based care. The managers and outreach team leaders reminded and verified community leaders that they were ready to provide HBCWs to the community and families. HBCWs were given a half-day the following day to be ready for their first day living with community households.

6.4 Conclusion

Walker and Avant's idea analysis processes (2011) were used to analyse the key ideas for creating a comprehensive model of support for HBCWs who offer community care. To ensure that the concepts in the model are reasonable and pure, the researcher was able to identify their uses after analysing the key concepts selected for the development of comprehensive support and a positive working environment. Additionally, the defining attributes enabled the researcher to develop operational definitions.

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.16>**THE SUPPRESSION OF PEOPLE'S RIGHTS IN THE NOVEL: MME A NNDWA DZOŦHE****Dr T.D. Raphalalani**

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Abstract

Human rights are the rights that every person has, irrespective of the specifics of the individual, but by virtue of their humanity. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) is the supreme law of the country. The Constitution, under the Bill of Rights, provides for the rights of all citizens of the country. Despite this legal framework, some citizens remain unaware or ignorant of their rights. This article investigates the suppression of people's rights in the novel Mme a Nndwa DzoŦhe, a literary text chosen for its powerful portrayal of human rights issues. A document analysis method was employed to collect qualitative data from the novel. The researcher applied a thematic analysis approach, identifying patterns that reflect the suppression of people's rights. The study is grounded in the theory of Justice developed by American political philosopher John Rawls in 1971. Rawls argues that in the public political culture of a democratic society, citizens should be free and equal, and society should be a fair system of cooperation. This study aims to highlight the urgent need for the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development to initiate educational campaigns to educate citizens about their human rights, especially in rural Black communities with lower literacy levels. These campaigns—through workshops, community outreach programs, and educational materials in native languages—could significantly improve understanding and respect for human rights. The impact could be even more profound if such education is delivered through storytelling.

Keywords: Human Rights, violations, citizens, rural Black communities, native language.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The recognition and protection of human rights are fundamental pillars of any democratic society. In South Africa, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) serves as the supreme law and provides a comprehensive framework for the protection of human rights through its Bill of Rights (Chapter 2). These rights are designed to safeguard the dignity, freedom and equality of all individuals, regardless of their background or social standing. However, despite these legal protections, many citizens, particularly in rural and historically marginalized Black communities, remain unaware of their rights or lack the means to enforce

them (South African Human Rights Commission, 2022).

One of the critical institutions tasked with addressing these challenges is the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), a Chapter 9 institution established to support constitutional democracy. According to Section 184 of the Constitution, the SAHRC is mandated to:

- Promote respect for human rights and a culture of human rights.
- Promote the protection, development and attainment of human rights; and
- Monitor and assess the observance of human rights in the Republic (Constitution, 1996).

To carry out this mandate, the Commission is empowered to conduct investigations, issue reports, secure appropriate redress and develop educational initiatives (SAHRC, 2023). Despite these efforts, systemic inequalities, limited access to education and socio-cultural dynamics continue to contribute to the violation and suppression of basic human rights, especially in under-resourced rural areas (Nattrass, 2020; Gasa, 2018).

Literature, particularly in African languages, plays a crucial role in reflecting and critiquing societal injustices. The novel *Mme a Nndwa Dzothe* by A.E. Maisha offers a compelling portrayal of how social and political structures contribute to the systematic suppression of individual rights, especially for women and the vulnerable. Literature such as this can function as a form of resistance and social commentary, bringing to the fore issues that often remain under-addressed in mainstream discourse (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986; Achebe, 1975).

The theoretical foundation of this study is drawn from John Rawls' Theory of Justice (1971), which emphasizes the importance of fairness, equality and moral reasoning in structuring society. Rawls proposes that a just society is one in which the "veil of ignorance" ensures that social institutions are designed without knowledge of one's own social position, thereby promoting equality and protecting the most disadvantaged. When examined through this lens, *Mme a Nndwa Dzothe* reveals profound injustices that contradict the constitutional ideals of equality and human dignity.

Considering this, the study advocates for a proactive approach by the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, calling for culturally sensitive educational campaigns. These should aim to increase awareness of human rights using indigenous languages and culturally relevant storytelling, especially in rural areas where traditional oral narratives remain a powerful means of communication and education (Finnegan, 2012; Mamphele Ramphela, 2008).

This article thus aims to contribute to both literary scholarship and human rights advocacy by demonstrating how literary texts can be used to highlight rights violations and inspire social transformation in South Africa's rural communities.

METHODOLOGY

This study explores the theme of the suppression of people's rights as portrayed in the Tshivenda novel *Mme a Nndwa Dzothe* by A.E. Maisha. The research is interpretive in nature, grounded in a qualitative research design, which is appropriate for studies that aim to uncover the deeper meanings behind human experiences, cultural expressions and social realities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Given the focus on a literary text and the nuanced representation of social and political dynamics, a qualitative approach allows for a rich, contextual and in-depth understanding of the issues at hand.

To collect data, the study employed the document analysis method, which is particularly suited for analysing written texts such as novels. Document analysis involves a systematic procedure for reviewing and interpreting textual material, enabling the researcher to extract meaningful themes and patterns related to the research question (Bowen, 2009). In this case, the novel served as a primary source document through which evidence of human rights violations, such as discrimination, marginalization and denial of justice, was examined.

The thematic analysis method was applied to analyze the data. Thematic analysis is a widely used method in qualitative research for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This involved a multi-step process:

Familiarization with the text: The researcher read the novel multiple times to gain a comprehensive understanding of its content and context.

Initial coding: Key phrases, situations or character actions that suggested the suppression of rights were noted and systematically coded.

Theme development: Codes were grouped into

broader categories that reflected recurring patterns of human rights suppression.

Review and refinement: The emerging themes were reviewed considering the overall narrative and the theoretical framework of justice to ensure coherence and relevance.

Interpretation: The themes were interpreted in relation to the socio-political context represented in the novel and South Africa's broader human rights discourse.

The study is further underpinned by John Rawls' Theory of Justice (1971), which provides a conceptual lens for interpreting how fairness, equality and moral justice are (or are not) realised in the fictional world of the novel. This theory helped frame the thematic findings within a philosophical and rights-based perspective.

The choice of *Mme a Nndwa Dzothe* as the subject of analysis is deliberate. The novel's setting in a rural, Tshivenda-speaking community provides a microcosm through which larger societal issues, such as the lack of human rights awareness and the structural forces that perpetuate inequality, can be examined. The cultural and linguistic specificity of the text also supports the argument for using indigenous literature as a tool for human rights education and advocacy in South Africa.

Ethical considerations were observed by maintaining academic integrity, accurately representing the author's work and contextualizing interpretations without bias or misrepresentation.

DISCUSSION

The novel *Mme a Nndwa Dzothe* offers a compelling narrative through which the suppression of individual rights, particularly those of children and women, can be examined against the backdrop of traditional authority, cultural beliefs and religious tensions. The story of Tshitingwa serves as a case study that highlights critical intersections between personal freedoms and the entrenched power of patriarchy and custom in rural South African society.

1. Violation of Religious Freedom

Tshitingwa's conversion to Christianity following her baptism by Pastor Nzeni sets in motion a conflict between her personal beliefs and her family's traditional religious practices. Her refusal to participate in rituals conducted by the traditional healer Ngwadza is met with anger and rejection by her father. This confrontation underscores a fundamental violation of Section 15(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), which guarantees that "*everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion.*"

In a pluralistic and democratic society, individuals, regardless of age, have the constitutional right to practice a religion of their choice. Tshitingwa's insistence on referring to God as her "new father" symbolically asserts this right, even as it disrupts family unity. Her father's reaction, which includes threats and attempts at coercion, demonstrates the persistent tension between customary expectations and constitutional liberties in rural contexts (Fokwang, 2009). Rather than respecting her decision, her father responds with aggression and authoritarianism, reinforcing traditional dominance over individual autonomy.

2. Suppression of Freedom of Association

In addition to religious freedom, Tshitingwa's right to associate with individuals and religious communities of her choice is also infringed. Section 18 of the Constitution affirms that "*everyone has the right to freedom of association.*" The father's threat to confront Pastor Nzeni and demand that he ceases contact with Tshitingwa is a clear attempt to sever her from supportive relationships and spiritual mentorship. This restriction exemplifies an abuse of parental authority and reflects how control over religious and social affiliations is often used as a mechanism of suppression, especially for young women (Ratele, 2014).

Such interference limits Tshitingwa's ability to develop her identity, practice her faith and participate in community life outside of the patriarchal family structure. In constitutional terms, these acts constitute an unlawful encroachment on her rights and could have been challenged

through the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), which is mandated to protect individuals from rights violations, especially in vulnerable communities.

3. Denial of Parental and Family Care

The withdrawal of financial support by Tshitingwa's father in retaliation for her religious choices highlights another dimension of rights suppression: economic coercion. At the time, Tshitingwa was a Grade 11 learner and legally a minor. Her father's decision not to provide for her education or basic needs violates Section 28(1)(b) of the Constitution, which states that *"every child has the right to family care or parental care, or to appropriate alternative care when removed from the family environment."*

This form of punishment weaponises economic dependence to enforce obedience, disregarding the child's rights to care, education and well-being. Tshitingwa's failed attempt to seek assistance from her uncle further illustrates the isolation and vulnerability faced by children in such situations. While the SAHRC or child welfare services could have been approached, the absence of rights education and accessible support structures often forces youth to navigate such crises alone, leading to desperate measures like leaving home.

4. Violation of Freedom of Expression and Gender Equality

When Tshitingwa's mother, Martha, attempts to mediate the conflict, she is silenced by her husband, who invokes Vhavenda customary law to justify her exclusion from the discussion. This act exemplifies the systemic silencing of women and is a direct violation of Section 16(1) of the Constitution, which guarantees that *"everyone has the right to freedom of expression."* Additionally, it undermines Section 9(3), which prohibits discrimination based on gender.

The denial of Martha's voice within her own family reinforces the patriarchal structure that privileges male authority and restricts women's participation in decision-making. This gender-

based suppression has broader implications for democratic participation and gender justice, especially in traditional communities where customary norms often override constitutional protections (Albertyn & Goldblatt, 1998).

5. Physical Assault and Child Protection

Perhaps the most severe rights violation occurs when Tshitingwa's father physically assaults her for continuing to defy his authority. This form of abuse violates multiple constitutional and legal protections. Section 12(1) (c) of the Constitution affirms that *"everyone has the right to be free from all forms of violence from either public or private sources,"* while Section 28(1)(d) affirms every child's right to be *"protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation."*

Rather than seeking legal recourse, Tshitingwa flees to an unfamiliar woman in town, exposing herself to new risks and uncertainties. Her choice reflects a lack of trust in the legal system or perhaps an absence of knowledge about available protections. The story thus illustrates the real-world barriers rural youth face in accessing justice, barriers often exacerbated by cultural stigma, fear of retaliation and weak institutional presence in remote areas.

FINDINGS

This study revealed several key insights into the suppression of human rights as depicted in *Mme a Nndwa Dzoŋhe*, particularly within rural and patriarchal contexts in South Africa:

1. Violation of Religious Freedom

The protagonist, Tshitingwa, experiences a denial of her right to freedom of religion when her father reacts violently to her conversion to Christianity. This reflects the broader challenge of reconciling individual constitutional rights with traditional belief systems in rural communities.

2. Suppression of Freedom of Association

Tshitingwa's father's efforts to control her interaction with her religious community violate her constitutional right to freedom of association. This underscores the authoritarian use of parental control to limit the social autonomy of youth, especially young women.

3. Economic Coercion and Denial of Parental Care

The father's withdrawal of financial and emotional support as a form of punishment for Tshitingwa's religious choices represents a clear breach of her right to parental care. This practice of economic coercion highlights how rights violations are perpetuated through dependency and familial hierarchy.

4. Gender-Based Suppression of Expression

Martha's exclusion from a family dispute due to her gender and her husband's invocation of customary law reflects systemic

gender inequality. This demonstrates how patriarchal interpretations of culture often suppress women's voices and rights within the household.

5.

Physical Abuse and Lack of Legal Recourse

The assault on Tshitingwa by her father, without legal consequence, highlights the vulnerability of children in rural areas who often lack access to legal resources or knowledge about their rights. The absence of intervention from institutions like the South African Human Rights Commission in such cases reflects a critical gap in enforcement.

6. Lack of Rights Awareness and Legal Literacy

Both Tshitingwa and her mother endure rights violations without seeking institutional help. This indicates a significant gap in awareness and education about constitutional protections, especially in rural and culturally conservative communities.

CONCLUSION

The case of Tshitingwa, as presented in *Mme a Nndwa Dzothe*, is emblematic of how the rights of children and women are suppressed through familial, cultural and traditional structures. Despite the existence of a progressive constitutional framework, these rights remain inaccessible to many due to ignorance, cultural resistance and lack of enforcement mechanisms in rural communities. The novel not only serves as a critique of these realities but also as a potential pedagogical tool to raise awareness about constitutional rights and promote justice in culturally relevant ways.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following

recommendations are proposed to improve the understanding, protection and enforcement of human rights in similar rural contexts:

1. Strengthen Human Rights Education in Rural Communities

The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development should initiate targeted outreach programs to raise awareness about constitutional rights.

These should include workshops, storytelling-based campaigns and accessible materials in indigenous languages such as Tshivenda.

2. Integrate Human Rights Themes into School Curricula

Schools, especially in rural areas, should include components of civic education that emphasize children's rights, freedom of religion and gender equality. Literature such as *Mme a Nndwa Dzothe* can serve as a powerful teaching tool in this regard.

3. Support and Empower Community-Based Structures

The South African Human Rights Commission and local legal aid institutions should strengthen their presence in rural areas through mobile offices, toll-free lines and community paralegals to help individuals report and resolve rights violations.

5. Encourage Legal Literacy through Media and the Arts

Local radio stations, drama groups and print media in Tshivenda should be mobilized to disseminate knowledge about human rights. Fictional narratives, like the one in this novel, can make abstract legal principles tangible and relatable.

Traditional leaders, healers and religious figures should be engaged in dialogue and training programs to harmonize cultural practices with constitutional rights. This can foster a more rights-respecting community culture.

4. Enhance Accessibility to Legal Support Services

6. Promote Gender Equity within Customary Law Contexts

There should be an ongoing review of customary practices to align them with the Constitution, especially regarding the participation and voice of women in family and community decisions. Legal mechanisms must ensure that no cultural practice infringes upon constitutionally guaranteed rights.

7. Facilitate Youth Support Networks

Establishing peer-led support groups in schools and communities can give young people platforms to express concerns, share experiences and learn about their rights in a safe environment.

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GENDER DIFFERENTIAL IN MEDIA ACCESS AND PERCEIVED HIV-RELATED STIGMA IN NIGERIA

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Abstract:

Nigeria is among the highest HIV/AIDS burden countries worldwide. Stigmatization against people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA) has implications for the coping, morbidity, and mortality associated with the disease. We examined the relationship between media access and perceived HIV-related stigma (PHS) in Nigeria. This cross-sectional design study used national survey data ($n=34,378$). A multi-stage sampling approach was used for sample selection. PHS was measured using five variables. Data were analyzed using a generalized linear model ($\alpha_{0.05}$). PHS was higher among males (82.0%) than among females (75.1%). The multivariable analysis revealed that the mean PHS score was higher among individuals with none and poor media access than those with good access and higher among males than females ($p<0.05$). PHS was high in Nigeria, and good access to media reduced its risk. Including media access and sex as the key variables while designing strategies to reduce PHS in Nigeria is strongly recommended.

Keywords: Gender, Media access, Nigeria, People living with HIV/AIDS, Stigmatization perception

Background:

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is one of the topmost development challenges facing less developed countries. Globally, 39.9 million people were living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA), although the burden of the epidemic continues to vary considerably between countries and regions. The WHO African Region remains most severely affected, with 3.4% of adults living with HIV, and accounting for more than two-thirds of the PLHA worldwide (World Health Organization, 2023). About 2 million PLHA in Nigeria and the country has the second highest burden of HIV/AIDS worldwide with HIV prevalence of 1.3% among adults compared to other sub-Saharan African countries like South Africa

(16.8%) and Zambia (10.8%) (Population Reference Bureau, 2022)). The estimated number of new infections and HIV/AIDS-related deaths in Nigeria was 390,000 and 217,000, respectively, in 2023 (Federal Ministry of Health, 2023; NACA, 2023). This high number of PLHA will require care from those who don't have the disease. Unfortunately, in many circumstances, HIV/AIDS-related stigma prevents PLHA from receiving the necessary care from the populace. Research has shown that stigmatization has psychological effects on PLHA, reduces their ability to copewith the disease and survival chances (Beichler et al., 2023; Parcesepe et al., 2020). To reduce the HIV-related stigma and death risk associated with the disease, HIV/AIDS-related issues aim at improving awareness, knowledge, preventive strategies and alleviate stigmatization against PLHA, are common discourses on radio, television, and newspapers in Nigeria.

Stigmas are overwhelmingly negative stereotypes against an individual or a group that has diffused effects in a community (Smith et al., 2016). Stigma denotes people as condemned, degraded, and disgraced. It tends to shape the life course of the victims and constitutes a barrier to their health (Smith et al., 2016). Research conducted from diverse assumptions about human behavior shows how easily and effectively stigmas may be socialized; how challenging they are to manage; how many facets of health and well-being are devastated by their existence; and how difficult it is to mitigate against them (Bos et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2016). HIV-related stigma refers to negative beliefs, feelings, and attitudes towards PLHA, their family members, and those who work with them. It often reinforces prevailing social inequalities concerning gender, culture, religion, race, ethnicity, social class, and sexuality. HIV/AIDS instrumental stigma is a reflection of the fear and apprehension that are likely to be associated with any deadly and transmissible illness. Also, the symbolic AIDS stigma is the use of HIV/AIDS to express attitudes toward the social groups or lifestyles perceived to be associated with the disease (Bos et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2016) ().

HIV stigma inflicts hardship and suffering on PLHA and has implications for research, preventive measures, coping with the disease, treatment, care, and support efforts. It has a series of consequences which can be seen from the standpoints of the individual, the family, the community, and the caregivers at home and health facilities. At the individual level, fear of discrimination and rejection can discourage people from going for an HIV test, sharing the results, health facility attendance, and treatment compliance (Ataro et al., 2020; Bharat, 2018). It also has economic and political consequences. An economic consequence of stigmatization against PLHA can result in not buying produce from a family in which a member is living with HIV (Ataro et al., 2020; Bharat, 2011). In the political realm,

PLHA may be denied being elected into a position because of the morbidity associated with the disease which can hinder their level of participation and involvement when on duty (Ataro et al., 2020; Bharat, 2011). The community may stigmatize orphan children who lost their parents as a result of HIV/AIDS (Junaid, 2009). Ostracism of marked persons in society reduces their disclosure and encourages secrecy (Smith et al., 2016).

In Nigeria, unfamiliarity with HIV epidemiology regarding its modes of spread and prevention worsens HIV-related stigma (Federal Ministry of Health, 2022). Activities on behavioral change communication through mass media are an effective approach in improving people's knowledge about the disease (Bekalu et al., 2014). There is a degree of connectedness between communication and stigmas. Communication is crucial to the existence of stigma, spread, expression, coping, and elimination (Smith et al., 2016). People use communication to devalue and ostracize stigmatized individuals, while stigmatized people use communication to cope with stigmatization. However, the behavioral attitude toward people with health problems and the access and reaction of people to communication may be different by gender.

Consequently, it is principally imperative to recognize the interface between HIV-related stigma and gender in Nigeria. In any society, women are known to provide care to people than men, particularly the sick. Research conducted in Ontario among PLWA indicated that women had significantly higher total and subscale stigma scores than men (Loutfy et al., 2012). The current study was driven by the fundamentals of intersectionality theory, which refers to the interdependent relationships between social identities and social inequities (Venable et al., 2006; Collins, 2000). Intersectionality is the study of overlapping social identities and related systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination. Intersectional

viewpoints theorize that the convergence of different identities produces divergent experiences of inequity and opportunity (Venable et al., 2006; Collins, 2000). This theory was used as a guiding theoretical framework for HIV research in some advanced countries, and emerging findings from the studies revealed that gender influences HIV-related stigma (Collins, 2000; Doyal, 2009). Social cognitive theory equally posits that the differences in gender role standard-value, motive, or behavior are considered more suitable for same-sex and are greater within sex than between sexes (Wharton, 2005).

Given the multifaceted nature of the problems associated with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria, the Government and international agencies have implemented policies aimed at eliminating discrimination and stigmatization against PLHA (Federal Ministry of Health, 2023). Whereas many investigations have been conducted about HIV-related stigma in Nigeria (Adimora et al., 2019; Bala et al., 2022; Oke et al., 2019;), many questions remain unanswered on the relationship between media access and perceived HIV stigma in Nigeria.

Literature Review

HIV/AIDS is among the top diseases that pose serious health issues to people in contemporary times. Despite the physical, psychological, and mental health consequences of this deadly disease, the stigma associated with the disease further compounds these health challenges. HIV-related stigma affects the health-related quality of life of PLHA as experienced in Austria, Munich, Berlin, and many other countries by compromising their coping with the disease and social support (Beichler et al., 2023). Such stigma included verbal abuse, outright rejection, job discrimination, physical violence, intimate partner violence, and severe disempowerment. (Celeste-Villalvir et al., 2023). HIV-related stigma can be challenging due to structural inequalities, cultural differences, and discrimination. Studies have found a negative relationship between stigma and the well-being of PLHA (Beichler et

al., 2023; Rzeszutek et al., 2021). A study by Ebrahimi and colleagues revealed that HIV-related stigma greatly affects the quality of life (QOL) of Iranians living with HIV/AIDS (Ebrahimi et al., 2019). In this study, lack of healthcare insurance, having no basic knowledge of HIV/AIDs before diagnosis, low monthly income, and stigma were associated with a low QOL (Ebrahimi et al., 2019).

A qualitative study conducted among patients accessing care at Dominican Republic hospitals concluded that the social context of HIV-related stigma affects women and men differently, with health impacts more subtle among men than women (Celeste-Villalvir et al., 2023). Women in most situations are victims of permanent loss of income or job, whereas men experience temporary changes in employment and /or income reduction. A similar study conducted in China indicated that females reported significantly higher internalized HIV-related stigma than males (Li et al., 2016). In Lebanon, gender was among the strong predictors of HIV-related stigma (Youssef et al, 2021). A national study in Indonesia which assessed the behaviours associated with discrimination towards PLHA found lower risks of discrimination among women, rural dwellers, and those who felt ashamed of their own family's HIV status, but higher among those who are knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS risks and were willing to care for an infected HIV/AIDS relative.

The paper identified gender as one of the predictors of discrimination against PLHA (Sadarang, 2022). Stigma remains a significant barrier to HIV testing in South Africa, a HIV high-burden nation (Treves-Kagan et al., 2017).

Evidences suggest that the magnitude of HIV/AIDS-related discriminatory attitudes is high in sub-Saharan Africa. A cross-sectional design study that assessed the gendered differences in the relationship between stigma and HIV testing in Mozambique showed that men have lower

uptake of HIV testing compared to women, and individual stigma was negatively associated with recent HIV testing among men (Ha et al., 2019). A high prevalence of discriminatory attitudes towards PLHA, ranging from 17.64% in Malawi to 79.75% in Guinea, was established in a study that examined the factors influencing discriminatory attitudes towards PLHA among the adult population in 15 sub-Saharan African countries (Teshale and Tesema, 2022). Gender of the household head and media exposure were among the individual-level factors associated with discriminatory attitudes towards PLHA (Teshale and Tesema, 2022).

In a study conducted at health facilities in Tanzania among adult PLHA enrolling in HIV care. The relationship between gender, HIV-related stigma, and health-related QOL was assessed. The study revealed that the respondents reported a high recently enacted HIV-related stigma and internalized stigma (Parcesepe et al., 2020). A comparative study was implemented in Ethiopia to assess the gender differences in perceived stigma and coping strategies among PLHA. In this study, women reported a higher level of disclosure stigma, used behavioral disengagement, self-distraction, and a higher level of adaptive coping strategies more often than men (Ataro et al., 2020). Another country-specific study in Ethiopia found that female gender, lower level of education, living in rural areas, and living in a low proportion of HIV tested communities promoted a discriminatory attitude towards PLHA (Arefaynie et al., 2021). HIV-related stigma hinders prevention efforts. Mass media use may moderate the association between sociodemographic factors, including gender, and HIV-related stigma. A systematic review and meta-analysis assessment of examining the impact of mass media exposure on HIV-related stigma revealed that mass media exposure has a modest and context-specific impact on HIV-related stigma reduction (Aghaei et al., 2023). This outcome was also found by another study from sub-Saharan African countries, where exposure to mass media

on HIV-related stigma programmes was generally associated with low levels of HIV-related stigma (Bekalu et al., 2014).

In Nigeria, HIV/AIDS-related stigma remains a crucial barrier to accessing healthcare services and improved QOL among PLHA. Research on HIV-related stigma was mainly conducted among the PLHA to understand their experiences of how people relate to them due to their HIV status. Conversely, the current study focused on how the general population perceives their relationship with PLHA. A qualitative study that explored the influence of gender discrimination and HIV stigma on women living with HIV/AIDS in North Central Nigeria found that forced marriage and low socioeconomic status contributed to gender discrimination and HIV stigma (Bala et al., 2022). Another study, which assessed HIV-related stigma and its determinants among PLHA in Abeokuta, South West, Nigeria, observed that the perceived stigma was high and disclosure contributed mostly to stigma. Although about one-third of the subjects had experienced an enacted stigma, abandonment by spouses and social exclusion were attributed to higher perceived stigma (Oke et al., 2019). A study that was conducted in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria revealed that stigmatization and discrimination influence the self-esteem of PLHA and that media access to HIV awareness programmes has the tendency to erode this influence if actively implemented (Adimora et al., 2019).

Methods

The study was conducted in Nigeria. The 2024 projection of the human population was 284.8 million (Population Reference Bureau, 2023). Nigeria has six geopolitical zones. Each zone is further divided into states, thus making 36 states, including the federal capital territory. Nigeria has a heterogeneous population, but there are three major ethnic groups: the Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba. The Hausas are predominantly in the North, and the Igbos and Yorubas are in the South. The Northerners are primarily Muslims whereas the

Southerners are mostly Christians. Undoubtedly, this kind of socio-political and religious delineation has a substantial effect on social interactions and interpersonal relationship patterns, of which stigmatization and access to media information are important features.

The design of the study was cross-sectional and nationally representative in sample selection. The Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey data was used. During the data collection, a stratified three-stage cluster design consisting of 904 clusters (urban=372 and rural=532) was used. The sample was designed in such a way as to provide data that can be analyzed on HIV/AIDS-related issues and other social and health problems. In this study, we used women and men aged 15-49 years. Originally, information was obtained from 38,948 women and 17,359 men. However, our study focused on samples of 22918 women and 11460 men, thus making a total sample of 34378 subjects. The reduction in the original sample was based on the completeness of information on variables necessary for the measurement of HIV stigma and media access.

Data were extracted from the measure DHS website. These include women's and men's files. The two files were merged after selecting the variables relevant to the accomplishment of the study's aims and objectives from each of the files. The data were weighted before use in order to limit some of the inadequacies that the cluster design approach that was used during the data collection exercise might cause to the outputs.

The dependent variable was the perception of HIV-related stigma, measured with the integration of five relevant questions obtained from the original questionnaire used during the survey. These are: willingness to care for relatives living with HIV/AIDS (Yes=0, No=1); a female teacher infected with HIV, but is not sick, and should be allowed to continue teaching (Yes=0, No=1); Can you buy vegetables from vendors with HIV? (Yes=0, No=1); People living with HIV should

be ashamed of themselves (Yes=0, No=1); People living with HIV should be blamed for bringing the disease to the community (Disagree=0, Agree=1). In these instances, 1 is an indicator of stigmatization. Aggregating the responses produced a maximum score of 5. Thus, an individual having a score of 3-5 was classified as having high perceived HIV stigma, 1-2 as low, and 0 as none.

Media exposure was measured using the frequency of listening to the radio, the frequency of watching television, and the frequency of reading newspapers. The responses to be chosen from are: Not at all=0, less than once in a week=1, at least once in a week=2, and almost every day=3. These options produced an overall maximum score of 9. This was later disaggregated into three categories as none, poor, and good, if a respondent scores 0, 1-4, and 5-9 points, respectively. Other independent variables are: sex, age, region, residence, education, and religion. Others are: ethnicity, wealth index, marital status, work status, ever been tested for HIV, and HIV knowledge.

Data were analyzed using the Chi-square test and a Generalized linear regression model at a 5.0% level of significance. The Chi-square was used to test an association between stigmatization perception (none, low, high) and the independent variables. The Generalized linear regression model was used to identify the determinants of stigmatization perception.

$$\eta_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_{1i} + \beta_2 x_{2i} \dots + \beta_p x_{pi}$$

The response $\eta_i, i = 1, 2, \dots, n$ is modeled by a linear function of explanatory variables $x_j, j = 1, 2, \dots, p$. Using this model, for the categorical variables, a dummy coding was created by making many variables out of the original variable. A categorical variable with k levels was transformed into $k-1$ variables, each with two levels. Careful construction of the variables resulted in uncorrelated dichotomous variables, and the var-

iables have the advantage of simplicity of interpretation and are more ideal than the correlated predictor variables. Dichotomous variables like place of residence and sex were directly entered

$$x_{pi} = \begin{pmatrix} x_{c_1} \\ x_{c_2} \\ \vdots \\ x_{c_i} \end{pmatrix} = (1 \quad 1 \quad \dots \quad 1) \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & \dots & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & \dots & 0 \\ \vdots & \vdots & \dots & \vdots \\ 0 & 0 & \dots & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

Eleven models were used to describe the relationship between perceived HIV-related stigma and the independent variables. In models 1 and 4, only media exposure was included to examine its singular influence on stigmatization perception among males and females, respectively. In models 2 and 5, the interaction between media exposure and HIV-related variables was examined for the two sex groups. Models 3 and 6 are the full models for males and females, respectively. In each model, the Akaike information criteria were calculated. The 7-11 models were based on merging the data in the two sex groups to examine the relationship between sex, media exposure, and perceived HIV-related stigma.

Ethical approval

Ethical approval for this study was obtained by the data originators from the Nigerian National Ethics Committee (NHREC/2008/07), functioning under the Ministry of Health. Informed consent was obtained from the respondents at the time of data collection, and they were assured of confidentiality and anonymity of the information they provided. Each consented participant was asked to sign an appropriate agreement form before the commencement of the interview. However, the authors were approved as the data originators to use their data for this study.

Results

[Figure 1 is here]

Figure 1 illustrates the percentage distribution of respondents by stigmatization level according to sex. The data revealed that 46.7% and 35.1% of males and females have a high level of stigmatization. About 18% of males reported that they

into the regression model. For those with more than two categories, like religion, household wealth, age, etc., dummy coding was used to re-code the variables as shown below;

will not stigmatize PLHA, as against 24.9% of females. Among all the respondents (males and females combined), 39% have a high level of stigmatization against PLHA, while 22.7% said they will not stigmatize PLHA.

[Table 1 is here]

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents by perceived HIV stigma according to background variables. The data revealed that media exposure was found to be significantly associated with the perception of stigmatization against PLHA. Among the males, 71.4%, 51.8%, and 26.9% of those with no, poor, and good media exposure, respectively, have high levels of stigmatization perception against PLHA ($p < 0.001$). Approximately 20.5% of women who have good exposure to media have a high stigmatization perception compared with 43.8% of their counterparts with no media exposure ($p < 0.001$). The data further showed that all the socio-demographic variables considered in this study were found to be significantly associated with the level of stigmatization. Among the males, 53.9% and 43.1% of those aged 15-24 years and 35-49 years, respectively, have high levels of stigmatization. However, respondents aged 25-34 years have the least high level of stigmatization as compared with other age segments of the studied subjects. This pattern was observed for females. In the male group, across the 6 regions in Nigeria, high stigmatization perception against PLHA was mostly found in the North-West (66.6%), while the least was observed among those in the North-Central region (29.1%). But among the females, the highest HIV-related stigma was observed among females living in the South-West region (49.1%)

and the least in North-Central (18.2%). Differences exist in the perception of stigmatization against PLHA by residents, and the data evidenced that the high stigmatization perception was higher among the males living in the rural areas (51.8%) than their counterparts in the urban areas (41.0%). A similar pattern was observed among females.

Having a high level of stigmatization perception falls consistently with increasing levels of education and increased wealth index in the two sex groups. For instance, a high level of stigmatization perception was 66.4% among males who had no formal education, as against only 19.9% found among those with a higher level of education. This observed pattern was found among females, but males consistently have a higher proportion of their members reporting high HIV-related stigma than females across all levels of education and wealth index. According to the religious group, the male data showed that a higher percentage of respondents who are Muslims (60.8%) have a higher stigmatization perception against PLHA than the Christians (34.6%). This pattern with lower percentages for each religion was observed among females. While 68.4% of men of Hausa ethnic background have a high perception of PLHA, 36.5% and 45.1% were found among the Igbos and Yoruba men, respectively. However, among women, the most perceived HIV-related risk was found among the Yoruba (48.0%) ethnic group. In either male or female sex composition, the percentage of people who have ever been tested for HIV and those who have good knowledge of HIV have a lower perception of stigmatization against PLHA compared to those who have not undergone an HIV test and those with poor HIV knowledge ($p < 0.001$).

[Figure 2 is here]

Figure 2 presents the gender differences in the percentage of high level of stigmatization perception by level of education according to the

three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. To ascertain the influence of education on high HIV-related stigmatization levels across the three ethnic groups. The analysis was restricted to women who had high levels of stigmatization, and the result shows that among males, 90% and 68.2% of Yoruba men who have no formal education and primary education have the highest HIV-related stigma, respectively, across the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. This is also the pattern exhibited by women. However, among women across all levels of education, high stigmatization perception against PLWA was mostly reported by Yoruba women, and this was closely followed by Igbo women, with Hausa women having the least.

[Table 2 is here]

Tables present the output of the generalized linear regression models of sex differential in perceived HIV-stigma according to background variables. The analysis output displays six models of presenting the relationship between media exposure, sex, and stigmatization perception against PLWHA. Models 1, 2, and 3 are for males, while 4, 5, and 6 are for females. β is the mean difference ($x_{ki} - x_{kj}$) between the HIV-stigma score of a specific category i and the reference category j of a variable k . In the models, positive values of β are indications of a higher risk of HIV-related stigma than the reference categories. Models 1 and 4 show a singular relationship between media exposure and HIV-related stigma among males and females, respectively. Models 2 and 5 represent the influence of HIV-related variables in the relationship between media exposure and HIV-related stigma. In model 1, the data indicated that the mean stigmatization perception against PLWHA was higher among individuals with no ($\beta = 1.30$, S. E = 0.05, $p < 0.001$) and poor ($\beta = 0.90$, S. E = 0.03, $p < 0.001$) exposure to media, respectively, than those with good exposure among males. In both sexes, the mean HIV stigma was higher in the South-West than in any other region in Nigeria. In models 2 and 5, the

interactions between media exposure and HIV-related variables showed that people with no and poor exposure to media have a higher mean perception of stigmatization than those with good exposure in both sexes. The mean stigmatization perception was ($\beta=0.67$, S. E=0.03, $p<0.001$) higher among men who have poor knowledge of HIV than those with good HIV knowledge. These patterns persisted when other variables were used as a control in both sexes. In the full model for either males or females, the identified predictors of stigmatization perception against PLHA are media exposure, age, ever undergone HIV test, region, HIV knowledge, residence, education, religion, ethnicity, and wealth index (models 3 and 6).

[Table 3 is here]

Table 3 presents the outputs of the generalized linear regression models of perceived HIV stigma according to background variables. When the data for males and females were pooled together to establish the relationship between sex, media exposure, and HIV stigmatization perception amid other confounding variables. The data showed that the mean difference of HIV-stigma was 0.33 (S. E=0.02, $p<0.001$) higher among males than females and the difference was more ($\beta=0.46$, S. E=0.18, $p<0.001$) when media exposure was included in the model (Model 9). Also, the risk of HIV-related stigma was higher among males ($\beta=0.44$, S. E=0.02) than females when other possible confounding variables were introduced into the model (Model 11). In Nigeria, the risk of HIV-related stigma was ($\beta=0.56$, S. E=0.003, $p<0.001$), and ($\beta=0.37$, S. E=0.37, $p<0.001$) higher among people with no and poor media exposure, respectively, than those with good exposure in the full model (Model 11). The risk of stigmatizing PLHA was higher among younger individuals than older ones. HIV-related stigma was higher among those who had poor knowledge of HIV, those who had not had an HIV test, and those who lived in rural areas than those with good knowledge, undergone HIV

tests, and those who lived in urban areas, respectively. HIV stigma is reduced with increasing levels of education and increased household wealth.

Discussion

Worldwide, HIV/AIDS is one of the infectious diseases that has threatened human life in the past four decades (Population Reference Bureau, 2024). The morbidity and mortality associated with the disease had negative impact on countries where the disease prevalence is high, developing countries in particular (Trapero-Bertran and Oliva-Moreno, 2014). Despite the immense contribution of anti-retroviral therapy in improving the longevity and survival chances of PLHA, the disease remains deadly and still causes high morbidity and mortality (UNAIDS, 2021). The PLHA would need support, care, and affection from those who don't have the disease in the population. Such supports have implications on how PLHA cope with the disease in terms of their morale and psychological state (Chaudoir et al., 2012). Traditionally, the family and community structures in Nigeria provide that the sick should be catered for. However, PLHA is often neglected, ostracized, and stigmatized because of the fear that the disease might be contracted through them (Bala et al., 2022; Adimora et al., 2019). In some instances, people attribute the disease mainly to past immoral sexual behaviors, not conscious of the fact that there are several means of contracting HIV, consequently, the victims are blamed. To change the orientation of the populace about these perspectives, Nigerian governments and International Agencies have been involved in wide campaigns on the need to accept PLHA at home and community. This they do through the media. Unfortunately, the level of media access is different across population groups and individuals in Nigeria. Therefore, we examined the role of gender in the relationship between media access and perception of stigmatization against PLHA in Nigeria.

This study revealed that the prevalence of perceived HIV-related stigma was high in Nigeria, but a higher prevalence was observed among males than females. The prevalence found in this study was slightly higher than the figure obtained in Arinze-Onyia and colleagues' study (Arinze-Onyia et al., 2015). While our study used a community and population-based approach, the latter study was conducted among the PLHA attending the ART clinic in a specific location in Nigeria, and this might be the reason for the difference in the two findings. Higher prevalence of stigmatization perception against PLHA among males than females obtained in our study did not agree with the result of the previous studies conducted in Mozambique, which found that women's HIV-stigma score was higher among men than women (Ha et al., 2019). Differences in the methodologies used in sample selection between these studies and ours could be attributed to this variation.

Media communication has been shown as an effective way of disseminating information to the population on a particular health problem and its possible solutions, mainly because of its wide coverage. In Nigeria, information on the need to accept the PLHA in the community is often provided by the three major means of communication, the radio, television, and newspaper. In this study, we found that the level of perception of stigmatization against PLHA reduces with increasing levels of media exposure. Findings from the multivariate analysis also supported this outcome, and the pattern was common to both sexes. This finding corroborated previous studies carried out in Sub-Saharan Africa (Onsomu et al., 2023; Bekalu et al., 2014). As emphasized in Bekalu and colleagues' study, media exposure to HIV-related communication is associated with increased knowledge about HIV, and this has positive implications for accepting attitudes towards PLHA. Although our study does not verify access to HIV-related programs in the media, the findings unwaveringly suggest that media-based HIV programs can institute an effective approach

to combating HIV/AIDS-related stigma in Nigeria.

The perception of stigmatization against PLHA was higher among rural than urban residents, even when the data were disaggregated by sex. The men and women living in rural areas have a higher perception of stigmatizing PLHA than their counterparts in urban areas. The observed pattern by sex and place of residence in the current study agrees with a similar study conducted in Kenya (Arefaynie et al., 2021). There is no doubt that people in urban areas might have more access to HIV stigma awareness and eradication information than those in rural areas. The negative influence of media access on the perceived HIV-stigma observed in our study could be responsible for the rural urban difference.

Religion is the set of beliefs, state of mind, tenets, and practices that define the relations between human beings and divinity. Virtually all religions teach friendliness to our fellow men, and the unique rule of religious teaching is to treat others as we would like to be treated. Religion shapes daily activities in Nigeria. The stigma attached to HIV/AIDS not only affects the individual's access to health care but also their relationship with religious groups (Collins et al., 2008). In this study, it is rather amazing that a sizeable proportion of people in the two main religious groups in Nigeria said they would stigmatize PLHA. The belief by religious followers that HIV is a punishment from God as a result of promiscuity and immoral behaviors might be the reason for this finding. However, a higher proportion of people in Islamic religious groups than Christians said they would stigmatize PLHA. The striking differential in the literacy level between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria (National Population Commission and ICF International, 2018) may be responsible for the higher stigmatization perception among Muslims than Christians. Another possible explanation for this finding is that the level of perceived HIV-related stigma was found to be highest among people of

Hausa/Fulani ethnic background who are predominantly Muslims, compared to other ethnic groups.

The benefits of HIV screening and having good knowledge of HIV have been proven to outweigh the potential consequences. It has been recommended by the World Health Organization and other international health agencies that individuals should go for HIV screening at regular intervals. Knowledge of individual HIV status puts his/her mind at ease about HIV and provides the impetus on how to make informed health decisions (UNAIDS, 2016). About one-fifth of the studied women have undergone HIV screening, and the perceived HIV-related stigma was lower among women who had done HIV screening compared to those who had not. These findings were at variance with the outcome of a study conducted in rural area of South Africa (Treves-Kagan et al., 2017). The high prevalence of HIV in South Africa compared to the level in Nigeria (Population Reference Bureau, 2024) could be responsible for the difference. It is not unlikely that those who have gone for HIV screening had received counseling information on HIV transmission and stigma at the time of the test. In addition, virtually all HIV screening service centers in Nigeria have posters or leaflets or brochures that are accessible to visitors, including those who come for the test (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2022). Good knowledge of HIV/AIDS is protective for stigmatization against PLHA than those with poor knowledge, as evidenced in this study can also substantiate this finding.

Strength and Limitation

The paper addressed an important issue demonstrating the relationship between gender, media access, and HIV-related stigma in Nigeria, a high HIV-burden country. The findings revealed significant implications for designing effective interventions towards HIV-related stigma reduction in Nigeria. The framing of the paper in intersectionality and social cognitive theories offers a

robust model for understanding the complex interaction of social identities and stigma.

The use of a large, nationally representative dataset strengthens the generalizability of the findings to the Nigerian population. However, causality cannot be established in the findings due to the cross-sectional design approach used for the study's implementation, therefore, the findings must be interpreted with caution. While the paper uses frequency of media use as a proxy for media access, it did not further explore the content of the media accessed. Exposure to stigma-reducing messages versus potentially stigmatizing content which was not differentiated in the paper, is a good area for further research. Qualitative research that targets the reasons for HIV-stigma in Nigeria remains a relevant area for further research in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Stigmatization perception against PLHA was high in Nigeria and lowered as the level of media access increased, but higher among males than females. Study findings highlight gender and media access as pertinent predictors of perceived HIV-related stigma in Nigeria. Programmes that could alleviate stigmatization against PLHA should be strengthened in Nigeria. This study suggests that gender and access to media be considered as part of interventions to reduce HIV-related stigma in Nigeria.

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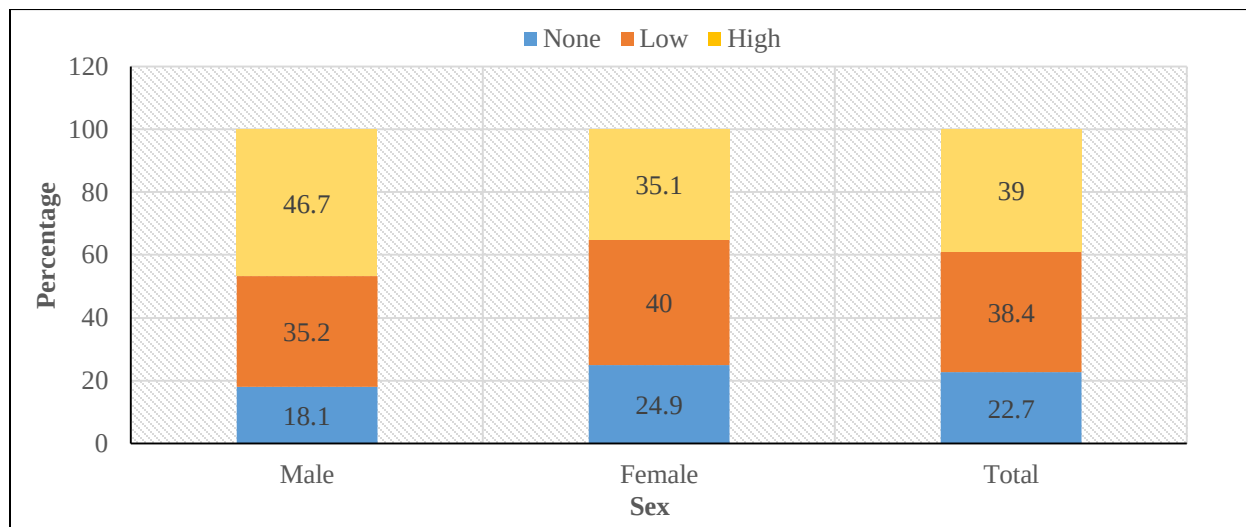


Figure 1: Percentage distribution of respondents by stigmatization level according to sex

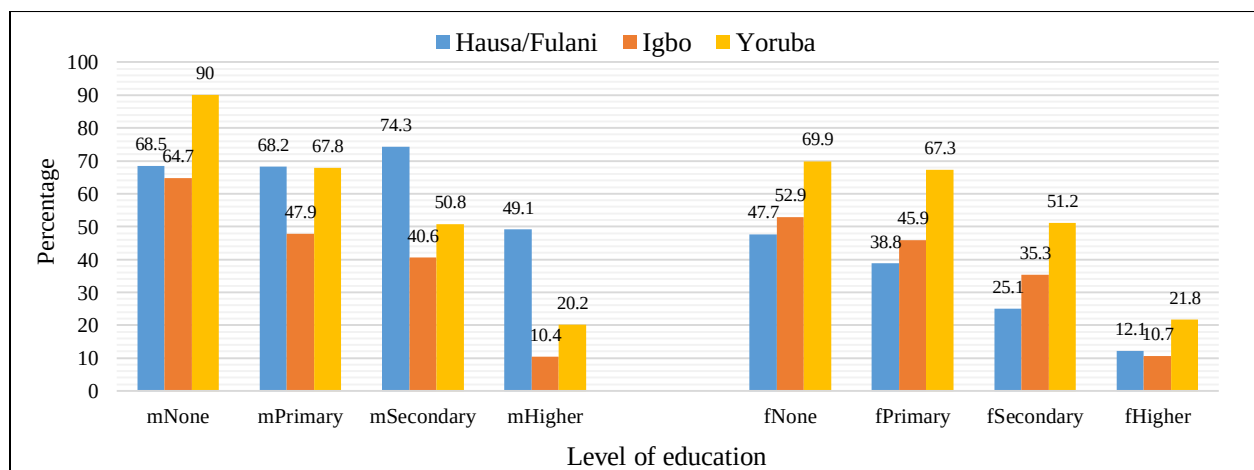


Figure 2: Percentage distribution of high level of stigmatization perception by level of education according to the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria [Males (m) and Females (f)]

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by perceived HIV-stigma according to background variables

Background Variables	Male			Total	χ^2 -value p-value	Females			Total	χ^2 -value p-value
	Stigmatization Level					Stigmatization Level				
	None	Low	High			None	Low	High		
	Men			Women						
Total	18.1	35.2	46.7	11460		24.9	40.0	35.1	22918	
Age					132.7*					35.8*
15-24	14.5	31.7	53.9	3971	<0.001	23.0	40.2	36.9	8075	<0.001
25-34	20.0	37.3	42.7	3579		26.6	39.9	33.4	7743	
35-49	20.1	36.8	43.1	3910		25.3	39.9	34.8	7100	
Region					1425.6*					1245.7*
North Central	22.2	41.9	35.9	1679	<0.001	37.9	44.0	18.2	3247	<0.001
North East	10.4	47.3	42.3	1478		18.6	52.7	28.6	2950	
North West	3.3	30.1	66.6	3234		22.6	38.3	39.1	5926	
South East	24.2	32.7	43.0	1222		21.0	41.6	37.5	3448	
South South	35.6	35.2	29.1	1939		33.2	36.7	30.1	3224	
South West	23.8	30.0	46.1	1904		19.5	31.4	49.1	4125	
Residence					191.4*					257.5*
Urban	22.7	36.3	41.0	5393	<0.001	29.1	39.9	31.0	11344	<0.001
Rural	14.1	34.2	51.8	6064		20.9	40.1	39.0	11574	
Education					1305.6*					1375.9*
None	3.6	30.0	66.4	1701	<0.001	15.0	41.4	43.5	6235	<0.001
Primary	10.1	32.2	57.6	1917		20.4	38.4	41.2	4165	
Secondary	17.6	35.7	46.7	5812		27.1	39.4	33.5	9642	
Higher	39.3	40.8	19.9	2028		45.7	41.1	13.2	2876	
Religion					1003.3*					453.3*
Christians	26.6	38.8	34.6	6173	<0.001	29.9	39.4	30.8	12793	<0.001
Muslims	8.1	31.2	60.8	5174		18.8	40.9	40.3	9962	
Others	15.3	22.5	62.2	111		12.3	32.1	55.6	162	
Ethnicity					1077.0*					908.3*
Hausa/Fulani	4.9	26.8	68.4	3307	<0.001	17.8	40.3	41.9	6292	<0.001
Igbo	27.1	36.4	36.5	1714		25.9	40.7	33.5	4270	
Yoruba	21.5	33.1	45.4	1614		19.7	32.3	48.0	3710	
Others	22.9	41.2	35.9	4822		31.9	42.8	25.3	8645	
Wealth Index				935.3*					817.8*	
Poor	5.5	30.7	63.8	3149	<0.001	14.1	39.5	46.3	6435	<0.001
Middle	12.9	36.2	50.8	2340		24.7	41.0	34.3	4597	
Rich	26.8	37.1	36.1	5968		30.9	39.8	29.3	11885	
Marital Status				13.4*					87.3*	
Never M	18.6	33.8	47.6	5408	0.009	28.4	40.6	31.0	5856	<0.001

Currently M	17.7	36.6	45.7	5871		23.5	39.7	36.8	15868	
Formerly M	16.7	30.0	53.3	180		26.7	40.8	32.5	1194	
Ever under- gone HIV test			1091					995.		
No	12.0	33.3	54.7	8377	<0.001	18.4	39.7	41.8	13562	<0.001
Yes	34.6	40.3	25.0	3082		34.4	40.4	25.3	9356	
HIV				177.9					390.5*	
Knowledge				*						
Poor	15.8	35.5	48.7	9194	<0.001	22.7	39.9	37.4	19036	<0.001
Good	27.5	34.0	38.6	2264		35.9	40.3	23.9	3882	
Media Exposure					1130.8					870.5*
					*					
None	4.4	24.2	71.4	1261	<0.001	14.4	41.8	43.8	4508	<0.001
Poor	13.7	34.5	51.8	6867		24.4	39.3	36.3	14527	
Good	32.3	40.8	26.9	3330		39.2	40.6	20.2	3882	

*Significant at 0.1%; **Significant at 1.0%; M: Married; SL: Stigmatization level

Table 2: Generalized linear regression models of sex differential in perceived HIV-stigma according to background variables

Background Variables	Males			Females		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	β (S.E)	β (S.E)	β (S.E)	β (S.E)	β (S.E)	β (S.E)
Media Exposure						
None	1.30(0.05) *	1.12(0.05)*	0.51(0.05)*	1.04(0.03) *	0.76(0.04) *	0.48(0.04) *
Poor	0.90(0.03) *	0.67(0.03)*	0.30(0.03)*	0.65(0.04) *	0.51(0.03) *	0.30(0.03) *
Good ^{R.C}	0 ^a	0 ^a	0 ^a	0 ^a	0 ^a	0 ^a
Age						
15-24			0.19(0.05)*			0.22(0.03) *
25-34			0.11(0.04)* *			0.10(0.02) *
35-49 ^{R.C}			0 ^a			0 ^a
Ever undergone HIV test						
No		0.76(0.03)*	0.43(0.03)*		0.52(0.02) *	0.37(0.02) *
Yes ^{R.C}		0 ^a	0 ^a		0 ^a	0 ^a
Region						

North Central	-0.49(0.06)*	-	1.25(0.05)*
North East	-0.46(0.07)*	-	1.17(0.05)*
North West	-0.06(0.06)	-	1.12(0.06)*
South East	0.14(0.08)	-	0.07(0.06)
South South	-0.44(0.06)*	-	0.56(0.05)*
South West ^{R.C}	0 ^a		0 ^a
HIV Knowledge			
Poor	0.67(0.03)*	0.61(0.03)*	0.41(0.03)*
Good ^{R.C}	0 ^a	0 ^a	0 ^a
Residence			
Urban	-0.21(0.03)*	-	0.19(0.03)*
Rural ^{R.C}	0 ^a		0 ^a
Education			
None	0.65(0.06)*		0.59(0.05)*
Primary	0.71(0.05)*		0.59(0.04)*
Secondary	0.59(0.04)*		0.40(0.04)*
Higher ^{R.C}	0 ^a		0 ^a
Religion			
Christians	-0.60(0.13)*	-	0.44(0.12)*
Muslims	-0.29(0.14)†	-	0.19(0.12)

Others ^{R.C}	0 ^a	0 ^a
Ethnicity		
Hausa	0.13(0.05)†	0.26(0.04) *
Igbo	- 0.17(0.06)* *	- 0.13(0.05) †
Yoruba ^{R.C}	0.23(0.06)*	0.46(0.05) *
Others	0 ^a	0 ^a
Wealth Index		
Poor	0.21(0.04)*	0.41(0.03) *
Middle	0.19(0.04)*	0.09(0.03) **
Rich ^{R.C}	0 ^a	0 ^a
Marital Status		
Never married	-0.42(0.11)*	- 0.08(0.05)
Currently married	-0.36(0.10)*	0.10(0.04) †
Formerly married ^{R.C}	0 ^a	0 ^a
<i>Intercept</i>	<i>1.61(0.03) *</i>	<i>0.67(0.04)*</i>
<i>AIC</i>	<i>41194.191</i>	<i>20188.238</i>
	<i>39105.685</i>	<i>86034.624</i>
	<i>85581.148</i>	<i>82319.015</i>

*Significant at 0.1%; **Significant at 1.0%; †Significant at 5.0%; AIC: Akaike Information Criteria; a: Set to zero because the parameter is redundant; RC: Reference category

Table 3: Generalized linear regression models of perceived HIV stigma according to background variables

Background Variables	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11
	β(S.E)	β(S.E)	β(S.E)	β(S.E)	β(S.E)
Media Exposure					
None	1.03(0.03)*		1.14(0.03)*	0.87(0.03)*	0.56(0.03)*
Poor	0.69(0.02)*		0.79(0.02)*	0.60(0.02)*	0.37(0.02)*

Good ^{R.C}	0 ^a	0 ^a	0 ^a
Sex			
Male	0.33(0.02)*	0.46(0.18)*	0.36(0.02)*
Female ^{R.C}	0 ^a	0 ^a	0 ^a
Age			
15-24			0.19(0.03)*
25-34			0.11(0.02)*
35-49 ^{R.C}			0 ^a
Ever undergone HIV test			
No		0.59(0.02)*	0.38(0.02)*
Yes ^{R.C}		0 ^a	0 ^a
Region			
North Central			-1.00(0.04)*
North East			-0.92(0.04)*
North West			-0.73(0.04)*
South East			-0.01(0.05)
South South			-0.55(0.04)*
South West ^{R.C}			0 ^a
HIV Knowledge			
Poor		0.49(0.02)*	0.41(0.02)*
Good ^{R.C}		0 ^a	0 ^a
Residence			
Urban			-0.19(0.02)*
Rural ^{R.C}			0 ^a
Education			
None			0.52(0.04)*
Primary			0.60(0.03)*
Secondary			0.46(0.03)*
Higher ^{R.C}			0 ^a
Religion			
Christians			-0.50(0.09)*

Muslims					-0.23(0.09)†
Others ^{R.C}					0 ^a
Ethnicity					
Hausa					0.21(0.03)*
Igbo					-0.13(0.04)**
Yoruba					0.40(0.04)*
Others ^{R.C}					0 ^a
Wealth Index					
Poor					0.37(0.03)*
Middle					0.14(0.02)*
Rich ^{R.C}					0 ^a
Marital Status					
Never married					-0.10(0.05)†
Currently married					0.02(0.04)
Formerly married ^{R.C}					0 ^a
Intercept	1.47(0.02)*	1.97(0.01)*	1.25(0.02)*	0.65(0.03)*	1.28(0.11)*
AIC	127965.803	129175.878	13722.148	125615.206	122177.679

*Significant at 0.1%; **Significant at 1.0%; †Significant at 5.0%; AIC: Akaike Information Criteria, a: Set to zero because the parameter is redundant; RC: Reference category

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.18>THE INFLUENCE OF *UMUADA*'S DEVELOPMENTAL INITIATIVES IN AKWUKE**Kelechi Johnmary Ani**

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Women that are born in different African societies have over the ages, contributed in different forms towards their societal development. Amongst the Igbo people, the Umuada remains a formidable force in societal development. This study focuses on the role of the Umuada in the development of Akwuke society. The researcher used ten key informant interviews and secondary literature to develop the content of the study. It found that women in Akwueke have engaged in different economic, social, political and educational programs that are aimed to transform their society. It therefore calls for private and public support towards Akwuke women for sustainable societal development. This will significantly enhance grassroots development in the community.

Keywords: Akwuke, development, gender, Umuada, & women,

Introduction

Akwuke is one of the 174 communities in Enugu State, Nigeria. Akwuke has an estimated population of 28,000 people, disaggregated into 12,500 men and boys and 15,500 women and girls. Located in the town of Akwuke along the Enugu Port Harcourt Expressway in Enugu South Local Government Area of Enugu State, the study area is located between Latitude 6° 22' 34" north and Longitude 7°29' 47.4 "east of the equator. The Akwuke people, residing in the southeastern part of Nigeria within Enugu State, are a significant part of the Igbo ethnic group. The Igbo are one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria, and their origins are steeped in rich oral traditions and historical narratives. For the Akwuke community, these traditions trace their ancestry back to the ancient Nri Kingdom, a cradle of Igbo civilization known for its significant cultural and religious influence. The Nri Kingdom, which emerged around the 10th century, is often regarded as the heartland of the Igbo people, and it played a pivotal role in shaping the cultural and societal norms of various Igbo communities, including Akwuke (Eze, 2019).

Oral traditions among the Akwuke people suggest that their ancestors were part of the waves of migration that spread out from the Nri Kingdom. These migrations were driven by various factors, including the search for more arable land, the need to escape conflicts, and the desire to establish new communities (Okoye, 2021). The Nri Kingdom itself was renowned for its non-militaristic approach and its emphasis on peace and diplomacy, which may have influenced the migration patterns of the Akwuke, as they sought to establish settlements that mirrored these values. This emphasis on peaceful coexistence is still evident in the Akwuke community's culture and social structure.

In addition to oral traditions, and other historical facts supports the long-standing presence of the Akwuke people in their current region. Archaeological findings in the broader Igbo territory indicate a history of habitation that spans thousands of years, with evidence of sophisticated societies that engaged in agriculture, trade, and metalworking. These archeological and historical findings in many Igbo societies align with the

oral histories of the Akwuke, suggesting a deep-rooted connection to the land and a continuous presence in the area (Nnamani, 2020). The Igbo, including the Akwuke, are known for their independent and decentralized communities, each with its unique traditions and governance structures, which have allowed them to maintain a strong cultural identity over the centuries.

Moreover, the Akwuke people's origin is intertwined with the broader historical movements within the Igbo region. The Igbo heartland, characterized by its dense population and fertile lands, was a hub of cultural and economic activity. This environment fostered the growth of communities like Akwuke, which developed distinct identities while sharing common cultural threads with other Igbo groups. The Akwuke, through their oral histories, maintain a strong sense of identity and continuity, underscoring their connection to the ancient roots of the Igbo civilization.

In conclusion, the origin of the Akwuke people is deduced from oral traditions, historical narratives, and archaeological findings. Their connection to the ancient Nri Kingdom highlights their deep cultural and historical roots within the Igbo ethnic group. The migrations from Nri, driven by a quest for fertile land and peaceful cohabitation, and supported by evidence of long-term habitation, underscore the rich heritage of the Akwuke community. This blend of history and tradition forms the foundation of their identity, linking them to the broader narrative of the Igbo people and their ancient civilization (Obi, 2022).

The origins of the Akwuke people, as with many Igbo communities, are primarily understood through oral traditions and historical narratives. These traditions suggest that the ancestors of Akwuke migrated from the Nri Kingdom, a renowned center of Igbo culture and religion. The Nri priests, known for their spiritual and ritualistic authority, played a crucial role in the dispersion of Igbo culture and values. As groups migrated from Nri, they carried with them the customs, religious practices, and social norms that would define their new communities.

The migration of the Akwuke people was driven by various factors, including the search for fertile land, the need for security, and the expansion of trade. As the population of the Nri Kingdom

grew, it became necessary for some groups to move outward to establish new settlements. This movement was often gradual, with families and clans branching out to find arable land suitable for agriculture. The fertile plains of the current Enugu State provided an ideal location for the Akwuke people to settle, engage in farming, and build their community, with many women being very active in community development. Consequently, this study will focus on the role Akwuke women in their societal development. It will document their economic, social and other contributions to the development of their society.

Methodology and Statement of Problem

This study is developed using primary and secondary sources. The primary sources were gathered as interviews from key informants. A total of ten key informants were interviewed and their opinions presented thematically. They were randomly selected by the researcher. The primary sources were then amplified by secondary sources that is made up of published academic literature.

Because women in Akwuke play vital roles in both socio-political and economic spheres. Although traditionally excluded from formal political positions, women influence decision-making through women's groups and associations. These groups, such as the Umu Ada (daughters of the land) and various cooperative societies, focus on community welfare, conflict resolution, and economic empowerment. Women's participation in market activities and local businesses further enhances their socio-political influence.

The Akwuke community, like many traditional societies, faces challenges in balancing traditional governance with modern political systems. Issues such as land disputes, youth restiveness, and the erosion of cultural values require continuous adaptation and integration of both governance forms. Nevertheless, the resilience and adaptability of the Akwuke people ensure that their socio-political structures remain robust and effective.

The socio-political organization of the Akwuke people is a dynamic blend of tradition and modernity. Through councils of elders, the Igwe, age grades, secret societies, and modern political

participation, the community maintains its cultural heritage while effectively engaging with contemporary governance systems. This dual structure not only preserves the past but also paves the way for sustainable development and social cohesion (Eze, 2019; Okafor, 2018)

Discussion and Presentation of Umuada's Developmental Initiatives in Akwuke

The role of Umuada in the development of post-colonial Akwuke, particularly from 1960 to 2020, cannot be overstated. As a historical construct, Umuada refers to the association of daughters of a particular lineage or community, both married and unmarried, who unite wherever they find themselves within or outside their natal homes to contribute to the socio-cultural and economic development of their communities. Their influence in Akwuke has been profound, shaping various aspects of the community's development. Umuada have historically played a significant role in the social development of Akwuke. Through their collective efforts, they have fostered social cohesion and community solidarity. Their influence extends beyond mere social interactions to encompass a broad spectrum of activities that have strengthened the social fabric of the community. One of the most significant contributions of Umuada to the social development of Akwuke is their role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. In a traditional Igbo society, disputes and conflicts are inevitable, ranging from land disagreements to family disputes. The Umuada are often called upon to mediate these conflicts due to their unique position as daughters of the lineage who are seen as impartial and above local politics. *Their methods of conflict resolution are deeply rooted in Igbo customs and traditions, emphasizing dialogue, restitution, and reconciliation. By mediating disputes, Umuada help to maintain peace and order in Akwuke, which is essential for any community's social stability and development. Their ability to restore harmony ensures that conflicts do not escalate into violence, which could disrupt the community's cohesion and progress* (KIIs, I, 2024).

Umuada also play a crucial role in organizing and supporting social ceremonies such as marriages, funerals, and festivals. These events are central to the community's cultural identity and social

life. The involvement of Umuada in these ceremonies ensures that they are conducted with respect to traditional customs and that they reinforce social ties within the community. For instance, during marriages, Umuada often provide guidance and support to the bride, ensuring that she understands her roles and responsibilities within her new family. In funerals, they ensure that the deceased is honored according to cultural norms, which is vital for the community's spiritual and social well-being. Festivals, on the other hand, provide opportunities for communal bonding, and Umuada's leadership in organizing these events helps to strengthen unity among the people of Akwuke. Their participation in these ceremonies not only preserves cultural practices but also fosters a sense of belonging and identity among the community members. This sense of identity is crucial for social development, as it encourages individuals to contribute positively to the community's growth and well-being.

Umuada have also been at the forefront of advocating for social justice and the welfare of vulnerable members of the community, particularly women and children. Their advocacy often involves addressing issues such as domestic violence, child neglect, and the rights of widows. As a respected group, Umuada are able to challenge injustices and push for the protection of those who may not have a voice in the community. In cases of domestic violence, for instance, Umuada do intervene to protect the victim and seek justice within the traditional framework of the community. They also ensure that widows are not mistreated or dispossessed of their late husbands' properties, which is a common issue in some communities. By addressing these social issues, Umuada contribute to the creation of a more just and equitable society in Akwuke.

The Umuada play a significant role in promoting social values and morality within the community. As custodians of tradition, they are responsible for upholding the moral standards of the society. They do this by setting examples in their behavior and by guiding younger women on the expectations of their roles as daughters, wives, and mothers. Their influence is particularly evident in their efforts to curb social vices such as dishonesty, laziness, and disrespect. Through both formal and informal education, Umuada instill

values such as hard work, respect for elders, and communal responsibility in the younger generations. This moral guidance is essential for the social development of Akwuke, as it ensures that the community's values are preserved and passed down to future generations.

Umuada have also been instrumental in strengthening social networks and community support systems in Akwuke, their gatherings and meetings provide opportunities for women to connect, share experiences, and offer mutual support. These networks are crucial for the social development of the community, as they foster a sense of solidarity and collective responsibility. During times of crisis, such as illness or economic hardship, Umuada often mobilize resources to support affected families. This support may come in the form of financial assistance, provision of food, or help with childcare. By providing these forms of support, Umuada ensure that the social fabric of the community remains strong, even in the face of challenges (KIIs, II, 2024)

Economically, Umuada have contributed to the development of Akwuke through various initiatives aimed at empowering women and supporting local businesses. They have organized cooperative societies and savings groups that provide financial support to women in the community. These groups have enabled women to engage in small-scale businesses, agriculture, and other income-generating activities, thereby contributing to the local economy. The economic development initiatives led by Umuada in Akwuke have significantly contributed to the financial empowerment and economic stability of the community, particularly among women. One of the most impactful initiatives has been the establishment of cooperative societies, which serve as platforms for women to pool resources, access credit, and engage in various income-generating activities. A prime example is the Akwuke Women's Multipurpose Cooperative Society, created by the Umuada to provide women with financial support through collective savings and loans. Members of this cooperative contribute regularly to a communal fund, which is then used to offer low-interest loans to participants. These loans enable women to start or expand small businesses, invest in agriculture, and meet personal financial

needs, thereby fostering economic growth within the community. In addition to savings and credit cooperatives, the Umuada have also recognized the critical role of agriculture in the local economy and have responded by establishing the Akwuke Agricultural Cooperative. This cooperative is specifically designed to support women who are engaged in farming, which is a primary occupation in Akwuke. Through this cooperative, women gain access to essential farming inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, and modern tools, which are often difficult to obtain individually. Moreover, the cooperative organizes training programs that introduce modern agricultural practices, enabling women to increase their crop yields and improve the quality of their produce. By facilitating the collective marketing of agricultural products, the cooperative ensures that women receive fair prices, enhancing their income and contributing to the broader economic development of Akwuke.

Beyond cooperative societies, the Umuada have also been instrumental in promoting vocational training and skill acquisition among women and youths in Akwuke. Understanding that economic empowerment extends beyond immediate financial support, the Umuada have initiated various training programs aimed at equipping women with skills that are in demand in the local and regional markets. These programs include training in tailoring, hairdressing, bead-making, and other crafts that provide sustainable income opportunities. *The Umuada often collaborate with local artisans and experts to deliver these training sessions, ensuring that participants gain practical skills that can be immediately applied. Upon completion of these programs, many women have gone on to establish their own small businesses, contributing to their families' incomes and the economic vibrancy of the community. However, the Umuada's economic initiatives are not limited to financial and agricultural support; they also encompass the establishment of small-scale industries within Akwuke. For example, the Umuada have supported the creation of small processing plants where agricultural products like cassava and palm oil can be processed and packaged for sale. These small industries not only add value to raw agricultural products but also create employment opportunities*

for community members, particularly women. By processing and packaging locally produced goods, Akwuke can participate more effectively in broader markets, thereby increasing the community's income and economic resilience (KIIs, III, 2024).

Overall, the economic development initiatives of the Umuada in Akwuke have been instrumental in transforming the economic landscape of the community. Through cooperative societies, vocational training, and the establishment of small-scale industries, the Umuada have empowered women, increased agricultural productivity, and enhanced the overall economic stability of Akwuke. These initiatives have not only improved the financial well-being of individual families but have also contributed to the collective economic growth of the community, making Akwuke a more prosperous and self-reliant society.

Umuada's influence extends to the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage in Akwuke. They have been at the forefront of efforts to sustain traditional practices and customs that are vital to the community's identity. Through their involvement in cultural festivals, rituals, and the teaching of indigenous knowledge, Umuada ensure that the younger generations are aware of and appreciate their cultural heritage. In the post-colonial period, particularly after Nigeria's independence in 1960, there was a significant shift towards modernization and Westernization, which threatened traditional practices. *Umuada played a crucial role in balancing these influences by advocating for the preservation of beneficial customs while also embracing positive aspects of modernity. This dual approach has allowed Akwuke to develop culturally while also adapting to changing times* (KIIs, IV, 2024)

The Umuada of Akwuke has played a vital role in the cultural preservation and development of the community, ensuring that traditional practices, values, and knowledge are maintained and passed down through generations. In a rapidly changing world where modern influences often threaten to erode traditional ways of life, the Umuada have emerged as custodians of Akwuke's cultural heritage, balancing the need to preserve the past while also adapting to contemporary realities. *One of the primary ways the*

Umuada have contributed to cultural preservation is through their active participation in and organization of cultural festivals and ceremonies. These events, such as the New Yam Festival, marriages, and funeral rites, are deeply embedded in the social fabric of Akwuke and serve as crucial expressions of the community's identity. The Umuada ensure that these ceremonies are conducted according to traditional customs, with an emphasis on maintaining the rituals and practices that have been handed down over generations (KIIs, V, 2024). By leading these ceremonies, the Umuada not only reinforce the cultural norms of the community but also provide a living example for younger generations to learn and appreciate their heritage.

In addition to organizing cultural events, the Umuada have also been instrumental in the teaching and transmission of indigenous knowledge and practices. This includes traditional crafts, such as weaving, pottery, and bead-making, which are important not only as cultural expressions but also as economic activities. The Umuada often hold workshops and training sessions where they pass on these skills to younger women in the community. By doing so, they ensure that these crafts do not die out and that the cultural knowledge associated with them continues to thrive. This transmission of skills also empowers younger generations economically, as they can use these traditional crafts to generate income. The Umuada's role in cultural preservation extends beyond ceremonies and crafts to encompass the protection and promotion of the Igbo language, which is a fundamental aspect of Akwuke's cultural identity. In many African communities, indigenous languages are at risk of being overshadowed by colonial languages like English. The Umuada, however, actively promote the use of the Igbo language in daily communication, storytelling, and education. They encourage parents to speak Igbo with their children and organize cultural events where the language is prominently used. By fostering a strong connection to the Igbo language, the Umuada help to maintain the linguistic diversity of the community and ensure that future generations remain connected to their cultural roots.

Furthermore, the Umuada have played a signifi-

cant role in preserving the moral and ethical values that are central to the cultural identity of Akwuke. In their capacity as respected leaders within the community, they act as moral guides, upholding and enforcing the community's codes of conduct. This includes promoting virtues such as respect for elders, communal responsibility, and integrity. The Umuada often intervene in situations where these values are at risk of being compromised, such as in cases of family disputes or social misconduct. *Their involvement in these matters reinforces the importance of cultural values in maintaining social harmony and cohesion. In the face of modernity, the Umuada have also shown a remarkable ability to adapt cultural practices to contemporary challenges while retaining their core essence. For instance, in response to the influence of Christianity and other religions, the Umuada have found ways to integrate traditional beliefs with new religious practices. This has allowed the community to maintain its cultural identity while also embracing aspects of modern religious life. Such adaptability ensures that Akwuke's culture remains relevant and vibrant, even as the community evolves* (KIIs, VI, 2024).

In fact, the Umuada of Akwuke has been indispensable in preserving and developing the cultural heritage of their community. Through their efforts in organizing traditional ceremonies, teaching indigenous knowledge, promoting the Igbo language, and upholding moral values, they have ensured that Akwuke's cultural identity remains strong. Their work not only honors the past but also lays a foundation for future generations to continue the cultural traditions of Akwuke in a rapidly changing world.

Umuada have also exerted influence in the political sphere of Akwuke. Though traditionally not involved in formal politics, their role as cultural custodians has given them a voice in local governance. They have used this influence to advocate for the rights of women and the underprivileged, ensuring that their needs are considered in community decisions. Traditionally, women in many African societies, including the Igbo, were often perceived as being on the periphery of formal political power. However, the Umuada have challenged this perception by asserting their influence in both traditional and modern political

arenas, ensuring that their voices are heard and their concerns are addressed. One of the key areas where the Umuada have exercised political influence is in the realm of traditional governance. In Igbo society, while men typically hold the formal titles and leadership positions, *the Umuada wield considerable power, particularly in matters related to family and community welfare. They have a unique position as daughters of the community, which allows them to intervene in disputes, make decisions on family issues, and even influence the selection of traditional leaders. The Umuada's involvement in these areas ensures that women's perspectives are considered in the governance of the community and that decisions are made in a way that benefits the entire community, not just a select group* (KIIs, VII, 2024).

The Umuada's political influence extends to conflict resolution, where they have been instrumental in mediating disputes that could otherwise escalate into larger conflicts. Their status as respected figures that are seen as impartial and invested in the well-being of the community makes them effective mediators. By intervening in disputes ranging from land conflicts to interpersonal disagreements, the Umuada help to maintain peace and stability in Akwuke. This role is inherently political, as it involves negotiating power dynamics, ensuring justice, and maintaining social order—all essential elements of governance. In addition to their role in traditional governance, the Umuada have also been active in advocating for women's rights and gender equality within the community. This advocacy is particularly important in a context where women have historically been marginalized in decision-making processes. The Umuada have used their influence to push for greater inclusion of women in both traditional and formal political structures. They have advocated for the participation of women in community meetings, decision-making councils, and even in the leadership of local development projects. By doing so, they have helped to break down barriers to women's participation in governance, ensuring that women's voices are heard in spaces where important decisions are made. Furthermore, *the Umuada have played a crucial role in addressing issues related to social justice*

and human rights in Akwuke. They have been vocal in advocating for the rights of vulnerable groups, including widows, children, and the elderly. For example, in situations where widows are at risk of being dispossessed of their late husbands' property, the Umuada have intervened to ensure that these women receive justice and are not left destitute. This form of advocacy is inherently political, as it challenges existing power structures and pushes for the protection of individuals who might otherwise be overlooked or oppressed (KIIs, VIII, 2024).

The Umuada's political activism is also evident in their engagement with modern political processes. They have been known to mobilize women during elections, encouraging them to vote and even to run for political office. By organizing voter education campaigns and advocating for the political participation of women, the Umuada contribute to the democratization process in Akwuke. Their efforts ensure that women are not only participants in the political process but also potential leaders, capable of shaping the future of their community. Moreover, *the Umuada have used their political influence to advocate for community development projects, such as the construction of schools, health centers, and roads. They have often lobbied local government officials and other stakeholders to secure funding and support for these projects. By doing so, they have positioned themselves as key players in the development of Akwuke, ensuring that the community's needs are met and that development is inclusive and equitable (KIIs, IX, 2024).*

The Umuada of Akwuke have demonstrated significant political influence and engaged in advocacy efforts that have reshaped the community's governance and political landscape. *Through their roles in traditional governance, conflict resolution, women's rights advocacy, and engagement with modern political processes, the Umuada have ensured that their voices are heard and that their community moves forward in a way that is just, inclusive, and representative of all its members (KIIs, X, 2024).* Their political influence is a testament to the power of collective action and the importance of ensuring that women have a seat at the table in all areas of decision-making.

Conclusion

The Umuada, a significant socio-cultural institution within Igbo communities, have played an indispensable role in the development of Akwuke, a town in Enugu State, Nigeria, from the post-colonial period of 1960 to 2020. The term "Umuada" refers to a collective of daughters born into a particular community, who, even after marriage, maintain a strong connection to their natal homes. Traditionally, the Umuada wield considerable influence in social, cultural, economic, and political matters, and their involvement in these spheres has been crucial to the growth and development of Akwuke over the past six decades. One of the most significant contributions of the Umuada to Akwuke has been in the realm of cultural preservation and development. In an era of rapid modernization and globalization, where traditional practices are increasingly under threat, the Umuada have stood as custodians of Akwuke's cultural heritage. They have been at the forefront of organizing and leading cultural festivals and ceremonies, such as the New Yam Festival, marriages, and funeral rites, ensuring that these traditions are upheld and passed down to younger generations. Through these activities, the Umuada have not only preserved the cultural identity of Akwuke but also provided a platform for intergenerational knowledge transfer, keeping the community's heritage alive.

The Umuada have also been instrumental in promoting and preserving the Igbo language within Akwuke. In a context where indigenous languages are often overshadowed by colonial languages like English, the Umuada have championed the use of Igbo in daily communication, storytelling, and educational activities. This linguistic advocacy has reinforced the community's cultural identity and ensured that younger generations remain connected to their roots. The Umuada's role in the economic development of Akwuke has been profound. They have established various cooperative societies that have empowered women economically and contributed to the overall financial stability of the community. One such example is the Akwuke Women's Multipurpose Cooperative Society, which provides women with access to credit through collective savings. This cooperative has

enabled many women to start or expand their small businesses, invest in agriculture, and meet their financial needs, thereby enhancing their economic independence.

Additionally, the Umuada have supported agricultural development in Akwuke through initiatives like the Akwuke Agricultural Cooperative. This cooperative provides women farmers with access to essential farming inputs, training in modern agricultural techniques, and collective marketing opportunities. These efforts have significantly boosted agricultural productivity in Akwuke, contributing to the community's economic resilience. Beyond cooperatives, the Umuada have organized vocational training and skill acquisition programs, equipping women and youths with marketable skills in crafts such as tailoring, bead-making, and pottery. These initiatives have not only preserved traditional crafts but also provided sustainable income opportunities for community members.

In the post-colonial era, the Umuada have also been active in advocating for women's rights and greater inclusion of women in governance. They have pushed for the participation of women in community meetings, decision-making councils, and leadership roles in local development projects. By doing so, the Umuada have helped to break down barriers to women's participation in governance, ensuring that women's voices are heard and their contributions recognized. Moreover, the Umuada have engaged in advocacy efforts related to social justice and human rights, particularly in supporting vulnerable groups such as widows, children, and the elderly. Their interventions in cases of social injustice, such as the dispossession of widows, have been crucial in upholding the rights of these individuals and maintaining social harmony in Akwuke.

The role of the Umuada in the development of post-colonial Akwuke from 1960 to 2020 has been multifaceted and indispensable. As custodi-

ans of culture, champions of economic empowerment, political advocates, and community builders, the Umuada have shaped the trajectory of Akwuke's development over the past six decades. Their contributions have ensured that Akwuke remains a vibrant, cohesive, and resilient community, deeply rooted in its cultural heritage while adapting to the challenges and opportunities of the modern world. The Umuada's legacy in Akwuke is a testament to the power of collective action and the importance of women's leadership in community development.

The Umuada of Akwuke has demonstrated remarkable resilience, adaptability, and leadership in the post-colonial development of their community from 1960 to 2020. Their contributions span across cultural preservation, economic empowerment, political advocacy, and social development, each of which has been crucial in shaping the trajectory of Akwuke's growth and modernization. In the cultural sphere, the Umuada have been instrumental in safeguarding Akwuke's traditions and values, ensuring that the community's rich cultural heritage is preserved for future generations. Their efforts in organizing and leading cultural events, promoting the Igbo language, and passing on indigenous knowledge have reinforced the community's identity and sense of belonging.

The Umuada's role in the development of post-colonial Akwuke has been profound and multifaceted. Their leadership and advocacy have not only preserved the cultural integrity of Akwuke but have also propelled the community towards greater economic and social advancement. The legacy of the Umuada in Akwuke serves as a powerful example of how women's collective action and traditional institutions can drive meaningful and lasting development in African communities.

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.19>**MAKING GENDER PARITY AN ACCOUNTABILITY OF EVERYONE IN A SECONDARY SCHOOLING SECTOR: A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE****Prof Solomon Modiba**

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Abstract:

The paper evaluates whether making gender parity an accountability of everyone in a secondary schooling sector will not lead to a noticeable mileage in the equalisation of the two genders. The paper is both conceptual and empirical in nature within the qualitative research paradigm. The question guiding the paper is: how can the secondary schooling sector be made a beacon of hope as regards evincing progress with the envisaged gender parity project? Document study and interviewing techniques were employed to collect data. The population comprised nine secondary schools from one district in Limpopo Province, South Africa of which three secondary schools were conveniently sampled. In each sampled secondary school, a male and a female learners became research participants. Research findings reveal that firstly, there is failure to confront patriarchy in schooling. Secondly, there is missing initiative to confront gender stereotyping in secondary schooling. Thirdly, there is the dilemma of the societal bias against females. Fourthly, there is the entrenched practice of females sabotaging each other in secondary schooling. Fifthly, there is the challenge of the inability to prevent drop-out of females in schooling. As part of the conclusion, the researcher recommends for the promotion of the concerted efforts as regards pushing back male gender dominance for gender parity in the secondary schooling sector to occur. In addition, the researcher recommends for the equitable treatment and trust of both genders at the secondary schooling environments for the sustainable development of the country and the continent of Africa.

Keywords: Accountability, Drop-out, Patriarchy, Sabotage. Stereotyping.

Introduction

Mdekazi (2017) is intrepid in proclaiming that the day the female gender truthfully refuses to be reduced by their male counterparts in any social activity the two genders are involved in, shall make a mark a genuine turning point of ushering gender parity in a society. Doing that will be part of pushing back the frontiers of masculine culture based on historic arrogance and mistaken notions of what exactly constitutes the female gender. The implication of this is that Africa's future, culture and value system deserve dismantling to create the sufficient space for gender parity. This is the case, because the deeply entrenched patriarchy, especially that of side-lining the female folk, has not demonstrated the social progress and economic development required by the continent of Africa and beyond. Gold (2016) maintains that there is a dire need for cultural evolution which has to incorporate arresting pa-

triarchy that delays the attainment of the sustainable development goals for the underdevelopment, developing and the developed countries of the world. Creating gender parity has to be an accountability of everyone due to the project being beneficial to every human being. Gender parity humanises and leads to humanism. This suggests that in the 21st century, genuine humanism has to be premised on equality and not on any mistaken notion. Gender parity, under discussion in this paper, is being comprehended by Sebola (2015) as the creation of a structure and order which cannot be externally imposed, which result from interaction between the multiplicity of humanism nodes which influence each other in the creation of the necessary gender equality. Every country be it underdeveloped, developing or developed stands to benefit from the created gender parity. At a school level, it is the most relevant and ideal platform for introducing gender equalisation. This resonates with the title of the paper whose

emphasis is on making gender parity an accountability of everyone in a schooling sector. At learning institutions, it is exactly where gender activism has to be internally generated other than being externally imposed, for it to remain relevant to the ethos, culture and general aspirations and preferences of the male and the female learners.

One of the key advantages of gender parity in a schooling sector, is its ability to nag all institutional members to be accustomed to be accommodative of each other despite their diverse gender orientations. One of the schooling maestros, namely, Clarke (2009) understands gender parity to be the act or manner of managing patriarchy, to prevent it from continuing to be an obstacle of development. In the context of schooling, the absence of gender parity could be a serious obstacle towards the male and the female genders being able to work together cooperatively and collectively in the business of knowledge acquisition. Broadly, this signifies that gender parity encapsulates the traditions and institutions that determine how authority is exercised in a particular schooling space with the intention of servicing all learners optimally irrespective of their gender orientations. To confirm the indispensability of gender equality, especially in an organisation like a school, which could record no educational progress and economic development when issues of gender disparity are allowed to dominate. Msila (2016) articulates that gender parity has a potential of steering the half-sinking ship into the school's bay through transformation and social change. The implication is that with gender equalization in place in a schooling sector, an education institution that was known to be struggling in terms of producing brilliant and exquisite learner results, could turn the tide and register quality educational progress and economic development for the benefit of achieving sustainable development goals that are beneficial for the progress of the country and the continent. This is possible, because, gender parity teaches civil ways of engagement for educational institutional

members especially when faced with insurmountable predicaments of underdevelopment, underachievement and those of general institutional dysfunctionality. Furthermore, gender parity is known to be able to teach how to decimate institutional challenges other than magnifying or aggravating them (Fox, 2010, Theletsane, 2014 & Moyo, 2015). Khoza (2015), Masina, (2015), Mdekazi (2017) and Tromp (2017) submit that in developing countries just like in underdeveloped countries, female learners forget that they do not need male learners to ascend to power but males normally need females to ascend to power.

The expressed statement signifies that the concept of gender parity could quickly be taken to the next level as and when being led and championed by even girl children themselves. Nkuna (2015) and Tisdall (2015) submit that apartheid and colonialism have instilled in the female gender of the African continent, a sense of self-hate and inferiority complex to the level of battling to create a sound gender equalisation which they could employ to govern, manage, regulate and lead their studies and their own affairs with dignity and pride. It has to be stated in no unequivocal terms that a sustainable gender parity plan stands to benefit the female folk more than they notice (Yukl, 2006, Motsepe, 2015). On that basis, the female folk needs to fight for the restoration of gender equalisation with their male counterparts. That is why Shejvali (2015) and Siswana (2007) assert and conclude that gender parity ascertains that all the secondary school learners with compelling attributes including their intellect and experience, do showcase and display them in a healthy teaching and learning space.

Jakes (2023) stresses that the involvement of diverse stakeholders in the creation of gender parity is indispensable. For instance, both male and female learners especially in secondary schools have a duty of taking care of one another irrespective of their genders. The manner of child up-bringing at home by parents has to reflect the 21st century where the parity of the two genders in terms of chores given to them has to be com-

pletely gender-blind. Treatment of male and female learners by their teachers at school, has to promote gender parity in every respect. The way in which school leaders manage and lead secondary schooling sector has to confirm and demonstrate that the era of side-lining and marginalising one gender is long over. All the genders have to be given an equal space and treatment at all times. Making gender parity an accountability of everyone stands to facilitate that every stakeholder, contributes sufficiently in generating a new society characterised by gender equalisation of male and females from home, school and in a society.

Literature review

Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005) submit that a theory as part of literature review, represents a mental view of a phenomenon or a system and normally forms the basis for a chain of reasoning. This signifies that when one advances a particular argument on a phenomenon such as evaluating whether making gender parity an accountability of everyone in a secondary schooling sector will not lead to a noticeable mileage in the equalisation of the two genders, with a theory in place, one's argument is likely to hold substance. The Critical theory and the Complexity Leadership theory, have been chosen as the theoretical frameworks to underpin this paper. Their selection rests on the relevance the researcher finds in them in terms of adequately illuminating issues of how making gender parity an accountability of everyone in the secondary schooling sector, will not add the momentum to the equalisation process of the two genders.

Besides enabling the researcher to frame this paper, the two theories, assisted immensely to make meaning from the whole notion of how gender equalisation as a starting point for educational progress and economic development of a country, at times gets frustrated from spousal attitude to girl children from the family level. Briefly, one of the principles of these two theories is that very often, the truth serves the status quo (Mdekazi, 2017). The other principle relates to the question of "why is it that certain groups of people are so

privileged in life than others?" These fundamental principles of the chosen theories were helpful in clarifying how rallying everyone around the concept of gender parity remains an uphill battle (Tromp, 2017). This is being aggravated by the biases and prejudices girl children suffer in the learning institutions, from falling pregnant to having patriarchal school mates. All of that and other reasons, delay the introduction of gender equalisation to stimulate inclusive educational progress and economic development of a country. The predicament with the mentioned sordid state of affairs is that it delays fully addressing gender disparities in the continents and its constituent countries (Motsepe, 2015). Traditionalism and the typical African outlook which promotes gender bias against girl children, is not helping the course. That delays the embracing of gender parity, which stands to benefit the globe's educational progress and economic development. The choice of the Critical theory and the Complexity Leadership theory in this paper, is informed by their encouragement of reflective and analytical thoughts as regards the complex concept of gender equalisation especially at the secondary schooling sector level. The question to pose is how long could it take the underdeveloped, the developing and the developed countries of the globe to completely overcome gender stereotyping against the female gender? The two selected theories are better placed to sufficiently and convincingly respond to such a question (Moyo, 2015).

In this paper, the two theories reveal that being approached and handled with vision, gender parity could indeed trigger and orchestrate educational progress and economic development through the two genders learning together in harmony and cooperatively helping one another for their mutual progress and that of their country and continent. On that note, these theories, serve as a basis for approaching, understanding and interpreting the whole issue of gender equalisation and the educational progress of a society and its sustainable economic advancement. Higgs and Smith (2010) advise that knowledge and how we understand truth, including scientific truth, moral

truth and historical truth should not be separated from everyday life. This implies that comprehending the trend on how gender parity unfolds in the underdeveloped, developing and the developed countries, the context of its manifestation can never be disregarded and ignored. That environment includes the patriarchal nature of global societies including the continent of Africa.

Theories assist in arriving at the root cause of the gender biases and prejudices characterising many African nations and beyond (Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 2009). The other relevance of the theories as part of literature review can be traced back to their emphasis of public ethics. In the context of this paper, that would imply the study of good and bad behaviour by human beings especially in the manner in which they interrelate and interact as part of rendering a social and an economic service to the fellow citizenry. These theories displayed a potential of uncovering whether the challenge of unpleasant attitude to girl children by their male counterparts, was because of a creation of socialisation structures, systems and processes down the years that persist to serve as a hindrance even today. The legitimacy and credibility of these theories as regards exposing the worrying effects of gender disparities as characterising global nations, is not in doubt. These theories stand out in advising against separating “real life testing” from scientific theories (Mdekazi, 2017). Historical reasons and existential conditions which some nations of the globe operate in, somewhat force and compel those global nations to think hard and long on when are they hoping to turn a tide as regards completely dismantling gender disparity for the benefit of the globe’s sustainable educational progress and economic stability.

The researcher reasons that not every theory, other than the chosen two which are underscoring this paper, could productively illuminate and delineate a problem of this paper (Allen, 2015). The problem of this paper centres around explaining the opportunity missed by countries of the globe, because of the challenge of patriarchy that runs from the families right to the space occupied by the nation. These theories advocate for

critical reflection on society, schooling included, in order to discover the hidden assumptions that maintain the existing power relationships that keep certain societal members perpetually enslaved though in a different form and guise (Higgs and Smith, 2010). In the context of this paper, the researcher reasons that the absence of gender parity in schooling wherein there is dominance of the male gender, that is tantamount to the female gender being enslaved and thus not as free as their male counterparts. Embracing these two theories by the researcher, in this paper, centres around the theories advising against separating the context of gender disparity from the sustainable educational progress and economic advancement of the nation. These theories teach that the global society requires to be emancipated from the mistaken notions of gender disparities, sooner rather than later (Arden, 2013). Global families and nations, do not have to wait for the unpleasant consequences of gender inequality, to spread further. This suggests that how the global society normally thinks and acts, is the product of many years of being subjected to conditions and circumstances of bad socialisation that either facilitate the quality and decent service to the nation or an entrenched and perpetual neglect of the female gender through the absence of strong socialisation systems, structures and processes in the families right to the public space (Tisdall, 2015). The unfortunate part is when secondary schooling globally demonstrates gender disparity. That is why as the title of the paper directs, this complex issue of gender parity has to be declared to be an accountability of everyone in underdeveloped, developing and the developed countries for the achievement of the sustainable development goals.

Problem statement

Hofstee (2010) deliberates that there is a distinction between the research topic and the research problem. The stated author submits that the researcher risks wasting the reader’s time where she fails to distinguish between a topic to read about and the research problem to surmount. The above elucidation signifies that with a research topic, the researcher gathers data about it, while

with the research problem, the researcher strives to have it ultimately addressed. The prerequisite of the researcher overcoming the research problem, is to have the better insight of it. Mouton (1996) avows that no skill is more useful than the ability to recognise and express the problem clearly and concisely. On the basis of the above, the problem of this paper centres around critiquing why gender parity between male and female learners in a school context remains a highly contentious and problematic issue. A plethora of literature reviewed confirms that patriarchy and a general limiting attitude towards girl children, is an ages old dilemma for countries of the globe and its people (Creswell, 2010). The expressed problem signifies that this is the time for countries of the globe and the continent of Africa to divest itself of the predicament of patriarchy which in no uncertain terms, remains a hurdle to the introduction of gender parity to stimulate educational progress and sustainable economic development. The question to pose is why gender equalisation as a sordid state of affairs is taking long to be suppressed and subverted in counties of the globe and the continent of African? The response relates to the point that due to the suffered colonialism in Africa, and apartheid in the case of South Africa, indications are that they have eroded and corroded in fellow stakeholders, any semblance of humanity and Ubuntu to the level where egoism in Africans is so much fortified such that continental incumbents turn to operate without conscience with much of what they are doing. That is why Mdekazi (2017) and Tromp (2017:3) are emphatic that if gender equalisation has to taste victory, workshop training that touches on spousal attitudes to the advancement of girl children in the secondary schooling sector, have to be organised. That could quickly assist in successfully pushing back the habit of delaying practical gender parity from becoming impactful in capacitating and empowering girl children to benefit educational progress and sustainable economic development.

Research questions and the objective

The research questions addressed in this paper

are anchored on the Critical theory and the Complexity Leadership theory, as the theoretical frameworks that underpin the paper (Higgs & Smith, 2010). The research questions are as follow: How can the secondary schooling sector be made a beacon of hope as regards evincing progress with the envisaged gender parity project? What are the ideas, concerns and aspirations that could better advance gender equalisation to trigger educational progress and sustainable economic development?

Broad as they are, the above questions can be broken down into the following sub-questions:

- (i) How is gender parity understood?
- (ii) How are educational institutions and the country as a whole benefit from the implementation of the concept of gender equalisation?
- (iii) How best to substitute gender disparity with gender equity?
- (iv) How are patriarchy limiting attitudes towards girl children affecting gender equalisation?

Research design

This paper is qualitative in nature. Myriad reasons necessitated that the paper follows the qualitative research paradigm as against the quantitative line of thinking (Levin, 2005). In the first place, the problem which the paper pursues, centred around critiquing why gender parity between male and female learners in a school context remains a highly contentious and problematic issue. Such a research problem was amenable to be studied through the qualitative way of thinking as against through the quantitative research paradigm. The nature of the problem was found to be researchable along the qualitative school of thought as against the quantitative line of thinking (Dawson, 2006). The choice of the qualitative research methodology was also necessitated by the fact that the paper is being underpinned by the Critical theory and the Complexity Leadership theory.

The researcher found a need to create a synergy between the Critical theory and the Complexity Leadership theory as the theoretical perspectives

that underpin the paper, as well as the qualitative approach as the overarching research methodology (Hofstee, 2010). It has to be emphasised that the combination of the three assisted immensely in terms of illuminating how the absence of gender parity in the school sector makes it difficult for the male and female learners to learn cooperatively and help one another with their challenging school activities. A good case in point for such a state of affairs happens annually when some secondary schools keep on experiencing unabated scholastic underachievement of learners due to placing insufficient attention to the parity of male and female learners comprising that school. This is manifested through poor learner results by one gender at school which somewhat depicts such a gender to be scholastically neglected in contrast to another gender whose dominance in schooling matters is evident for everyone to notice (Masina, 2015). With the Critical theory and the Complexity Leadership theory underpinning this paper, the researcher utilised them to evaluate whether making gender parity an accountability of everyone in a secondary schooling sector will not lead to a noticeable mileage in the equalisation of the two genders. Furthermore, the theories were also applied to establish and determine the common reaction by the two genders in a schooling sector as regards making gender parity an accountability for everyone. Since this paper is qualitative in nature, there was a need to amalgamate both the Critical theory, the Complexity Leadership theory and the qualitative research approach. That aimed at optimising the ability and strength of the Critical theory and the Complexity Leadership theory towards the exposure of how continuing to approach gender equalisation in silos other than collectively and collaboratively continues to rob the disadvantaged gender of the quality schooling service they are entitled to and which continues to be extended only to the dominant gender which is the male gender (Gold, 2016).

Partnering the qualitative research approach, the Critical theory and the Complexity Leadership theory enabled the researcher to make an in-depth understanding of how despite many years

since colonialism and discriminatory schooling formally ceased to exist, its effects remain firmly in place together with its concomitant practices such as taking and treating the female gender in a less dignified fashion (Creswell, 2010). Such effects are still so severe such that many public secondary schools find it difficult to experiment with gender equalisation to begin to offer schooling opportunities to all learners with aplomb and distinction irrespective of their sexual orientations (Mouton, 1996). To conclude this item on research methodology, there is a need to divulge that document study as well as interviewing techniques were employed to construct data relevant for this paper. To be precise, all the documents primary and secondary that contained information about gender parity in the secondary schooling sector were studied. To corroborate and triangulate the gleaned data, interviewing was conducted with six members in each of the identified or sampled three public secondary schools. Responses were audio-taped for transcription purposes later-on. The said data collection tools emerged very helpful in terms of accessing data pertaining to how making gender parity an accountability of everyone in a secondary schooling sector could lead to the noticeable mileage in the equalisation of the two genders (Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005). Altogether six research participants were interviewed as regards their views pertaining to making gender parity an accountability of everyone in a secondary schooling sector. It is gender parity for educational progress and the sustainable economic development of countries and their institutions.

Findings

Findings arrived at in this paper, are in relation to the research topic whose focus is: evaluating whether making gender parity an accountability of everyone in a secondary schooling sector could not lead to a noticeable mileage in the equalisation of the two genders. The basis of the findings is the analysed data which were generated through the document study and the interviewing technique. Responses of the six research participants which were evaluated as regards

making gender parity an accountability of everyone in a secondary schooling sector, were sourced from Respondents A up to F. In school 1 Respondent A was a male with Respondent B being a female. In School 2, Respondent C was a male with Respondent D being a female. In School 3 Respondent E was a male with Respondent F being a female. Research participants' truthful information was concealed to protect the actual identities of those research participants. The researcher sampled those research participants for interviewing in the area of gender parity and how it could stimulate educational progress and sustainable economic development for the country and continent. Furthermore, paying attention only on those sampled research participants, ought not create an impression that they were worse off as regards the suppression of gender equalisation at the secondary schooling sector. That is not the case, not at all. Suffice to reveal that the selection of those six research participants, was on the basis of the researcher having familiarised himself with issues of gender parity through interaction with them when carrying out other research projects in partnership with them. The Critical theory and the Complexity Leadership theory have been adequately instrumental in helping in the analysis of data to ultimately emerge with these findings. Findings and discussion for this paper are the following: failure to confront patriarchy in schooling. Secondly, missing initiative to confront gender stereotyping. Thirdly, the dilemma of societal bias against females. Fourthly, entrenched practice of females sabotaging each other. Lastly, inability to prevent drop-out rate of female learners. A detailed discussion of the selected findings follows.

Discussion

Failure to confront patriarchy in schooling

Schools are established to contribute to the development of their communities, country and the continent through dispensing knowledge to learners at schools. Acknowledging that the dominance of the male gender in schooling could be an obstacle towards according the same equal status to the female gender, requires that something be done about the monster of patriarchy.

Continuing to turn the blind eye against patriarchy in a schooling environment could perpetuate the exclusion of female learners as regards being capacitated and empowered through schooling (Brunton, 2003). That is why the point that successful implementation of gender equalisation in schooling hinges upon addressing patriarchy. On this issue, Respondent A reminds that *"there is no contradiction to the fact that 'patriarchy, serves as a vicious obstacle within the school population in the continent of Africa and across the globe due to its inhibitive nature towards the recognition and acceptance of female learners as equal partners to the male learners'"*. Respondent D remarks that *"I feel more than under-privileged to be a female learner in this continent's secondary schools, where being a female, is being associated with mediocre and inefficiency in whatever schooling project one is assigned to work out"*. Respondent F advises that *"in the absence of gender equalisation programme, which is anchored on operative policies, systems and structures, then countless attempts of putting gender issues at the centre stage may persist to vanish in thin air"*. Utterances of the research participants are straightforward in first unveiling that yes, gender equalisation is faced with huge bottlenecks due to the patriarchal nature of the schooling environments across the globe. In addition, the sentiments of the research participants are somewhat exhibiting a sense of despondence as regards having gender parity being a reality sooner rather than later. This is understandable considering that those who were once victims of gender disparity, are likely to wish for its instant dismantling for the sake of salvaging the future through inclusive and equitable schooling. This is a point which even the review of literature is not mute about it. For instance, both Tsheola (2002) Mbeki (2003) Madue (2013) and Zwane (2015) contend that gender equalisation through schooling, is what 21st century global society so much requires and demands for the sake of its educational progress and sustainable economic development. The researcher reasons that the day global society learns to value and embrace gender parity in its schooling sector, it would be the

time when gender discrimination would no longer have a place and space in the minds and hearts of learners and adults.

Missing initiatives to confront gender stereotyping

Much as members of every family and community are being brought up in a certain fashion, that is understandable and greatly encouraged, What is though worth frowning upon is teaching the little ones an attitude of being stereotyped either in favour or against a certain gender, When gender stereotyping occurs in a schooling set up, it has the potential of setting the two different genders against each other to the detriment of the enterprise of dispensing knowledge. Basing everything on the indispensability of gender parity in schooling, Bongwe (2010) and Macha (2016) reiterate that a debate on gender equalisation needs not be condemned but condoned in all respects. This is on the basis of such a debate having a potential of enabling those with a huge baggage of being stereotypical about gender related issues, getting an opportunity of checking their mental files over the matter. On this challenge of stereotyping which without doubt retards the transformation of the learner population in schooling environments across the globe, towards an egalitarian society that transcends gender and pursues meritocracy, an insightful conversation on gender equalisation is indeed missing. That is why Respondent E warns that “as a result of many years of apartheid and colonialism, sufficient insightful conversations were never created to free the male gender from the yoke of regarding the female gender to be inferior to them in whatever assignment the female gender is engaged in”.

On the expressed matter, Respondent A indicates that “*it can never be said to be late for the male and female learners to seriously re-ignite a debate on the essence of people of this planet earth to operate and live in countries where males are emancipated from viewing and regarding the female folk as their necessary junior partners due to being influenced by their stereotyped view of them*”. Respondent D maintains that “*Healthy and understanding attitudes to the females in*

general from their places of abodes, are the better starting point of unravelling this colossal burden which has been left unattended for centuries until of now late, namely, patriarchy and being stereotyped”. The researcher, fully aligns himself with the observation by the research participants that the debate on gender stereotyping could best be commenced from the homes which is where gender discrimination is introduced, practised and end up being a way of life for the male and the female genders. The body of literature reviewed, confirms in no uncertain terms the above expressed views. For instance, Gobillot (2008) and Cunha, Filho and Goncalvers (2010) advocate that the indispensability of a sound gender activism debate towards the educational progress and the sustainable economic development of countries remains irreplaceable.

Females sabotaging each other

Harmonious co-existence within the male and the female genders is indispensable. But, it is disheartening when within the disadvantaged gender, namely the female gender there is internal sabotage where females find it completely difficult to work cooperatively and collaboratively with each other as members of the same sex and gender without sabotage. Allen (2014) remarks that as long as the introduction of an efficacious gender activism debates are not taken as a priority by the planet earth, then making a dent to the challenge of sabotage by the female learners against their fellow female learners could take long to achieve its intended outcomes. In reality, the type of socialisation the female gender is exposed to as part of their upbringing, contains an unabated challenge of learnt sabotage by females against the other females.

The above expressed point suggests that much as it is vital to re-ignite gender parity debate, there is dire need to couple and partner that debate with appropriate emphasis to discouraging gender sabotage which is normally practised by the female folk against their fellow female members (Mdekazi, 2017). In most cases gender sabotage is fuelled by uncontrollable envy and jealousy which a female harbours against another fellow female member. That is why Respondents A and

F concur that “adequate spade-work lies ahead for the gender activists, considering that as of now the unpleasant spirit and attitude of pull her down syndrome embraced by females against their fellow females is at its highest peak in every generation and nations across the globe”. Respondent B of School 1 emphasises that “despite the majority of African countries having over 30 years of independence, gender sabotage is still intact despite its destructive nature to the educational progress and sustainable economic development of communities and countries especially by the contribution of the female gender”. Respondent E of School 3 reiterates that “the manner of socialisation within the families, homes communities and societies across the globe contributes to the prevalence of gender sabotage by failing to discourage withdrawal of support by a female to her fellow female”. This is not helpful in terms of how the female folk have to grow up and accept their female folks as equal partners on whom they could even confide as and when a need arises. Responses of the research participants are spot-on in unveiling in no uncertain terms that ignoring for so long the danger of gender sabotage by females against their fellow females has to be addressed in the same way male dominance against female dominance is being approached and tackled. This fact is even being vindicated by countless literature reviewed for the sake of this paper (Omano, 2005, Kouzes & Posner, 2007, Thornhill & Van Dijk, 2010, Sebola, 2012, Qwabe, 2013 & Tisdall, 2005).

Conclusion

As demonstrated in the discussions of the findings of this paper, both the review of literature and the theoretical perspectives played a critical role in talking to the findings of the paper. Furthermore, document review and interviewing technique together with the theoretical frameworks, provided the better context within which the entire paper had to be located and understood. Small wonder that making gender parity to be the accountability of everyone in the secondary schooling sector, experienced difficulties such as

failure by societies to confront patriarchy, missing initiatives to confront gender stereotyping and female gender sabotage in the secondary schooling sector. The conclusion arrived at in this paper is in the context of totally removing gender disparity in the secondary schooling so that both the male and the female learners could experience equitable opportunities of succeeding with their studies, especially in Limpopo Province, South Africa. Findings of this paper are confirming that getting gender parity to be a reality in the secondary schooling sector, first has to start in the families, at homes, schools, in the communities and in the society at large.

Recommendations

The basis of these recommendations are the discussed findings which are as follow:

There is a need for the promotion of the concerted efforts as regards pushing back the frontiers of gender disparity in the secondary schooling sector. Galvanizing every stakeholder to fight down this colossal hurdle of gender disparity especially in the secondary schooling sector is perfectly in alignment with the title of this paper. The title of the paper pushes for making gender parity an accountability of everyone in the secondary schooling sector.

To overcome gender disparity in the secondary schooling sector, there is also a need for the equitable treatment and trust of both genders at the secondary schooling environment for the educational progress and the sustainable economic development of the country and the continent of Africa. In addition, there is a need for the countries across the globe to learn to value and embrace diversity, which will in part assist in terms of overcoming gender patriarchy, gender stereotyping and gender sabotage. That would foster better baggage management as regards limiting attitudes towards the female gender especially as practised by some males. Finally, there is as well a need especially by some male folk to unlearn deep-rooted biases and prejudices against people of other gender groupings, specifically the female folk.

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BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH GENDER-EQUITABLE CLIMATE ACTION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: ISSUES AND OPTIONS

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Abstract

The consequences of climate change are far-reaching, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where livelihoods largely rely on rain-fed agriculture. This situation presents significant threats to the region's development and intensifies existing gender inequalities. The varying impacts of climate change on women and men stem from their distinct roles, societal expectations, and inherent differences, with women being disproportionately affected. This study delves into crucial considerations for crafting gender-sensitive climate action in sub-Saharan Africa. Through a desktop research approach, we argue that gender considerations are vital in climate action, as men and women contribute differently and are affected in diverse ways. Gender-sensitive climate responses include gender analysis, inclusive decision-making, equitable resource access, capacity building, and gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation. It is essential to design and implement gender-responsive climate actions to ensure that climate solutions are effective, sustainable, and equitable. These actions consider the varied needs, perspectives, and experiences of women and men in the context of climate change. The involvement of both men and women in climate actions is crucial. Potential funding mechanisms for gendered climate change actions encompass local resource mobilization, the private sector, women's groups, governments, international organizations, and gender budgeting. Policymakers, climate change scientists, practitioners, and lawmakers, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, must acknowledge the importance of implementing gender-responsive climate change actions and strategies.

Keywords: *climate change, climate action, gender*

Introduction

Sub-Saharan Africa is particularly susceptible to intensifying climate change owing to its limited adaptive capacity and extensive development challenges. According to Barna (2021), 85% of

the world's population is affected by climate change. Because climate change affects the agricultural sector's sustainability and dependability, sub-Saharan Africa is seeing a constant decline in its reliance on agriculture (Ellis, 2000). Kotir

(2011) posited that sub-Saharan Africa's reliance on agriculture has led to claims that the continent is the most sensitive to the effects of climate change worldwide. It is crucial to realise that climate change affects men and women differently, with women being the most vulnerable. Gender-responsive climate actions ensure that the needs, viewpoints, and experiences of both women and men are considered in efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Gender equality is a critical factor for achieving climate resilience and sustainable development. In this study, gender-responsive climate actions and challenges in sub-Saharan Africa were examined to identify effective strategies and recommendations that enhance climate resilience and support gender inclusivity.

Gender and climate change: a conceptual context

Mouton (1996) contends that conceptualisation refers to the process of breaking down and analysing a study's central ideas as well as the integration of that research into the body of previously developed theory and research. Gender can be referred to as the socially constructed qualities of men, women, girls, and boys (WHO 2014). Jhpiego (2020) postulates that the economic, social, political, and cultural characteristics and opportunities that come with women and men are referred to as gender. As postulated by Turrentine and Denchak (2021), changes in the average weather conditions are referred to as climate change. McOmber (2020) postulated that men and women in Africa have different levels of awareness regarding the dynamics of drought, flooding, and rising temperatures caused by climate change. According to Azong and Kelso (2021), one of the main causes of patriarchal oppression and women's disproportionate vulnerability to climate change is an unequal distribution of economic power between men and women. Issues related to climate change, such as frequent droughts, variable rainfall, high temperatures, and flooding, exacerbate the situation for women who have already experienced inequality in Africa (Adeola et al., 2024).

Making the case: Why consider gender in climate action

Gender should be considered in climate action because men and women contribute to climate

action in different ways and are affected in different ways. Ergas et al. (2021) contended that if actions that consider variations in gender vulnerability and the distinct roles of women are implemented, advances in gender equality and social inclusion can aid in the fight against climate change. Adeola et al. (2024) state that, as the world moves toward a new climate regime, governments must recognize the connection between gender and climate change and involve women in formulating policies. UNEP (2024) asserts that, due to prevailing gender dynamics and inequalities, the effects of climate change differ between men and women. It further notes that, as with most other challenges in the humanitarian and developmental domains, women are the most negatively impacted.

The Red Cross (2014) postulated that women in many parts of the world are more susceptible to the effects of climate change because of their unequal access to resources, education, legal protection, decision-making, and power. According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2020), gender in climate change initiatives enhances resilience among women and their families. The UNDP (2023) contends that gender disparities and climate risks interact, exacerbating existing patterns of gender disadvantages. Women's knowledge of the local, cultural, and environmental contexts, as well as their survival skills, are essential components of resilience and healing in terms of climate action and sustainable development (Department of Climate Change, Federal Ministry of Environment, Nigeria, 2021).

According to Schalatek (2022), women in sub-Saharan Africa continue to be primary agricultural producers, producing approximately 80% of the continent's food. Due to gender inequality across most of Africa, more women are impoverished, less educated, more exposed to health risks, and more susceptible to climate change (PSC Report, 2023). In addition, Awiti (2022) stated that there is growing recognition that the biophysical effects of climate change are linked to demographic, institutional, and socio-economic factors. These factors interact in complex and frequently nonlinear ways, thus overwhelming the ability of households or communities to adapt or cope. This is particularly true in cases where social and economic justice, as well as

gender inequality, are ignored. It is widely recognised that socioeconomic disparities already exist and are exacerbated by climate change. It is important to note that because of punishing practices and social norms, ownership over or access to rights to assets or capital endowments, and other factors, long-standing socioeconomic imbalances between men and women are exacerbated by orders of magnitude, and with a heightened focus on adaptation to climate change, it is critical to recognize and address the uneven distribution of vulnerability to and gender-differentiated impacts of climate change. The Paris Agreement (2015) acknowledges that adaptive action should follow a gender-responsive approach. The UNDP (2012) asserts that climate actions can be made more effective and sustainable in Africa by involving both men and women and utilising their gender-based experiences in formal and informal workforces, communities, and households. According to the UNFCCC (no date), women can also be vital in the fight against climate change because of their local expertise in sustainable resource management and their ability to lead sustainable practices at home and community levels.

Designing gender-sensitive climate responses: key considerations

The distinct social, cultural, and economic circumstances of sub-Saharan Africa must be carefully considered when creating gender-sensitive climate responses. Otzelberger (2011) postulated that gender-sensitive climate responses refer to the examination and resolution of gender-related risks and opportunities in light of intended climate change responses. Key considerations include gender analysis, inclusive decision-making, equal access to resources, capacity building, and the dispelling of damaging gender stereotypes. Sub-Saharan climate responses can effectively address the needs of all people using a gender-sensitive approach.

Gender analysis

Gender analysis ensures that differences between men and women are identified when developing strategies for climate change mitigation and adaptation. Nelson et al. (no date) posited that in developing countries, women are often the primary users and managers of natural resources, such as gathering firewood and water; thus, they suffer more from the effects of climate change.

This results in women walking long distances to acquire commodities. They further postulated that gender analysis ensures that the specific needs and perspectives of women are considered, leading to effective climate responses. According to Lopez et al. (2015), 90% of women in many African countries engage in agricultural work; thus, when climate change occurs, they are largely affected.

Angola (2010) posited that men oversee jobs that are sensitive to climate, such as managing land, raising livestock, and forestry. The African Development Bank (2019) posits that applying a gender perspective to the development issue at hand necessitates analyzing the gender division of labor, determining the needs and priorities of men and women, identifying opportunities and barriers that currently exist to the achievement of development goals, and selecting an intervention strategy to address these issues. Otzelberger (2011) contends that men are also at great risk when it comes to climate-related risks because of the cultural expectations of male risk-taking behaviour. Female-headed households' agricultural production is more vulnerable and less adaptive to climate change because of their lower endowments in major productive inputs such as land, labour, and capital. Social norms and traditional gender roles, particularly caregiving, limit women's ability to reallocate time to work on family plots, diversify crop or animal output, and pursue off-farm activities (FAO, 2015). In certain societies, only men have the right to cultivate specific crops or to access markets. Furthermore, many adaptation techniques require investments in inputs, time or labour, technology, or networks for collective action, such as cooperatives, making them expensive for households with limited credit and a small number of working-age adults, most of whom are female. Gender and societal inequalities among men and women may also affect investment needs or priorities, and access to weather and climate information.

According to the UN Women (2022a), more women than men live in poverty worldwide, which makes it more difficult for women to obtain the resources they need to become resilient against the effects of climate change. Gender norms influence adaptability and resilience. For instance, women's social roles are frequently es-

essential to maintaining the community's resilience; they recognize the needs of the community and have formed networks among themselves in response to the effects of climate change to enhance social capital (UNFCCC 2023).

Inclusive decision-making in policymaking

Gender must be integrated into climate change policies and strategies. The UN Women Watch (2009) argues that women are often left out of decision-making processes and access to land ownership, as well as resources that are essential to their livelihoods; therefore, this makes them vulnerable to climate change. Women and other marginalised groups, such as children, the elderly, the sick, and people with disabilities, ought to play an active role in adaptation efforts, rather than merely acting as recipients. This is done to ensure that their needs, preferences, and vulnerabilities are considered during program design and implementation (Bryan et al., 2016). (USAID, no date) postulates that both men and women must be prioritised in the designation of climate change responses involving their knowledge. Habtezion (2016) argued that policymakers should involve women and consider their significant contributions to livelihoods, family welfare, biodiversity conservation, natural resource management, health, and food security when developing responses to climate change. According to Ampaire et al. (2020), through gender-responsive policies and practices, East African governments are becoming more skilled at adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change, which has lessened its adverse effects of climate change.

There is a disparity between women and men in their involvement in climate decision-making, policy development, and execution activities. Women and female-led organisations are inadequately represented in lobbying, policy, and decision-making roles and processes (Mavisakalyan & Tarverdi, 2019). The Environment and Gender Index (EGI) data indicate that women constitute less than one-third of decision-makers in six out of nine evaluated decision-making processes, based on the average representation of women throughout the Conferences of the Parties and the three Rio Conventions (IUCN, 2015). The Gender Action Plan recognises that women's empowerment is essential to climate

policy and action, emphasising that "full, meaningful, and equitable participation and leadership of women in all aspects of the UNFCCC process and national and local climate policy are crucial for attaining long-term climate objectives" (UNFCCC, 2019).

Sadie (2005) contends that women encounter barriers to political participation at both the national and local levels, attributable to entrenched patriarchal structures, despite the existence of a strong national gender policy. The Kenyan Constitution requires the state to adopt legislative and policy measures, ensuring that no more than two-thirds of the members of elected bodies belong to the same gender. Nevertheless, the implementation of these progressive constitutional provisions has been substantially delayed, particularly in rural sub-Saharan Africa, owing to the persistence of male-dominated institutions, traditional beliefs, and customs regarding women's responsibilities and status. In addition, women's participation in decision-making can be increased by implementing various supportive actions, such as establishing flexible meeting times that do not interfere with women's domestic responsibilities and recognising potential safety concerns when deciding on meeting venues, mobility, and duration. Capacity-building programs at various levels might be an appealing approach to breaking down barriers to women's representation and participation in policy and decision-making, as well as gender capacity-building as an important component of climate response efforts or programs. Moreover, enhancing women's participation in decision-making can be achieved through various supportive measures, including the establishment of flexible meeting schedules that accommodate women's domestic obligations and the acknowledgement of potential safety issues when selecting meeting locations, transportation, and duration. Capacity-building initiatives at several levels may serve as an effective strategy to dismantle obstacles to women's representation and involvement in policy and decision-making, alongside gender capacity-building as a crucial element of climate response activities or programs. O'Neil and Domingo (2016) assert that effective formal rules and legal rights must be context-specific, consider their interaction with existing laws, and account for social norms. The

economic difficulties faced by women are intricately linked to their representation and participation. Women can engage in business because of their access to resources and affordable financing. Thus, multi-sectoral interventions are essential to enable women to initiate their enterprises by providing access to resources and reasonably priced financing and empowering them to have a voice and make decisions, even within the household.

O'Neil and Domingo (2016) assert that a robust and enduring commitment to women's economic empowerment is essential, encompassing financial support for capacity building and training to enhance labour participation alongside institutional backing for women-led and women-centred groups. They argue that specific gender policies do not enhance women's empowerment; therefore, to ensure effective and equitable climate action, it is essential to promote inclusive governance that involves women in the decision-making processes. Women's representation in climate governance can enhance the effectiveness of policies by integrating their unique perspectives on natural-resource management and disaster response. This can be achieved by increasing women's participation in local and national climate governance frameworks and by providing leadership opportunities in community-based adaptation projects. For example, in Uganda, women's involvement in local water management committees has resulted in more sustainable water use and improved community resilience to drought. This ensures that women's voices are heard in climate decision-making processes, which not only promotes gender equality but also strengthens the resilience of entire communities.

Equal access to resources

The PSC Report (2023) asserts that African women's limited access to financial resources, land tenure, political engagement, and wage employment makes them more susceptible to the effects of climate change. Bryan et al. (2016) contended that programs for coping with climate change must consider gender roles, access to resources and services, and other elements that might limit men's and women's ability to adapt. Men and women in West Africa have different

access to resources such as financial services, agricultural extension services, land ownership, and high-quality seeds (Assan et al., 2018). Musavengane and Leonard (2019) note that women in Africa frequently experience different opportunities and disadvantages from men, especially when it comes to access to essential services.

Men and women have unequal access to decision-making power, information, skills, assets, and networks (Nelson & Stathers, 2009), resulting in gender-based exposure and sensitivity. Climate change is projected to heighten gendered vulnerabilities and worsen interlocking forms of discrimination against women. Policies aimed at strengthening adaptive capacity at the community level, particularly in agricultural and pastoral areas, sometimes fail to identify and address the gendered aspects of women's experiences.

Awiti (2022) indicated that women's vulnerability in northern Mali increases as men migrate for work, compounded by the absence of men's rights for women left behind to secure tenure and control over fungible resources. Moreover, the effects of disasters may be intensified by insufficient consideration of gender. The vulnerability of women in northern Mali increases as men migrate to employment, compounded by the absence of women's rights to secure tenure and control over fungible resources. Additionally, the consequences of disasters may be intensified by the absence of a gender perspective in humanitarian response and recovery efforts, as women frequently face difficulties in establishing property ownership or experience discrimination during the distribution of property and assets, which are often managed by male heads of households (IFRC, 2017).

Neumayer and Plumper (2007) concluded that socially constructed gender-specific inequalities in access to resources, capabilities, and opportunities for females embedded in everyday socioeconomic patterns explain greater female disaster death rates than males. Women in rural areas rely primarily on natural resources as important inputs and assets to provide for themselves and their families. However, climate change and climate-induced degradation of essential resources such as freshwater, land, and pastures enhance competition and frequently aggravate or magnify the likelihood of violent conflict.

It is critical to stress that climate change is a risk

amplifier that aggravates pre-existing political, socioeconomic, and structural circumstances and potentially pushes tensions over the threshold, leading to conflict and violence (Raleigh, 2010). Sudan is extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change, whereas North Korea is plagued by drought, desertification, and harsh temperatures. These threats exacerbate soil degradation and crop failure, putting additional strain on already scarce natural resources such as fresh water and pasture. As food producers and primary water collectors, women and girls suffer disproportionately from crop failure and water scarcity. Previously, migratory pastoral groups had become sedentary, causing competition for scarce water, pasture, and land resources, resulting in friction and conflict with agricultural communities (Bronkhorst, 2011). Women and girls are particularly affected by water scarcity and the conflicts they face.

Capacity building

Building women's capacity to comprehend the effects of climate change and create constructive responses for adaptation and disaster recovery is crucial (UNDP, 2016). Dankelman (2010) asserted that climate change adaptation strategies should work to increase women's asset bases because this determines their adaptive capacity, how they are impacted by the effects of climate change, and how they respond to it. The UNFCCC strongly emphasizes capacity building to foster climate awareness and resilience through research, education, and training (Patel et al, 2021). Kabasa et al. (2024) contended that, to facilitate information sharing on climate change issues, including risks, mitigation, and adaptation strategies in Africa, it is imperative to enhance climate capacity building in education, research and training. According to Bastakoti and Doneys (2020), women are more likely to adopt short-term coping mechanisms than medium- to long-term adaptive strategies in response to climate disturbance, because they typically have lower resilience capacities. The climate and agricultural information provided via mobile phones reduces the information gaps between male and female farmers and increases women's knowledge of climate-smart technologies (Mittal, 2016).

As postulated by Njuki et al. (2019), financial inclusion increases women's productivity in agriculture and small businesses, which improves

their intra-household bargaining power and builds their capacity to cope with climate change. Therefore, it is important to provide women with climate-resilient technologies to bridge the gender gap in climate adaptation. Capacity building can be in the form of training programs focusing on climate-smart agricultural practices, renewable energy, and water conservation techniques, thus empowering women to assume leadership roles in climate resilience and adaptation. An example is drawn from Malawi, where women have been equipped with programs that have improved their socioeconomic standing while simultaneously focusing on a technical aspect. Training has focused on managing solar pumps, reducing their reliance on inconsistent rainfall, and enhancing agricultural productivity.

Gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation

Gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation ensure that the objectives of gender-responsive climate action are met. It measures the impact of the initiative on both males and females. Chingarande et al. (2020) postulated that well-structured and reliable monitoring and evaluation systems are essential to assess the advancement of gender equality in climate action. The design, implementation, and evaluation of policies and projects should consider both men's and women's needs to enhance sustainable development (Loye, 2018). SADC (no date) posits that ensuring gender-responsive disaster risk reduction in the sub-Saharan Africa region requires the ability to monitor, measure, and evaluate the progress made by both men and women. IFAD (2016) contends that a gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation approach aims to evaluate a project's intended and unintended effects and impact on gender relations. The UNFCCC (2023) argues that to determine whether adaptation policies have achieved their goals of gender equality and women's empowerment, whether they have had unintended consequences related to gender, and to make the necessary adjustments for the future, gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation are essential. According to the UN Women (2022), gender-responsive monitoring and assessment employ an inclusive and participatory process that incorporates the opinions of all stakeholders, including women.

Gender, participation and climate action

Both men and women must be involved in planning so that their voices inform climate change actions. Dankelman (2010) posits that women must also participate in climate change mitigation and adaptation because of their role in key climate sectors such as agriculture, livestock management, disaster risk reduction, water management, and health. The BNRCC (2011) contends that women have made significant contributions to the adaptation and mitigation of food security, water management, biodiversity, fisheries, and disaster management. This indicates the use of indigenous knowledge in climate actions. Climate change adaptation strategies must consider the relative and distinct capacities, power, social resilience, vulnerabilities, and resources of both men and women (WHO 2014). Greater resource accessibility for women can lessen vulnerability and build stronger households and communities. Involving women in decision-making will ensure that mitigation and adaptation efforts meet the needs of everyone (UNDP, 2023). The UNDP (2023) further postulates that women's unpaid caregiving responsibilities impede their ability to participate in decision-making and lead to climate change. According to the UNFCCC (no date), if policies or projects are implemented without women's meaningful participation, existing inequalities can increase, and effectiveness can decrease. It further posits that women's indigenous knowledge of sustainable resource management plays a vital role in their response to climate change.

Funding gender-responsive climate action

Chingarande et al. (2020) posit that for sub-Saharan Africa to evaluate the advancement of gender equality in climate action and provide sufficient reporting on instruments, robust and well-structured monitoring and evaluation systems with sex-disaggregated data and sufficient funding support are essential. According to the SADC (no date), the UNFCCC provides access to international adaptation funds, such as the Green Climate Fund, adaptation funds, and the Special Climate Change Fund concerning disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Achakpa (2023) asserts that African countries have applied climate initiatives that advance gender parity and the empowerment of women and other marginalised groups with assistance from international organisations, governments, and civil

society. According to the USAID (no date), the United Nations Agency for International Development and Amazon launched a public-private partnership known as the Climate Gender Equity Fund (CGEF). This fund aimed to scale up climate finance and advance gender-equitable climate actions. The UNFCCC posits that local resource mobilisation can be a possible way to fund gendered climate change projects; it emphasises the need for a gender perspective to be considered when developing resource mobilisation strategies and applying climate finance instruments.

Patel et al. (2021) contend that government plans and promises are useless without funding for their execution through public budgets and expenditures. They further argue that governments must take steps to incorporate gender responsiveness into climate-responsive budgets and vice versa. Muneri (2023) postulated that the private sector can significantly increase women's participation in climate-smart agriculture by offering gender-responsive vital inputs, services, and products along the entire agricultural value chain. Women's groups can serve as a crucial platform for women's collective agency and improve women's access to services such as credit and information. Alvi et al. (2023) postulated that several countries in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa have strong groups of women who assist in delivering programs and interventions for climate resilience. According to Adams et al. (2014), civil society actors and donors should offer suggestions and inputs to the Green Climate Fund to ensure that the fund's gender-responsive mandate is operationalized. GCF (2015) ascertains that a standard for international best practices for gender responsiveness might be established by the Green Climate Fund, which was initially tasked with including gender in its operational and policy frameworks. Formal training programs have had little effect on women's financial literacy (Hastings et al., 2013).

Wagh (2017) asserted that women ought to have access to financial services that are aligned with their social networks and facilitate life transitions by mitigating risk and stabilising income. Climate risk insurance serves as a crucial risk management strategy that can enhance resilience and protect assets and livelihoods. Buchner et al.

(2012) identify multiple approaches to the intricate domain of climate finance, including public, private, and market-driven strategies. These methods encompass funding from international, multilateral, and bilateral sources, along with intermediary institutions. Ng'weno et al. (2018) and Wagh (2017) argue that technological advancements, such as mobile phone applications in financial education that customise experiences to meet women's specific needs, have a greater potential for widespread impact compared to a universal approach, although further testing and improvement are necessary. Gathering sex-disaggregated data is essential for assessing women's demands and targeting and customising financial solutions to meet their specific requirements and preferences. Improving gender-disaggregated data, in terms of both quantity and quality, would enhance the commercial and policy rationale for the financial inclusion of female entrepreneurs. Women in sub-Saharan Africa may nominally have access to financial services such as bank accounts, although encouraging statistics indicate a growing trend in their access to these services. Financial decision-making authorities regarding the account frequently reside with their male relatives.

According to the UNDP (2019), equitable climate financing has the potential to enhance climate response initiatives and contribute to the achievement of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aimed at promoting development over the next 15 years, including SDG 1 (poverty reduction) and SDG 5 (gender equality). Climate financing can advance gender equality by emphasizing the adaptation and mitigation initiatives that support disadvantaged groups, particularly women. Access to sustainable energy technology would alleviate the challenges related to women's energy generation and consumption, while also decreasing their reliance on solid fuels, which account for 25% of global black carbon emissions. In addition to addressing gender disparities, the equitable targeting and integration of women and men in the implementation of existing climate financing tools will enhance their long-term viability and efficiency. Clear policies and reporting systems must be established within these mechanisms to ensure that gender issues are considered adequately during project execution.

Therefore, gender-responsive climate financing mechanisms and financial allocations are required. Without financial support, women cannot adapt to or build resilience to climate change. Financial inclusion has a limited influence on women's economic empowerment because of social and cultural barriers such as intra-household bargaining power and women's social standing. Consequently, adaptation efforts aimed at small-holder families must consider gender dynamics when determining access to productive assets and benefit distribution. The growing amount of data supports the importance of gender responsiveness in project design and execution. However, to achieve equitable results, the efficient use of climate finance requires incorporating climate change needs and goals into gender-informed development strategies and planning.

Conclusion and policy way forward

Gender-responsive climate action is critical for attaining effective and sustainable climate resilience in sub-Saharan Africa. Women's inherent vulnerabilities to climate change and their critical responsibilities in natural resource management make them an essential component of any climate adaptation plan. Ensuring that women have equal access to resources, funding, and decision-making processes is not just an issue of fairness but also a critical component of community resilience. By fostering inclusive governance, gender-sensitive financing, capacity building, social protection, and catastrophe risk reduction, Sub-Saharan Africa can promote gender equality and construct more climate-resistant communities. Awiti (2022) argues that no silver bullet can ameliorate the gendered effects of climate change through policy, intervention, or technology. The impact of any policy, intervention, or technology will differ based on men's and women's access to assets or endowments as well as their respective access rights to production and income distribution. However, the lack of gender-disaggregated data hampers efforts to create gender-responsive treatments that would help women cope and adapt to the effects of climate change. Most importantly, national policies need to support women's access to other assets and services such as education, land, finance services, and diverse income-earning opportunities. Without these provisions, educational and alternative livelihood options beyond subsistence

farming, economic choices, off-farm work, and income opportunities for women remain limited. More importantly, efforts to design and deploy gender-responsive solutions to climate change impacts must take a holistic, asset-based approach that meaningfully seeks to identify dominant causal mechanisms and develop context-specific policy and institutional options to address interlocking assets or capital disbursements. It is critical to bear in mind that the societal impact of climate change, both winners and losers, ultimately concerns power dynamics and complex systems negotiated through norms, beliefs, and institutions in many situations (Awiti, 2022).

UN Women's (2020) research emphasizes the vitality of incorporating gender factors into all levels of policy creation, implementation, and assessment. This requires undertaking gender-sensitive assessments to determine the unique vulnerabilities and abilities of women and men in the face of climate change. Recognizing the particular problems that women experience, such as restricted access to resources and decision-making authority, allows policymakers to create focused initiatives to address inequities and strengthen their resilience to climate threats. Furthermore, including gender-responsive indicators and goals in policy frameworks allows policymakers to monitor progress toward gender equality and evaluate the efficacy of actions to reduce gender gaps (UN Women, 2020). This includes setting clear standards for assessing women's involvement, access to resources, and empowerment in climate change activities. In addition to acknowledging the various effects of climate change, policymakers must address the distinct roles and responsibilities of men and women in adaptation and mitigation measures. Women frequently act as the main caregivers, resource managers, and community leaders, making their contribution to climate resilience

women's participation in decision-making processes, ensure their access to resources and technology, and acknowledge their agency and competence in solving climate change concerns.

UNDP (2019) highlights many essential features of policy suggestions for incorporating gender issues into national climate change policies and initiatives. These suggestions are crucial for ensuring that climate responses are inclusive, equitable, and effective. Therefore, policymakers, climate change scientists, practitioners, and lawmakers, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, must recognize the imperative of implementing gender-responsive climate change actions and strategies. This entails acknowledging the differential impacts of climate change on men and women and integrating gender considerations into policies and decision-making processes. Ensuring that men and women benefit equally from budgetary allocations for climate action is imperative when developing and implementing new climate policies. This makes it possible for everyone to use their leadership and skill sets to address crises. It is essential to empower women by providing education on climate change and its consequences. Involving women in decision-making processes is crucial, considering their heightened vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. By actively engaging women in decision-making, they can contribute significantly to climate change mitigation efforts. Similarly, I recommend raising awareness among males. It is also important to educate men on the differential impacts of climate change on different sexes. Raising awareness among men about the specific vulnerabilities of women to climate change impacts can influence their decision-making at various levels. This understanding can lead to more inclusive and effective climate-change strategies that consider women's unique challenges.

important (UN Women, 2020). Consequently, policies and initiatives should aim to increase

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REALIZING THE SOUTH AFRICAN MULTILINGUALISM DREAM THROUGH KWAITO MUSIC

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Abstract

The multilingual nature of the lyrics in Kwaito music, the popularity of this genre among young South Africans of all races and tribes, the universality and value of music throughout human history provides this genre with the potency for realizing the unitary effort envisaged in the constitution of South Africa. Despite its origin as an art-form invented by youth from the ghettos (euphemized slums, romanticized as kasi) of South Africa and the fact that it is associated with gangster life and at times misogyny, this genre, like sheng in Nairobi–Kenya (Wrong, 2010), possesses a unifying element, as it proves itself to be a ‘cauldron’ of South African languages. With South Africa still experiencing the residues of apartheid, Mfecane and Difaqane (Southern African tribal wars of the 1800s) and not immune to latent ethnic atavistic tendencies, this product of youth, an age bracket that epitomizes change, is deemed a “contagious” and potent tool towards the demolition of the old social order. It is, however, unfortunate that very little studies have been dedicated to this aspect of the art form. In light of this, this study was then conducted with the view to establish the extent to which Kwaito music, could be relied upon to disseminate the thirteen languages, which have been confined to tribal and demographic enclaves, making it possible for the social order in which divide and rule as the modus operandi could prevail against democracy and social cohesion. In order to justify the utilization of a music genre into long established social-political neuroses, this study also draws the attention of the reader to several other uses of the art form to human exigencies. The study uses a song by an award-winning Kwaito artist, Kabelo Mabalane. Analyzing it with special focus on its multilingual content, then some subsidiary themes such as moral lesson and ethnomusicology background provided, the study showed that, indeed, this genre has the potential to disseminate the rudiments of South African languages, especially, those which are seldom available in some neighborhood. Even more crucial is the fact that the songs in this genre can inspire love for other languages. Lastly, the selected song also demonstrated that this genre is socially and morally responsible.

Keywords: Multilingualism, music genre, Kwaito music, social cohesion

Introduction

South African artists have always led the way with regards to social integration and harmony. For instance, soapies such as *Muvhango* and *The Queen* use almost all of the country’s 13 official languages. This is often evident when one character speaks to another whose mother tongue is not the same as theirs. For instance, a Tshivenda or Sepedi addressee will, using their own language, respond in an appropriate manner, which attest to the fact that the two languages are mutu-

ally intelligible. Further exposure to other languages in this art form is done with the aid of subtitles. It can, therefore, be surmised from this media data that the soapy which commands audience and has an element of “addiction”, which can be deciphered from the number of advertisements which are played between scenes, has the power to, positively, influence attitudes towards languages other than one’s own. This view is influenced by the fact that the heroes and sheroes of the viewers are exuding a positive attitude to-

wards the country's official languages. In so doing, the soapy writers are fostering a post-apartheid South African identity, and in a very subtle manner suggesting that, to be a South African means to be able to communi-cate with fellow South Africans. The secret of it all lies in the affection, which is often witnessed in a developmental language called *motherese*. In this study, it is argued that with its capacity to heighten aesthetics, Kwaito music possesses hormonal arousal implicated in the allure requisite to the acceptance and dissemination of other languages.

South African musicians have explicitly instrumentalized their art to achieve social integration and remake the world. Among them are: Jabu Khanyile, Hugh Masikela, our contemporary Ringo Madlingozi and many others. For instance, Ringo, an isiXhosa mother tongue speaker, demonstrates affect to other South African languages besides his isiXhosa, by composing multilingual songs. He even goes to the extent of featuring individuals such as Tuks Senganga for some Setswana lines in his music-making. The other artists above, who also sing in various South African languages are both subversive and confrontational towards the tribalistic and ethnocentric tendencies which have denied some citizens of the envisaged rainbow nation to communicate, that is, to be part of a broader community, with their fellow compatriots. Expressed differently, these artists also explicitly attack the social stereotypes that many people, including politicians, dare not speak about. For instance, in the song *Chileshe* by the jazz maestro, Hugh Masikela, explicitly excoriates three extra-textual social deviants, two with ethnic narcissistic self-esteem and one with the mind of a thug. The first person he addresses is Chileshe, whom he incites to protest against the ethnic slur, *kimane*, a derogatory name given to very dark-skinned people, often from the northern parts of the country. The second is Ngobese, whom he rebukes for calling other people *izilwane* (animals). He berates this addressee for the narcissistic outlook which he wears on his sleeve and represents their identity as humans in the line "*nabo ngabantu, u zo khula nini na.*" This line means

that the humans you are labeling animals are not animals, but humans, just like you. He takes this further with a rhetorical question: "When will you outgrow this immaturity?"

Within the Kwaito *genre*, the condemnation of ethnic supremacy is more explicit in Arthur Mafokate's Kwaito song titled *Nee Baas (No boss); Don't call me Kaffir*. This demeaning word which is originally Arab (Kaffir) has been used by both the British and the Afrikaners to refer to black South Africans. It has been instrumental in categorizing people, and consequently, prescribing inhumane attitudes against them with no compunction. This song is an outright rejection of racial prejudice and a call for mutual respect that could promote common national unity. Such voices of respectability include Jabu Khanyile who in the song, *aMambau*, protests in the line "*Bazibiza ngamaga ...oku salayo, singa bantu*, meaning, they may call us names, but the fact remains, we too are humans. With the view to unravel this phenomenon, the authors will discuss the subject under the following sub-themes: a brief history of the *genre*, a short biography of the Kwaito star whose song has been selected for the study, the metaphysics of music, neuro-science and music, psycho-sociological value of music, the lyrics of the selected song and their English translation, analysis of the song/data, and the social relevance of the song.

2. A Word on the Genre and its History

Ndabeni and Mthembu (2018:190) aver that the history of Kwaito is a contested space. They argue that African musical and oral strains, Hip Hop and House music all converged to create Kwaito. They trace the origins of this *genre* to predecessors such as Afro-bubblegum of the 1980s by legendary artists, pop music stars such as Brenda Fassie, Chicco Twala and many others.

Lending relevance to Kwaito as an artistic representation of the country's various languages, the *South African Info* article dated 9 April of 2003 states that, "Kwaito is a wild, eclectic, mix up, a boiling, cooking brew of languages and sound that could have happened nowhere, but in South Africa. It is a glorious potpourri of all 13 official

languages that puts to rest the apartheid mythology of separate development.” To scholars such as Kamwendo (2006: 57), the eleven languages in Kwaito music directly position it to serve four of the six goals of the South African language policy which are to: (i) promote national unity within the country’s linguistic and cultural diversity, (ii) entrench democracy which includes the motivation of language rights, (iii) promote multilingualism and (iv) promote respect for, and tolerance towards linguistic and cultural diversity. Kwaito has become a pervasive feature of South African society, especially among the youth. Swartz (2003) views this music *genre* as the country’s popular music, and further claims that 80% of the youth support it. Mandoza’s song *Nkalakatha* is a classic example authenticating the claim above. This Kwaito song stayed at the top of the charts in both Black and White radio stations despite the monolingual nature of its lyrics. In 2019, when the South African rugby team won the World Cup, this song was played in car radios by young Afrikaners whose excitement was shared with some black youths they had given a ride to. This was observed by one of the researchers in Pretoria North near Wonderboom railway station. This shows that there is no doubt about Kwaito music reaching a section of the population, which, according to the apartheid social engineering, was not supposed to access any of the Bantu languages.

As a *genre*, kwaito is often associated with American Hip-Hop. This is largely because of its rap style. The reader is, however, reminded that the stylistic choice of songwriters to make music with lyrics being dictated upon a beat is not new to the South African music arena. This is evident in the music of artists such as Mpharanyane who was famous as far back as the seventies. This does not reject the fact that some Kwaito musicians have models in the hip-hop world. For instance, Kabelo confesses that he was a fan of Tupac Shakur, and he attributes his gangster mentality to him. Spikiri confesses that Snoop Dogg was one of his role models. TKZee, which is the group that Kabelo Mabalane started with, also admit to taking Hip Hop and adapting it to the South African context.

Music is actually not just eclectic in terms of the language component, but even in the beat itself. Spikiri confesses that he was influenced by Chicco’s music. He performed as a dancer in the music video titled *Some Money* by Sello Twala. This study will, however, not dwell much on these debates, but would like to explore the intrinsic capacity of Kwaito to influence the acquisition and learning of the languages spoken by a broader portion of the South African society.

There is also some conjecture that “Kwaito” has some origins with a gangster known as *AmaKwaitos*. These were known to use a hybrid street language called Scamto. Scamto itself is a street lingo which, according to Motshegoa (2005:1), “...was developed to ensure privacy between “the boys” and their *mattaras* (Bosses). It was also developed as a *lingo* to avoid arrests and detection from the police for various crimes.”

Paying attention to the misogynic innuendos in the lyrics of some Kwaito songs such as Arthur Mafokate’s ‘*Wa ipona o montle jwang*, and Thebe’s ‘*Dibiri di chipile*’ (Beer is cheap), however, provide discomforting evidence against the social responsibility of Kwaito music. Another cause for suspicion against Kwaito is its link with Hip Hop gangster life in the United States of America (USA). Like Hip Hop, Kwaito music was started by the black youth who lived in the poor urban areas and some of them, did indeed have some criminal records. For example, Mandoza and Kabelo have participated in robberies. Kabelo alludes to this type of lifestyle in his song *Kwaito General*, which is selected for this study. Makendlas, a younger brother to the man nicknamed the king of Kwaito, Arthur Mafokate, reportedly, died by shooting himself after shooting and fatally wounding a fan. Be that as it may, perceived from a multiple perspective advantage, Kwaito music yields that this music *genre* can be an asset in society, and this study intends to demonstrate exactly that. In an attempt to create some background to this paper and the argument we intend to construct, below, an attempt is made to provide some brief biographical details of the Kwaito artist whose song has been selected for the study.

3. A Brief Biography of Kabelo Mabalane

This task is performed by taking snippets from his autobiography titled: *'I ran for my life'*. Kabelo Mabalane, also known as Bugga Luv, grew up in Soweto –between Pimville and Diepkloof (Mabalane, 2016; Ndabeni & Mthembu, 2018). Like Mandoza, Arthur, Tokollo and many other Kwaito stars, he also had his share of street life, violence, gangster mentality and drugs which he later and timeously wrenched his life from. Early in his life, he was highly interested in finding the ghetto and liked expressing himself in various languages. Having had the privilege to attend school with Whites, he developed a mission "... to demystify the Black person to the White and vice versa" (Mabalane, 2016:31); thus, forging a new and a rainbow nation even when not holding the microphone. The school which was also multicultural, provided an enabling environment. He claims that he was in heaven whenever they had an English class. This testifies to his love for words/languages and forging unity among South Africans. One other factor worth mentioning is the fact that he grew up in a family that loved music. His father had countless music records-now coming in the form of smaller CDs. Also, Kabelo championed the struggle against drug dependency (Ndabeni & Mthembu, 2018). This Kwaito star is reported to have legions of fans (Mabalane, 2016: 10). Reading this charisma about him against Hoffer's observation that, "The superior individual, whether in politics, literature, science, commerce or industry, plays a large role in shaping the nation..." (Hoffer, 1951:17) justifies the belief to admit the relevance of this musician and his *genre* towards igniting love for almost all of South African languages. Hoffer's view is corroborated by Cohen (2003), who avers that one can be addicted to another person in the same way as they get addicted to a drug-more of this in another section of the study. Cohen (2003) develops this idea further by stating that drugs demolish our ability to choose. In this study, by extension, the researchers argue that Kwaito as a genre popularised by Kabelo among others, invades the will with its aesthetic allure and "endears" the multilingual lyrical content of this music to the consumer of the art under

investigation.

4. Language Acquisition Theories and Music

The relationship between Kwaito music and language acquisition is mainly justified by the aesthetic rewards which accompany the multilingual content of the genre. This genre achieves its cohesive power by lowering the inhibitions inherent among individuals who have been raised in a society whose differences were magnified by the apartheid ideology. The differences alluded to above are still discernible in the existence of townships such as Soshanguve. They and many others justify the urgency with which the acculturating power of Kwaito music should be welcomed. Some of the inhibiting forces against the promotion of multilingualism include both social and psychological distances (Ellis, 2008; Gass & Selinker, 2008).

Scholarship in language acquisition avers that to deal with these walls of inhibition, there should be a way of appealing to the ego of the second or third language learner so as to increase its permeability and entice it to permit other people's form of identification (languages) without fear of looking childish and insipid. This observation on second or foreign language acquisition has been justified by an experiment carried out by Guoira, Brannon and Dull in 1978, cited (in Ellis, 2008). In their experiment, data were collected from subjects on the pronunciation of a foreign language before, during and after the ingestion of alcohol. The results showed a correlation between pronunciation and alcohol level in the blood. That is to say, the accuracy of pronunciation fluctuated with the amount of alcohol in the blood, becoming more precise when the alcohol content was high and less so when it was low. Guoira and his colleagues then justifiably concluded that alcohol reduces inhibitions. According to Stern (1983:38), "an anomic individual because of his [sic] critical attitude to his own society, is open to the demands of a different language and culture; therefore, anomie is a positive predictor of language achievement." In tandem with this, the effects of alcohol led Guoira to conclude that, operationally, inducing state of per-

meability of ego boundaries or the ability to partially and temporarily give up one's separateness of identity is a prerequisite for learning a language other than one's own (Ellis, 2008:179). There is convergence among the effects of alcohol, the human limbic system and the psychosocial state. According to Cohen, a state of bliss is achieved while listening to music, and this association of the good feeling with music, as proven by the South African Music Awards (SAMA), demonstrate that Kwaito has the potential to lay the foundation for learning non-mother tongue languages. There is most probably a mutual relationship between the consumer and the artist. The artist provides bliss, and the consumer of the music "yields" their soul/ego to the unpronounced whim of the artist. This is analogous to the dissolution of the ego among the Sufi Muslims while they perform their ritual dance.

5. Metaphysics of Music

Cultural anthropology records that human history has always held music to the status of a panacea in various spheres of life. This is substantiated by Balfour (2004:1) who asserts that, "music has been used from ancient times for exorcism to invoke the presence of healing spirits, banish evil, dispel illness and to usher the human psyche into the space of comfort and wellness." In this section of the study, an attempt is made to discuss the power of music with the view to justify the choice of Kwaito as a genre that can be used to realize the constitutional imperative relating to languages and the consequent social integration that comes with it. This view as held by the authors in this instance is that this genre has the potential to create a psycho-social terrain for the engendering of positive predisposition towards South African languages other than one's own. The section begins by referring to the innate metaphysical power of music as it is encoded in its etymology.

The morphology of the word "music" literally invokes an inherent metaphysical force in this art form. This word constitutes two morphemes which are: "muse" (independent) and "-ic" (bound). While the noun "muse" comes to the

English language via Greek mythology (Apel, 1972; Zwilling, 2015), and it is the name of the Greek god of the arts, the suffix "ic" is borrowed from Latin and it means "pertaining or belonging to" (Myers, 1986). The combination of these two morphemes results into the English word "music." It can; therefore, be inferred that the power to enchant, which has popularized Kwaito music, especially, among the youth, simultaneously situates this genre, strategically to serve as an instrument for achieving multilingualism and social cohesion.

Further evidence to the above assertion is derived from some English verbs that often collocate or belong to the same semantic field with the word 'music'. The first of these is the source word for the verb "chant", which means "to sing". The English language has words such as 'enchant'. The Merriam - Webster dictionary defines incantation as "The use of spells or verbal charms spoken or sung as part of a ritual or magic." In this very dictionary, the word "enchant" is captured in the three senses which are, "to bewitch", "enrapture" or "fascinate". The word "enrapture" also connotes "to delight." Against this background, it can be concluded that kwaito Music as both a dance and sung artistic product is innately empowered with the capacity to both delight and enchant. Bringing this to language acquisition and learning, it then follows that, the mood and memory capacity invoked by kwaito music can lead the listener into a learning mode. The capacity to both delight and enchant foretells the instrumental capacity of this music genre to lower the affective filter. Fasold and Connor-Linton (2006: 494) define the affective filter as "The emotional blocks such as self-awareness, or embarrassment that can hinder the language acquisition process."

The etymology referred to above, ties in well with the fact that one of Kabelo's friends and a group mate, Magesh, is perceived to be a god because of his linguistic acrobatics. This idea is buttressed by the argument that rock stars are capable of invoking similar feelings for the pagan rites (Roland, 2018). It is this supremacy of the artist which has probably led Strauss to compare

music composers to deities, and to view their art as the highest mystery of man (Storr, 1992).

Another crucial metaphysical finding on music is derivable from the work of Cohen (2003). His observation includes the Sufi Muslims performing their ritual dance. What happens during this dance, is that, "In the trancelike state that arises, the ego is said to dissolve, allowing the universal presence to enter" (Cohen, 2003: 28). Universal on its own suggests two developmental traits. These are a counter provincialism mental state and the widening of psycho-social horizons. Cohen states that Dervish dancers perform their dance in a circular repetitive manner while simultaneously focusing on a prayer. The summit of this dance is a transcendental experience that eventually dissolves the ego. Watching YouTube performances of songs such as *Two Bob Yanga* by Malaika provides a typical scenario of ego dissolution strength akin to that of yet another Kwaito song, "*Ha ke rata, nka tsola; ka bontsha lethabo*, literally meaning, watch out! I may soon get nude (publicly) just to express euphoria. The argument supporting the use of music to permeate culturally insulated personalities through kwaito as dance music hinges on this capacity of dance music to dissolve the ego and open it up to other languages. Central to the argument in this study is the fact that the permeability of the ego is useful towards the "cultivation" of the soul for the reception of other languages.

Two other incidents from religion, pertinent to the argument on the power of the muse on personalities, revolve around its impact on the human *psyche*. In these instances, the representations of this art demonstrate the potency of music to both positively and negatively direct human Behaviour. The first is the clinical power of music where the biblical character, David, is reported to have played his harp in order to help king Saul to regain his sanity (The Bible-1 Samuel 16:23). Relating this issue to the unitary value of music is the fact that the exploitable tribalism and ethnicity are related to mental degeneration in the same way as the psychiatric impairment that the king presented with. A reading of the literary arts such as the short story *Unto Dust* by Herman Charles Bosman and a poem *Da Same*

Da Same by Sipho Sepamla "mirrors" this *psychosis*.

A second incident testifying to the power of music is the assassination of the biblical character, John the Baptist in the book of Mark 6:22-28. The story is told of a young girl who danced to King Herod out of his wits. After a dance performance by the daughter of Herodias, the mistress to the king, the king told the daughter to name 'any' reward she wanted as a remuneration commensurate to the aesthetic value of her performance. The dancer asked for the head of John the Baptist, and the king had to grant that which he had never imagined he would offer. It can be surmised from this incident that with Kwaito also being a dance music, this 'alchemy' of the ego as well as the lowering of the inhibitions are possible and may lead to the reciprocal and impulsive surrender of one's consent to the artist, and by extension, the learning of another language. Inductively, it can be claimed that ethnicity and tribalism, which had been instrumentalised and institutionalised by colonial social engineering, would also 'melt' under the *dunamis* of music. In the social learning theory of language acquisition and learning, this is called acculturation desired and enabling state of learning another language (Gass & Silinker, 2008).

According to Cohen (2003), a state of bliss is achieved while listening to music. This association of the good feeling with music is proven by the SAMA, which, although unaware on the part of the music consumers, demonstrates that Kwaito music manipulates the soul in favour of the incoming "othered" forms of cultural expression such as language. This power which helps the music lover to regress to a child-like stage of development is still an enigma even many years after the song *That' isgubu* by Bongo Maffin was released. We substantiate this point by using an instance which occurred on the 15 of March 2021. On this day, a Power FM Radio presenter, Lukhona Mnguni, started his show with the song *Thathi'sgubu*. A tweet was sent to commend him for beginning the show with such a grand style. The presenter commented back on the song he played, which he did in a very light mood. He

tapped into the recent (2021) South African commission of inquiry narrative which had been in the headlines for some time. Mnguni suggested that there should be a commission of inquiry into the meaning of the lyrics rapped by Stone Seate, a Setswana-speaking member of the group. Below the lines in question are represented *verbatim*:

Ashiki shia motswako

I can vibrate like a themtola

If one were to respond to Lukhuna, the advice would be that the words are, actually, a childlike gibberish attempt to speak English. This is certainly induced by the euphoria derived from the cheesecake like stimulus input from Kwaito music. These lines of the song are actually a grammatic representation of the very inhibition lowering euphoria mentioned earlier in the study. This state of the ego allows the persona of the song to, unashamedly, regress to the impulse of the little child and care very little about how stupid he/she may seem. Stated differently, this can be viewed as a return to pre-socialisation/indoctrination of childhood innocence. Once arrived at this psychological state, the individual has attained a level at which learning a foreign language is less impeded. This is the advantage children have over their parents whenever they have to, simultaneously, learn a non-native language. The artist provides a clue to his addressees to the lines cited in the above paragraph by describing the linguistic and artistic context invoked by the *s'gubu* (drum), which in the context of this song is a substitute for music.

Le sekgoa se re aparetse, (even English is all over us). Boesengmang ba ipala mabala a kgaka (Mere blokes have found the audacity to propose to ladies.)

Converging data corroborating the claim we make above is also derivable from a song “Two Bob by the group Malaika where two lines run as follows:

Rona, Setswana re se ravasa le Sekgoa,

O tlaa intshwarela, fa ke sa bue sentle.

Translated, this means, “as for us, we don’t mind

concocting a hotchpotch of Setswana and English. Translation of the second lines states, “Please pardon us if what we are saying does not make sense.” This confessed willingness to make mistakes in speaking another language is psychologically empowering in the feat to acquire and learn a second language, particularly among post childhood learners.

The power of the artist to create a second or foreign language receptive attitude is supported by instances where political states, overtly, put plans to curtail or at times even to completely suppress this power. To demonstrate this, we turn to the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of South Africa. Wasserstrom and Cunningham (2018) chronicle the suppression of art produced by non-partisan artists such as Liu Xiaobo who together with other ‘dissident’ artists based their work on the ideas of Vaclav Havel’s Charter 77. These artists demanded democratic reforms from the People’s Republic of China’s government. Xiaobo won the Nobel peace prize, and his government showed no interest in it. They actually denounced it. Nineteen countries which are friends of China also rejected it. Subsequent to that, Liu was sentenced to 11 years in prison. While in prison, he was diagnosed with advanced liver cancer. He wanted to seek medical help overseas, but was denied permit, and he died on the 13 July 2017. Looked at through the lens of George Orwell’s novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the actual course of his death might crave further investigation.

The claim that music can be a resource in learning languages is not an innovation to studies on language learning. Rose (cited in Sabbagh, 1993) observes that music can improve learning. She used Hip Hop, a sister genre to Kwaito, with children labelled “at risk” in her educational outreach and it yielded positive results. She also claims that Hip Hop promotes a venue for conflict resolution, cooperation, creative thinking and a method to engage traditional curriculum.

6. Neuro-Musico Insights

Scientific evidence from a discipline such as Neurology corroborates the claims which have

been made about music over the years. For instance, Speranza *et al.* (2022) identified thirteen (13) areas of the brain that get activated during music listening and making. In their study, it is argued that kwaito music maximizes its effect such that all of these 13 regions are involved. This justifies the near-omnipotent and meta-physical power music has on both the human soma and the psyche. Hence, Cousineau's (2023) argument that music can make one lose control. The above observation substantiates 'non-empirical' claims expressed by two of South African songs. One is by Lucky Dube and the other by a group called Stimela and Ray Phiri. In what one views as a meta-musical line or apology for music, Lucky Dube has these lines about music in a song on music itself:

Even the pope agrees, even the president agrees. It (music) is the only natural way to staying high. Corroborating this power of the *muse*, the lead singer of an Afro Jazz, Stimela, in their track *Singajindi majita* confesses,

"I am inspired; I cannot understand it (the inspiration)."

Reinforcing the two observations above, Cohen (2003: 356) argues that music creates "ecstasy" just like an "ecstasy" drug. He avers that, "music and visual stimulation would probably help you[sic] get to the endorphin releasing point quicker... it lifts you to a plateau of natural ecstasy". This ethno-musicologist further views music as the quickest way to arrive at the release of endorphins. Studies on the limbic system reveal that, the role of endorphins pertinent to the argument made about Kwaito in this study include among others: synchrony at the physical level which then overlaps to the ideological, linguistic and eventually shared intentionality. Concurring with Cohen is Liebenberg (2017), who adds that laughter and music also cause synchrony.

Another observation on the role of music on the limbic system is provided by Harvey (2018). This ethnomusicologist claims that, "music affects many aspects of human behaviour, especially, in encouraging prosocial interactions, trust and cooperation within groups of culturally

compatible, but not necessarily genetically related individuals" (Harvey, 2018:1). This is facilitated through the release of oxytocin, the social bonding hormone. Very pertinent to this study is the fact that music also facilitates aspects of learning and memory. Harking back to Cousineau (2023), this is the work of the hippocampus. Richter and Ostovar (2016) claim that oxytocin, firstly, promotes synchrony and social interaction; secondly, it contributes to cultural identity, and finally, encourages the formation of cooperative networks. These neuroscientists also observed that from an evolutionary perspective, it has been argued that dance advantages humans "by contributing to sexual reproduction signaling, cooperation, social bonding, infant care, violence avoidance as well as embodied individual and social communication and memorisation (Richter & Ostovar, 2016). Harvey (2018) takes the idea further as he argues that this art form triggers the release of oxytocin which affects forms of behaviour such as: trust, empathy, reciprocity, group conformity, anxiety and overall social decision making under different environmental conditions. This hormone is referred to as an ancient peptide in mammals and it is universally involved in reproductive biology, modulating social learning and affiliative behaviours.

With dance moves as an integral part of Kwaito music, it can be justifiably inferred that this *genre* possesses the power to engender ecstasy and *camaraderie* among music consumers, artists and anybody associated with the multilingual lyrics of the artistic product responsible for the genesis of the ecstasy. The argument is supported by Cohen: (2003:78) who states that, "long periods of dancing boost serotonin naturally." It is only fair that we explain how this hormone works. This is done, first, by zooming into the etymology of the word "ecstasy". According to Cohen (2003:94), this word is originally a Greek noun derived from the word, *existeniai*, and it means to "drive out of one's mind". In this case, it can be deduced that music, and Kwaito by extension, has the power to set in motion, both acculturation and neuroplasticity. We provide a brief discussion of the second one as the first has

already been defined. Neuroplasticity means the ability of the nervous system to change its activity in response to intrinsic or extrinsic stimuli by reorganizing its structure, functions, or connections (Leaf, 2015). It can; therefore, ameliorate an attitude towards a particular language or people if the artist deliberately or inadvertently produces an aesthetic consumable to that effect. It can engender positive predisposition towards individuals and cultures, the music consumer might have been enculturated and indoctrinated into disdaining.

In addition to endorphins, Cohen (2003:78) has also observed that, “long periods of dancing boost serotonin naturally.” According to Harvey (2020), serotonin promotes mutual altruism, synchrony, social interaction, cultural identification and affiliation. Further to that, Harvey (2018) also discusses the benefits of oxytocin, a hormone that is triggered by music, though it might not be the only factor. Among these are, firstly, the promotion of the expression of positive emotions and prosocial altruistic attitudes, and the reduction of anxiety and promotion of trust, empathy and pro-social activities.

This discussion proceeds by tying the “enchantment” of music to ecstasy and memory gains that are derived from listening to this artistic product. The rationale for this is the reciprocal relationship between music and its consumer as related to the genre of choice in this study. Juslin and Sloboda (2013: 34) remark that in one study where they learned that music can heal speech impairments, they also learned that music has an enduring lifespan in the memory compared to speech. They cite an experiment in which it was observed that:

If a barbiturate is injected into the left carotid artery so that the left hemisphere of the brain is sedated, the subject is unable to speak, but can still sing.

Another study reported on by these researchers found that children with a memory problem could easily remember information that is presented simultaneously with music. Music, which in the context of this study is Kwaito, therefore, does not only act as a source of delight for the listener, but also as a memory enhancer, hence

the relationship between music, museum and *mnemosis*.

Constructing a more vivid picture of the relationship between music and the human limbic system is Pinker (cited in Szubart, 2019). This seminal researcher describes music as auditory cheesecake and an invention that tickles the brain in the same manner as cheesecake tickles the palate. The reader is here reminded of Shakespeare’s argument and demand: “If music be the food of love, play on. Give me the excess of it.” Another study carried out by Kirkwerk (2009) to investigate the impact of music on patients who were suffering from Alzheimer’s disease validates the power of music as a memory enhancer. The results showed that music improves the memories of individuals suffering from Alzheimer’s disease. Based on the findings of this study, one can justifiably conclude that music, and by extension, Kwaito, qualifies as a technique to retain second/third or foreign language lexical items, which are the building blocks of any form of language learning.

This discussion is ended with an observation by Mthembu (2018) who cites the psychology professor, Louis, who led a neuroscience crew which conducted a research on music with the findings showing that “music can trigger messages to the brain that can lead to the physical reactions as powerful as orgasm. This is supported by Tarr, Launa and Dunber (2014) who state that music-making and movement to music are activities central to ritual, courtship, identity and human expression, cross-culturally.

7. The Psycho-Social Value of Music

Music is said to exist because it conferred to humanity’s ancestors, a reproductive advantage. The power of this art genre is even implicated in the reproductive element of the human species. This has been alluded to in the play, *Dintshontso Tsa Lerato* (Fatalities of Love), a Setswana drama by Raditladi (1967). In this romantic play, the main character, Sakoma (meaning, he of song), “enchants” Mmamotia, who impulsively falls in love with him only to regret a few days later, though there had not been any conflict between her and her new lover. *In tandem* with this

literary representation of the power of music, Bloom states that the adaptationist attributes the capacity of procreation to music as well. He claims that, “The genes of those who produced music out-produced those who didn’t” (Bloom, 2011:125). This researcher further cites another study buttressing this observation. He states that in 1958, a study was conducted on the mating behaviour of fruit flies by the biologist John Maynard Smith. Their dance became the object of focus, and it was discovered to be an act of sexual selection. The results revealed that, through this dance, females choose whom to mate with (Bloom, 2011:83).

Further observation by the above researcher is that the genes of those who created and enjoyed music outproduced whose, did not. Providing a rationale for this, Bloom claims that music can facilitate the establishment of emotional bonds with other people. He observed that if we move in synchrony with other people, we turn to like them more, feel more connected to them, and are more generous to them. Hence, his conclusion that song and dance are the ‘ultimate team builders’ (Bloom, 2011:126). He cites Edmund Burke who in 1757 stated that music arouses awe. The definition of this word is, “...a social-emotion; it corresponds with the sense of reverence to the collective. Its primary triggers are powerful people who unite the community, and we diminish ourselves and are sub-servient to these awe-inspiring others” (Bloom, 2011: 217).

The power of music to unite the nation is acknowledged by Wrong (2010). This scholar opines that, “...popular trends alone would accomplish what Kenya’s presidents had failed to accomplish with their national anthems, independence days, flags and salutes: a true sense of nationhood” (Wrong, 2010:149). This argument is based on the transition of Kenyan city populations from a mono to a multilingual demography manifest in the Kenyan version of Hip Hop and Kwaito which is called Sheng. With the young shedding off their tribal identities and no longer electing to identify themselves along tribal lines, such as Luo or Gikuyu, they prefer to identify as Kenyans. Wrong is highly impressed by the abil-

ity of the singers to show off that linguistic prowess and allegiance to that ideal by dipping into five or six languages without pausing for a breath. In this study, the effort is made to demonstrate how Kwaito also does the same. However, like Kwaito and Hip Hop, this genre was also despised. It was cascaded as a pastime that should have been left to *matatu* (taxi) touts, drug pushers and other disreputable people of their society. The same thing was said of Kwaito by *Y* magazine which labeled kwaito music as a disgrace to Hip-Hop and its artists being called *Amavuilpop*, meaning dirty stinking chaps (p.147). These two genres have, however, stood the test of time (p. p147. They epitomise P’ Bitek’s argument that the artist is a ruler (P’ Bitek, 1986). It, therefore, makes sense when politicians covet or dislike this power and below the claim is elaborated.

8. Kwaito, the Envy of Politicians in South Africa

Kwaito music has exuded the level of influence which has been envied by politicians. In South Africa, for instance, the Kwaito star Arthur Mafokate was reported to be a friend of the ruling party’s top six (Ndabeni & Mthembu, 2018). He has, reportedly, been invited to their political rallies so as to appeal to the youth. Corroborating the claim above, also, is the evident relationship between Kwaito music and the South African national senior Rugby team. Even as recent as 2019 after the rugby national team had won the World Cup, the song *Nkalakatha* by Mandoza was played on car radios by White Afrikaner rugby fans in Pretoria North and most, probably, everywhere in South Africa where rugby fans of every creed and ethnic affiliation are available. This song has been the national anthem of the national rugby team since its return to international participation.

Like Hip Hop in Brazil, United States and Cuba, Kwaito has also been used for its “edutainment” in the services of social intervention against rape and substance abuse by groups such as Bongo Maffin, Tkzee and Trompies. The fact that Kwaito music has been chosen to lure the youth to attend campaigns of this nature shows that it is

acknowledged as a powerful tool to bind the people together for national concerns. The very choice makes it manifest that Kwaito is the most desired type of music among the youth who are, actually, the majority among consumers. However, what seems to be ignored is the fact that it is a genre largely made up of multilingual lyrics; hence, this study.

The “contagious” linguistic passion displayed by Kwaito artists, who can even go to the extent of singing in Spanish (eg, song titled *Bambino* by Malaika available on YouTube), is a reflection of the South African political aspiration encapsulated in the phrase “The rainbow nation”. What the Kwaito artists are doing through this genre is to give artistic expression to a sentiment by the former president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki which is captured in the following words: “I am formed by the migrants who left Europe to find a new home on my country on our native land. Whatever their actions, they remain a part of me” (Mbeki’s: Speech *I am an African which he rendered* 08-May-1996-available online). Kwaito music provides a practical example of the passion to reconcile and unite the nation through language, as it incorporates Afrikaans in some of their songs. Afrikaans, which could have been stigmatized after the 1976 uprisings, whose aim was to reject its imposition as a medium of instruction, is redeemed and “re-enfranchised” by Kwaito musicians. It propagates a social reconstruction verdict encoded in the *Freedom Charter’s* insisting that South Africa belongs to all who live in it (Luthuli, 2018). Like UTAKA, a music genre in Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya, Kwaito has already led the way towards unifying the region, Southern African Development Community (SADC). It has permeated the cultural plateau of Botswana and forged a common identity among the youth of various SADC countries. In an article titled *Bopa Daily news Archive*, dated 10 February 2005, Odirile Vee Sento’s Kwaito DVD titled *Yaaah!-Vee wa lethale*, is reported to have sold 100,000 copies in its first three weeks. This demonstrated that the youth culture which started in South Africa, Soweto has become a SADC’s popular cultural expression. The above-mentioned artist has also sold

DVDs titled *Vee Wa Mampela* and *Kasi Angels*. The two titles used languages from South Africa, and this shows the extent to which the region is likely to cooperate on issues of politics and economics.

This South African genre has already created fans in Zimbabwe. Reportedly, some of the *souvenirs* the Zimbabwean youths buy whenever they visit South Africa are Kwaito albums. Their main language Shona, which is a minority language in towns such as Mafikeng in the North-west province of South Africa, has also been popularised by Kwaito stars, of whom Bongo Maffin is the leader. Something pertinent to the argument in this study about Bongo Maffin is that even the name “*Bongo*” itself, is a cognate of *boboko*, a Setswana word for brain, is the name of a music genre in East and Central Africa and in Swahili, it also means the brain or mind. It can be surmised from this observation that there has probably been a conscious effort in the name of the group to evoke solidarity with other African countries. The very Kwaito group, Bongo Maffin, is an interesting mix of people of varying language backgrounds who can sing in any South African language. For example, Jah Seed, the Rastafarian-looking gentleman, is a Shona from Zimbabwe. Stoane Seate’s mother tongue is Setswana and Thandiswa Mazwai speaks isiXhosa, and yet they can sing in any language their songs are composed. That is to say, they do not have to sing in their mother tongue all the time. For example, Thandiswa of Bongo Maffin sings the Setswana lines in their song, *Mmangwane a ko` mpulele*, meaning, aunt, please open for me. A few years ago, a South African Brewery was reported to have asked Bongo Maffin to assist boost their sales.

9. Kwaito Music and South African Politics

According to Ndabeni and Mthembu (2018) Kwaito became a force to reckon with. Its power was coveted by politicians. For instance, in 2002, Bridget Mabandla, the deputy minister of arts and culture, had a meeting with Kwaito artists to discuss the possible contribution of this genre in economics. This point is elaborated on, further,

by mentioning that Arthur Mafokate and Eugene Mthethwa have reportedly been at the forefront of the ANC political campaign. The authors above mentioned that Arthur has, during one of the national elections, been found campaigning for the Democratic Alliance party. These authors also claim that President Mbeki of South Africa's 1999 electioneering strategy relied heavily on Kwaito as its aesthetic lure to the youth.

10. Kwaito and the Economy of South Africa

Kwaito's popularity has boosted other parts of urban culture such as the fashion industry. For instance, young designers such as Stoned Cherrie, Loxion Kulca and Sun Goddess have boomed all over the country; their designs are based on the images/trends set by the Kwaito singers such as retro-sixties, afro-chic and pantsula styles. YFM, a youth radio station launched in Gauteng in 1997, follows the principle of 'giving the youth the license to create their own identity,' and has since grown to become the biggest urban youth radio station. Leo Manne, the music program manager of YFM, confessed that Kwaito 'has been the core of YFM's success' (Coetzer, 1999:43). The station's foundation stems almost directly from the doctrine formed by Kwaito, of allowing the youth the freedom of expression, in whatever language they prefer (p14). During the apartheid era, major record labels refused to sign up Kwaito acts, claiming that the music had a few chanted lines. But then, Kabelo Mabalane's song, *Kwaito General*, which is selected for this study, is an antithesis of that, and has proven the allegation unfounded. The paradox of this aversion is that Kwaito producers then resolved to start their own independent labels, which have since become very successful. The outcome has completely changed the lives of producers such as Mdu, who

started selling his Kwaito tapes from his car boot. The Kwaito recording labels, such as Kalawa, Triple 9 and Mdu Music, have gone on to become some of the country's biggest independent labels, with major Kwaito artists selling well above platinum. This mass "hysteria" induced by Kwaito music is a mystery the world of commerce covets. Observation shows that there are subliminal messages sent by this act and the message is that Kwaito music possesses a superior commercial advantage to culinary products such as chicken and even alcohol. Even in 2022, grocery stores such as Checkers used Kwaito music to sell their new products to withstand the cutthroat competition they are confronted with.

Conclusion

This section of the study has introduced the reader to the Kwaito genre which is the music the authors believe affects almost every aspect of society. The introduction dwelt more on music as an Art genre, by extension, included the aesthetic power of Kwaito. A variety of factors, such as: its history, language acquisition theories, metaphysical power, neuroscience insights into music, the psychosocial value and politics, have been discussed. These were discussed with the view to illuminate the capacity of music and Kwaito in particular, on why it has the power that can be tapped into, for numerous human aspects. Against this background, and with the hope that a plausible rationale has been provided, a direct analysis of the song is now embarked on. Since readers might not be familiar with the song selected for the study, the song has been presented with line-by-line translations (See addendum). Below, is a chart presenting the multilingual content of the song and the various languages of South Africa, which feature in the song.

11. Findings: The chart below presents the lyrical content of the song according to languages spoken in South Africa with the artist switching from one to the other, with pretty much no effort. Other aspects of music and texts were added.

Song Title	Languages used	Intertextuality	Themes	Music	Paralanguage
Kwaito General	Setswana(nna) Sepedi(ke) Sesotho(nna) English(general) Tsotsitaal(speeta) IsiXhosa(phakamisa) IsiNdebele(vele) isiSwati(phakamisa) Afrikaans(net) isiZulu(mina)	Serote's poem: <i>My Black boys in the streets</i> Christian church testimony	Crime Drug abuse Testimony Kwaito music Metaphysics Cynicism Jealousy	Repetition Parallelism Enjambment Phonoaesthetics Metaphor Apostrophe	N/A Audio version only

12. ANALYSIS OF THE SONG

12.1 Linguistic Relevance of the Song

The song uses seven different languages ranging from Sesotho, Setswana, isiZulu, isiXhosa, English, Sepedi, Afrikaans and Tsotsitaal, an unofficial street language which is multilingual in nature. The song itself is multilingual. "Kwaito" is *Tsotsitaal* and "General" is English. The first stanza uses isiZulu until the last line where the English words "Mr" and "man" are used and then proceeds to the excellence of linguistic eclectics and agilities inherent in the genre. This attribute is found in stanza number two. The first line of the stanza is largely in isiZulu and it is followed by an intra-sentential multilingual line: "*Ninga khohlwa is'hipa up yi lento*" which translated means "Don't forget, this thing raises our esteem". The first three words are in isiZulu and then the speaker deviates as he borrows "*hipa*" from English "keep" and then an English preposition "up" is used before "*yi lento*" which is isiZulu in the same line. The third line returns to isiZulu/isiXhosa and then the fourth one mixes Afrikaans and isiZulu "*Ba s'fateli kop toe nge nxa ya lento*". The subject is both Nguni and Sotho/Tswana and the verb is borrowed from Afrikaans "v pronounced as 'f' and then naturalized into isiZulu/isiXhosa and then the prepositional phrase "*kop toe*" is Afrikaans. The line closes with isiZulu/isiXhosa/Nguni which includes

isiNdebele and isiSwati "*nge nxa ya lento*." The next line is predominantly isiZulu and is intercepted by an important syntactic element, the interrogative pronoun "why," which is English. The next two lines are in isiZulu and they are followed by a line which starts in isiZulu mainly and ends with Tsotsitaal "*spita*" from the English speed up but now having experienced a semantic shift to mean you are forward. The word has been borrowed from English "speed" and has now come to mean "nasty/mean" after a semantic shift (see Meyerhoff, 2006). Lines 9-15 return to isiZulu while the last line of the same stanza starts with: "*...is maar net...*" which is Afrikaans, and ends the stanza in isiZulu, "*Ngi ya mthanda*."

Stanza number three starts with the two lines in isiZulu using "*bomgozigozi*", a word borrowed from English "gossip" and then returns to a mixture of both isiZulu and English, "*...ngathi si dizzydizzy*." Line number four takes an intra-sentential code switching, "*phakamis' sgubhu se Kwaito city to city*." The verb in the sentence becomes isiZulu and the object becomes a mixture of Afrikaans and isiZulu/isiXhosa, kwaai /nto (Kwaito) and then proceeds to English. This then leaves the reader with a sentence of five languages within one line. The remaining lines end

the stanza in isiZulu.

The refrain of the song further demonstrates both the multilingual content of Kwaito lyrics and its inadvertent and yet innate intention to disseminate languages through “foreigner talk” (Gass & Selinker, 2008), a form of speech that intends to make the input more comprehensible by modifying the utterances. In this two-line stanza, the artist obviates the Proto-Bantu origin of the Nguni/Sotho/Tswana while simultaneously exercising the liberty and affluence of his linguistic heritage as a South African. The first line starts with the subject “Mina” which is Nguni/Xitsonga and then followed by the copulative/linking verb “ke” meaning “am” which is Setswana/Sesotho/Sepedi cognate and the word “Kwaito” has been used as part of the compound noun Kwaito General. The first part “*Kwaito*” has been explained above and the last part is in English. This

line alone uses vocabulary items which are commonly used by: amaZulu, amaNdebele, amaSwati, amaXhosa, Basotho, Batswana, Bapedi, Afrikaners and the English. This Kwaito line has combined different languages in the language policy of South Africa.

Another attribute of the song that makes it an effective tool in the promotion of multilingualism is the liberty of the *persona* to substitute cognates and promote comprehensibility of the input. In the last line of the refrain, instead of continuing with “mina”, he uses the Sesotho/Setswana/Sepedi cognate “nna” and then keeps the remaining part of the sentence with this combination of meaning and compositional technique, maintaining the tune. This language artist forges this linguistic flexibility into a creative force, which has the potential to conceive a new nation capable of breaking *com-uni-ca-tion* barriers.

12.2 Social Relevance of the Song

Besides the focus of the study which is to demonstrate the multilingual nature of the Kwaito music, this song has vindicated Kwaito and acquitted it from social irresponsibility stigma. One of the reasons this Kwaito song was selected is that this song, written by a former gangster, addresses several concerns emanating from the composer’s personal observation, including his own life. In the first stanza, he implicitly shares his new encounter with his creator, which changed his life completely. He has just realized a new life, stemming from an awareness that God loves him. He feels that, compared to his former life of gangsterism, a relationship with God has given him things that he would not have acquired through thuggery (*Ba s’fateli kop toe ngenxa ya lento*), meaning, people now take us seriously because of Kwaito music. He also testifies about the talent that he probably ignored before, which is now shaping his life to the point where people admire him as a result thereof. He also admonishes his fellow Kwaito stars not to destroy their talents. A

complaint about this destruction is also mentioned in the very song. He says the following in the lines below:

*Yini ngathi manje sesiphethe lamasentana
Ngathi sesihlanyiswa yile mandlanyana?*

Translated, this means: It seems our having a few cents drives us insane. Why do we become power drunk?

This whole stanza has an angry tone. In the following lines, “*Eish, kuya benywa, kuya phuzwa, kuya lahlwa*” (Stanza no 2, Lines 13-14), he explicitly reprimands other Kwaito musicians against drug abuse, which is in the form of nicotine and alcohol. He is also against lasciviousness and promiscuity (Line 14, same stanza). He has used the euphemism in Tsotsitaal “*kuya-lahlwa*”, which means promiscuity. However, he is aware of *hubris* (pride) and he confesses that he is not trying to be snobbish, but it is all because of his love for God and the music which has lifted him from poverty and moral degeneration manifested in his involvement in crime. His anger against fellow Kwaito musicians who *do*

not behave well is suggested in his new awareness that there are backbiters and scoundrels, “*Bomgozigozi/Bomghobozi* (Stanza 3 line 1), who derive pleasure in the downfall of others and some Kwaito singers indulge in risky lifestyles. In a more motivational tone, he also shows that drugs such as alcohol can ruin a person’s life. “*Ibhasi iyaku shiya ulibele yibeer ungaboni is’khathi*” (Stanza no 4 lines 11-13). The bus he is talking about here is a metaphorical one, signifying life.

Stanza number three is an elegy in which he laments the premature death of gangsters. Their machismo-induced death is a loss even to themselves since they die without realising their purpose in life. In this song, Kabelo shares similar concerns with Serote (1972) in his poem “*My Black brothers in the streets*”. The argument Kabelo presents in this stanza is that, stealing, robbing and killing are not a solution to poverty but seeking one’s talent is. This assertion is supported by Mandoza’s biography. As a young man of sixteen, Mandoza had already been incarcerated for criminal activities. He left this wayward life and found a better one in music. Despite some inconsistencies in character, Mandoza has carved a niche for himself in the entertainment industry as seen in the song *Nkalakatha*, mentioned before. In the song, it is evident that Kwaito musicians do have a mission to bring to the youth, not only to delight them but also to teach them. The reader is reminded here, of the fact that these are the “chaps who, at some stage, were called “amavuilpop”; “v” pronounced as “f”.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research has discussed the philosophical view of music, its general value to humanity, with reference to the individual and the society at large. It also attempted to show the positive side of kwaito. The discussion included the use of music in a number of situations, including human wellness, social cohesion, politics and social justice issues. These were linked to the power of music in general, and Kwaito as a focus genre, to popularize and disseminate the various languages of South Africa. Furthermore, a link between Kwaito and Hip-Hop music was also drawn. This was done to emphasize the role the

youth and this performing arts genre, particularly, Kwaito music, can play in rebuilding and redirecting the attitude of the society towards a national goal. Two other important factors that were discussed were the metaphysical power of music and insights from neurology, which lend Kwaito music its centripetal resocialization force.

One Kwaito song by Kabelo Mabalane was selected and analyzed with focus on the multilingual content and socio-political value. The song that was analyzed demonstrated the linguistic ability of Kwaito singers to indulge in any South African language with ease, a linguistic prowess desired by the new post-apartheid society. Furthermore, the extent to which this genre is pervasive among South Africans has been attested to by the sales of this genre and the popularity of some of its stars.

The study has, however, noted some limitations. Firstly, the research did not exploit other forms of data collection such as interviews, observation and questionnaires. This was due to the minimum number of pages this research was confined to. Authors do acknowledge that these data collection methods would have given weightier reasons for the choice of Kwaito as a vehicle for promoting multilingualism in South Africa.

Kwaito sales and the influence Kwaito stars have on the South African Music Awards (SAMA) as well as their socio-political relevance, provide a rationale for the use of this genre in the promotion of multilingualism. It is, therefore, recommended that more than 40% of the music played on both the national and public radio as well as television stations should constitute Kwaito and other genres, which are also multilingual.

In addition, talk shows aimed at improving the societal value of Kwaito music could be held with the intention to educate the viewers and listeners against the negative impact of some Kwaito lyrics and messages. This will put pressure on some Kwaito singers whose music does not reflect the ethical and constitutional imperatives of the country to take a more socially responsible position in the composition of their songs.

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APPENDIX

LYRICS OF THE SONG: (Available at: <https://www.loot.co.za/product/kabelo-exodus/lxhk-564-g450>)

Song Title: Kwaito General

Artist: Kabelo Mabalane, AKA Bugga Luv

*Wangithatha wangibonis' izinto
Wangithatha ngagibel' izinto
Wangithata wangibonisa umhlaba
U Jesu wa bonisa u kuthi nami uyangithanda
Bheka namhlanje ukuthi umuntu uhlalaphi
Bheka namhlanje ukuthi u muntu u gcoka ini
Bheka namhlanje ukuthi unjolise nobani
Ngiphethe uMagesh
Ngiphethe uMr. Zwai man*

*He took me and showed me things
He took me up and I drove big things
Surely, Jesus showed that He really loves me
Look at where I live today
Look at what I am wearing
Just check who I am in love with
I've got Magesh on my side
I hang around with Mr. Zwai man.*

*Ningakhohlwa ukuthi iyasidlisa lento
Ningakhohlwa isikhipha up lento
Basi thathel' ikhanda yi lento
Ba s'fateli kop toe ngenxa yalento
Manje why si imosha lento?
Siya ikhafulela, i ya seka lento
Singa khohlwa eyethu lento
Masiyekile uku spita
Si iphushe lento
Yini ngathi manje ses'phethe lamasentana
Ngathi sesi hlanyiswa
yile madlanyana.*

*Eish! kuya bhenywa,
Kuyaphuzwa, kuyalahlwa
Angizenzingcono
Is maar net ngiyamthanda*

*Don't forget we survive on this thing
Forget not, this thing makes us famous
We gain recognition because of this thing
Now why do we destroy it?
We spit at it
Let's not forget
This thing belongs to us
Let's stop being nasty
And promote this thing
It seems once we acquire*

*A few cents,
 This little power
 Makes us crazy
 People smoke, drink and get lascivious
 I'm not being snobbish
 It's just that I love him
 Eish basibhekile a bomgozigozi (bomghobozi)
 Bayathanda mababona
 Ngathi si dizzydizzy (dizzy x2)
 Phakamisa sgubu se Kwaito city to city
 Ngiyabezwa
 Baya pepeza bathi izo' phela ngithi mina ngi
 Sho ngithi le Kwaito ngizo imela*

*Backbiters are watching us
 They rejoice when they see us
 Looking dizzy
 Raise the Kwaito beat city to city
 I can hear them
 Gossiping; saying this Kwaito's gonna dry up
 But I promise to be loyal to this Kwaito*

*Mina ke Kwaito General
 Nna ke Kwaito General
 I am the Kwaito General
 I am the Kwaito General
 Maningi a masotsha kuleimpilo
 ya bo ruff and tumble
 Awu mfowethu se si zwile
 Kuvele kufebani?
 Amasotsha onke a fela empini
 Banga get yilento papa
 Abalethele yona
 Eish!*

*Why does it have to be like this?
 Dreams are dying because of a fix
 Nawe*

*Ibasi li yak' shiya
 Ulibel' ibeer
 Ungaboni is'khathi
 Many are the soldiers
 In this ruff and tumble life
 Oh, my brother
 We have had enough
 Who should die next?
 All the soldiers died in battle
 Without reaching the things
 The father has in store for them
 Oh! Why does it have to be like this?*

*Dreams are dying because of a fix
Right now, the bus is leaving and you're
Holding onto a bottle of beer
Not realizing time is running out.*

*A bantwana ba ng'bhekile
Ma ba bona ngifak' iskhiya
Ngibona ulalele
Ngob' uyangi fila
Girls are watching me
When they see me putting the key
Into the ignition
I can see you are carefully listening
And it's all because you feel me.
Mina ke Kwaito General
Nna ke Kwaito General
I am the Kwaito General
I am the Kwaito General
I didn't believe in me, but you always said I can
That's why today I will always be your number one fan
Abanyebathi mina ngawe ngi moshi isikathi
Abanye bathi ngeke u laste e mpilweni ya mi
Abanye abantu
Bakuthandile
bayakuthenga
Abanye abantu bayakumela
Bayakufela
Abanye abantu baya hleka
Ngiyabazwela*

*Ngoba mangiphethe wena ngiphethe inyuko kuphela
Ah Kwaito music yes, I'm talking about you
I want you to know that Buga Luv loves you
Ngiyabezwa bathi ziyophela
Ngithi noma kunjani*

*Some people claim I am wasting my time with you
Others say you will never last in my heart
Others love you and they buy into you
Some are Martyrs
And they die for you
Others are mocking; I pity them
For when I have you, I have all that money is
Ah Kwaito Music I am talking about you
Mina iKwaito ingizo imela*

*Mina ke Kwaito General x2
I am the Kwaito General x2*

*Ek se, sidonsa kanzima
Ukuthi sizo fika lana
Ogcabanga ukuthi ngizoyeka
Uzob' e phethwe ukuhlanya Hey
! It's not easy
We are pressing forward
He who thinks I will leave this Kwaito
must really be crazy*

*Ke nna ke Kwaito general x2
mina ke Kwaito general
It's me the Kwaito general x2
I am the Kwaito General
ke nna ke Kwaito general x2
mina ke Kwaito general
It's me, the Kwaito general x
I am the Kwaito General*

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.22>**CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON MENTAL HEALTH AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN BOTSWANA AND SOUTH AFRICA****Gaolatlhe Medupe**

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MMaluleke@sadtu.org.za**Abstract**

Although cultural settings have a significant impact on how mental health is understood and managed, it is a critical factor in determining students' academic success. Traditional beliefs, social norms, and community expectations greatly influence how people in Botswana and South Africa view mental health, frequently resulting in stigma and a reluctance to seek professional assistance. The ecological system theory serves as the foundation for this study, which examines the interactions between institutional, community, and individual elements that affect mental health and how those interactions affect academic achievement in higher education. In order to gather data from a sample of 400 students at a few universities in Botswana and South Africa, this study uses a quantitative research approach and structured surveys. The relationship between cultural perspectives on mental health, stress, anxiety, and depression levels, and their quantifiable effects on students' GPAs is the main emphasis of the analysis. The results show a statistically significant link between mental health issues and poor academic achievement, with financial obstacles and cultural stigmas appearing as major determinants of help-seeking behaviour. The study also shows that students who turn to unofficial networks of friends and family experience more stress than those who seek out proper mental health care. The results offer useful information that educators, legislators, and mental health professionals can use to create inclusive policies that support academic achievement and mental wellbeing while taking into account the cultural realities of Botswana and South Africa.

Keywords: *Mental health, academic performance, cultural perspectives, higher education, institutional mental health services, student wellness*

Introduction

African indigenous civilisations, which frequently depart from Western psychiatric frameworks, use culturally distinctive explanatory models of illness to conceptualise mental stressors such as anxiety and depression (Tladi et al., 2022).

This study looks at how academic achievement is impacted by cultural views of mental health, highlighting the interaction between institutional

mental health care, society expectations, and traditional beliefs. The conceptual framework is the ecological systems theory, which offers a prism through which to examine the interplay of institutional, community, and individual forces. According to Bronfenbrenner's theory, people experience a variety of settings over the course of their lives, and each one has a different impact on behaviour to variable degrees (Bronfenbrenner, 2009).

Similar to how traditional beliefs in Botswana

have a significant impact on health-seeking behaviours, some ethnic groups in South Africa continue to have traditional ideas that affect how they interact with contemporary medicine and education. Although it is untrue to say that entire tribes consistently oppose modern techniques, prevailing cultural viewpoints in some societies prioritise customs above modern methods (Ashforth, 2007). Contradictions that can lead to sub-par academic performance and little exposure to mental health literacy arise when traditional knowledge and practices are valued more highly than formal schooling.

Developing culturally sensitive therapies that address students' mental health issues requires an understanding of the impact of different cultural viewpoints. This study intends to offer useful insights for educators, legislators, and mental health professionals by exploring the complex relationship among culture, mental health, and academic achievement.

Literature Review

Cultural Attitudes Toward Mental Health

Mental health problems are frequently seen via a cultural lens in many African civilisations, where they are intricately intertwined with customs and beliefs. They are sometimes associated with spiritual reasons or personal weakness. Ancestral discontent or spiritual imbalances are occasionally blamed for illnesses like anxiety and depression (Muyanga, 2017). Affected people are reluctant to seek professional assistance because of these cultural views, which greatly contribute to stigmatisation. According to studies, these kinds of attitudes might make mental health issues worse and make it more difficult to get the right care (Muyanga, 2017).

For instance, because of the country's cultural emphasis on spiritual causality, traditional healers are often consulted for mental health concerns in Botswana. Although traditional medicine's contribution to healthcare is acknowledged under the Traditional Health Practitioners Act, it does not necessarily coincide with contemporary mental health treatments (Botswana Ministry of Health, 2001). Similar to this, socioeconomic inequality and the history of apartheid in South Africa have strengthened these cultural beliefs.

Conflicting approaches to care might result from traditional African ideas about "ukuthwasa" (spiritual calling) being misconstrued as mental illness, according to studies (Ashforth, 2007).

The fear of being branded as "mad" or weak adds to the unwillingness to seek formal mental health treatment, which further hinders effective intervention. This stigma is especially common in rural places where traditional support systems are the only choice due to restricted access to mental health resources (Sorsdahl et al., 2009).

Religious beliefs are another important cultural component that has changed over time and continues to influence people's attitudes and perceptions in Botswana and South Africa. Western-inspired churches, commonly known as "fire churches," are common and frequently perform healing miracles, which encourages the majority of their adherents to return to them in order to receive mental health treatment (Sorsdahl et al., 2009). Traditional African churches, like those of the Bazezuru tribes in Botswana, have a strong belief that the church may help with medical problems. Such orthodox faiths frequently reject government drugs intended to cure fatal illnesses. The Bazezuru Tribe has recently opposed vaccination against COVID-19, rubella, and measles, claiming that their faith opposes modern treatment (Rantsimako, 2021). Due to their strong traditional beliefs, students from these groups may view mental health problems through a cultural lens and attribute them to spiritual reasons. This may result in a dependence on traditional healers and underuse of contemporary mental health care.

Mental Health and Academic Performance

Concern over mental health problems among students at South African and Botswana's universities is on the rise. A global public health issue, mental diseases impact one in four individuals globally, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) (WHO, 2018). Global research shows that there is increasing concern about college students' mental health (Visser & Law-van Wyk, 2021). Universities around the world have reported high prevalence rates of mental health conditions such depression and anxiety (Patel et al., 2007).

Moreover, current research clearly shows a connection between academic underachievement and mental health issues. Students in Botswana and South Africa frequently struggle with stress, anxiety, and depression, which impairs their ability to concentrate, stay motivated, and do well overall (Napuri, 2018). Lower Grade Point Averages (GPAs) and higher student dropout rates result from these diseases' impairment of focus, motivation, and cognitive function (Patel et al., 2007), (Napuri, 2018).

Studies conducted in Botswana show that social constraints and financial strain are two factors that raise students' anxiety levels (Mosetse, 2019). Similar issues are present in South African universities, where students report high levels of stress and feelings of inadequacy related to exams (Goga et al., 2015). Furthermore, marginalised populations are disproportionately affected by the legacy of apartheid-era inequality, which now affects their access to high-quality education and mental health care (Mokwena & Shiba., 2014).

The connection between academic achievement and mental health emphasises how urgently initiatives that address psychological well-being and educational achievements are needed. There is potential for reducing these problems with programs that incorporate mental health awareness into academic courses (Van der Walt et al., 2020).

Institutional Support Systems

Both South African and Botswana's universities have worked hard to set up institutional support networks for mental health. Peer support initiatives, counselling centres, and collaborations with non-governmental organisations are becoming more widespread. However, cultural stigmas, budgetary limitations, and a lack of resources frequently hinder the efficacy of these services (Stander et al., 2014).

Due in part to cultural reluctance and a lack of understanding, mental health services in Botswana's universities are typically underutilised and centralised (Nkomazana et al., 2015). Institutions in South Africa, however, have put in place more comprehensive initiatives, such as wellness facilities and helplines. Despite these developments,

students are discouraged from seeking help since mental health is still stigmatised (Nduna & Jewkes, 2012).

Furthermore, money is still a major obstacle. Although South Africa provides funding for student mental health, this is frequently insufficient to satisfy the rising demand (Bateman, 2020). Similar limitations apply in Botswana, where mental health services are given very little funding, which further restricts their impact and reach.

The discrepancy between service availability and utilisation emphasises the necessity of culturally appropriate methods. For example, combining traditional and modern methods could help close this gap and promote students' increased acceptance of mental health services (Sorsdahl et al., 2009).

Intersectionality and Generational Perspectives

Most people agree that cultural stigma makes it harder for people to get mental health help. However, it is important to remember that there are differences between students from Botswana and South Africa who live in cities and those who live in rural areas. Younger college students, especially those in cities, are more likely to be able to deal with both old and new ideas about mental health, according to research (Ashforth, 2007). These students may try to find a balance between ancestral explanations and science diagnoses, going to churches and counselling places for help. Students from rural areas, on the other hand, often say they are more in line with traditional standards, which makes formal treatment less likely (Muyanga, 2017). This strain in belief systems can make people put off getting help and make it harder for them to do well in school.

Theoretical Framework: ecological systems theory

The ecological systems theory offers a framework for examining the ways in which institutional, community, and individual influences interact to affect academic achievement and mental health. According to Bronfenbrenner's paradigm, people grow up inside nested systems that interact and have an impact on one another. One of these is the microsystem, which includes the immediate surroundings—family, friends, and

teachers—where attitudes and behaviours are shaped by face-to-face interactions. For example, kids' academic performance may suffer if they are discouraged from seeking help due to cultural stigmas around mental health in their families (Bronfenbrenner, 2009).

The link between the home and school contexts is one example of how several microsystems interact to form the mesosystem. A supportive atmosphere for addressing mental health issues can be created through parent-teacher collaboration. On the other hand, a breakdown in communication across these systems may make students' problems worse (Neal & Neal, 2013). External elements like institutional rules and societal standards that have an indirect impact on an individual are referred to as the exosystem. Students' performance and well-being may be indirectly impacted by social expectations for academic achievement or a lack of financing for mental health care (Tudge et al., 2009).

On a larger scale, the macrosystem consists of the laws, conventions, and cultural values that influence the attitudes of society. Traditional beliefs that link mental health problems to spiritual causes have a big impact on how these problems are viewed and dealt with in South Africa and Botswana (Ashforth, 2007). By acknowledging how changes over time—like heightened awareness of mental health issues or changes in policy—affect both individual and societal results, the chronosystem adds a temporal component (Bronfenbrenner, 2009).

To make Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory more useful, this study maps out important results across its five systems to show how they affect students' mental health and how well they do in school. At the **microsystem level**, students' close families and friends, as well as their classmates, have a big impact on how they feel about mental health at first. Students are less likely to use campus counselling programs when their families don't want formal help because of religious beliefs. The **mesosystem** shows how different microsystems interact with each other, mainly between educational and religious places. For instance, ministers often serve as alternative

counsellors, which may affect how many students use campus wellness centres. Students are affected by structures and decisions they don't directly control, like how universities spend their money, which affect the quality and availability of mental health services, especially in rural schools. The **macrosystem** includes cultural beliefs and ideals that are more general.

This study uses ecological systems theory to investigate the complex effects on students' academic performance and mental health. The notion emphasises how crucial it is to use systemic, culturally aware interventions to eliminate barriers at several levels. This comprehensive approach offers a strong framework for comprehending and resolving the difficulties faced by students in these situations by highlighting the dynamic interaction between institutional, societal, and personal elements.

Research Methodology

Research Approach

In order, to rigorously evaluate and analyse the connections between academic performance, mental health experiences, and cultural attitudes, a quantitative research approach was chosen for this study. When analysing correlations and deriving findings that may be applied to a large sample size, quantitative approaches are especially well-suited (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The main instrument used to collect data was structured surveys, which allowed for the collection of numerical data and consistent responses from all participants.

Research design:

A cross-sectional research design was used in this study, which entails gathering data from a specific population at one moment. Finding trends and connections between variables, such how mental health affects academic achievement, is made easier with a cross-sectional design (Setia, 2016). To guarantee accuracy and reliability in evaluating mental health factors, the structured survey was created using proven mental health assessment instruments, such as the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) and the Generalised Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7).

Sampling

A sample of 400 students from South African and

Botswana universities was the focus of the investigation. To guarantee that the sample reflected a range of demographic and intellectual backgrounds, stratified random sampling was used. With this selection technique, individuals were chosen at random from each stratum after the population was divided into subgroups (e.g., gender, field of study, and year of study). Stratified sampling lowers sampling bias and improves the sample's representativeness (Taherdoost, 2016).

Data Collection

Standardised, self-administered questionnaires were disseminated online to collect data. Demographic data, mental health metrics (with an emphasis on mental health stressors like anxiety, stress, and depression), cultural perspectives on mental health, and academic success (as shown by self-reported GPA) were all covered in the questionnaire. To ensure clarity and improve the survey's questions, a small group of students participated in a pilot study before it was distributed.

Data Analysis

SPSS, a statistical application was used to analyse the data that was gathered. Demographic data and mental health metrics were compiled using descriptive statistics. To find connections between mental health factors and academic achievement, inferential statistical techniques such as regression analysis and correlation were used.

Validity and reliability of the study

The study used validated mental health assessment instruments and piloted the questionnaire to verify that it accurately captured the desired characteristics. By matching the survey questions to the goals and theoretical framework of the study, construct validity was attained (California State University, Los Angeles & Drost, 2011). Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the survey items' internal consistency; a threshold of 0.7 was deemed satisfactory (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Ethical considerations

The study received ethical approval from the appropriate university ethics committees in South Africa and Botswana. An informed consent form outlining the study's objectives, the voluntary nature of participation, and confidentiality guarantees was given to participants. Measures were

taken to securely preserve all data in accordance with ethical research guidelines, and data were anonymised to safeguard participant identity (Resnik., 2020).

Limitations of the study

Even though 62% of people who were asked to participate did so, the study acknowledges that there may have been non-response bias because students who felt more negatively about mental illness may have chosen not to participate. It's possible that this means the dataset do not show extreme views or deeply rooted culture resistance to formal mental health care. We used to prompt and promises of privacy to help with this, but this could happen again. In the future, researchers should think about using follow-up interviews or focus groups to get these kinds of opinions.

Self-reported GPA may also be affected by social desirability bias, which means that students may lie about how well they did. Institutional GPA checking was not possible because of restrictions on accessing the data. Even so, studies show that self-reported GPAs are usually accurate if privacy is protected (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Results

With a remarkable 62% response rate (n=243/400), the survey demonstrated a high degree of participation from the intended audience. This response rate is consistent with research by (Omona., 2013) who proposed that a 50% response rate is typically seen as appropriate for survey response validation.

For survey data to be accurate and reliable, a high response rate is essential (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The obtained response rate increases the credibility of the study's findings and confirms the representativeness of the responses by exceeding the suggested threshold.

Although a 62% response rate indicates a significant level of engagement, it is crucial to recognise potential biases and limitations related to the sample size and response rate (Saunders et al., 2016). The non-response bias may persist despite efforts to increase participation, perhaps introducing biases into the data that is gathered. Nonetheless, studies indicate that when response rates surpass 50%, non-response bias is typically

negligible (Saunders et al., 2016). Additionally, steps like data validation checks and anonymisation processes were put in place to guarantee the accuracy of the responses.

All things considered, the high response rate of 62% raises the credibility of the survey results by

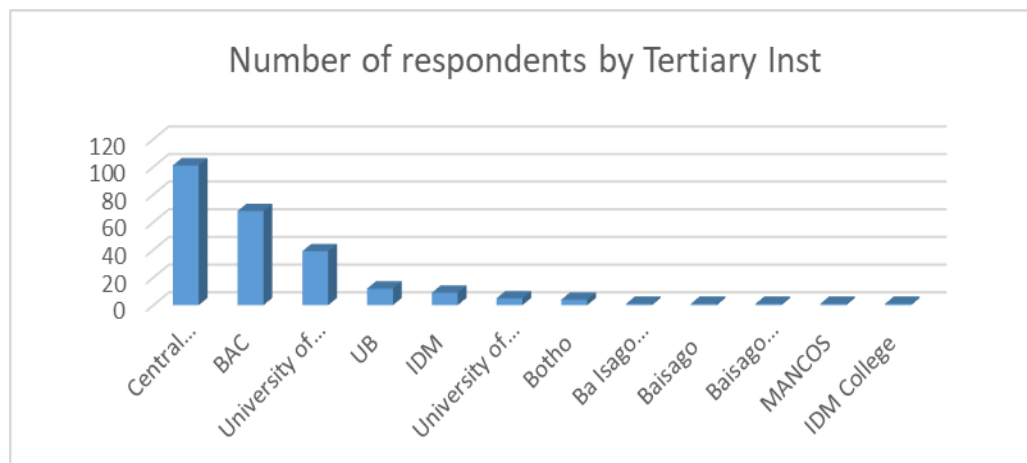
being consistent with previous studies and showing a high degree of participant involvement. These findings offer a strong basis for deriving significant conclusions and providing insightful information about the study.

Demographics

Out of the 400 questionnaires submitted, 246 were returned, yielding a 62% response rate for the survey. The following was the respondents' demographic profile:

- I. **Tertiary Inst:** The study was carried out in 12 tertiary institutions with Central Johannesburg TVET college and Botswana Accountancy college contributing most students as per the Figure 1 below.

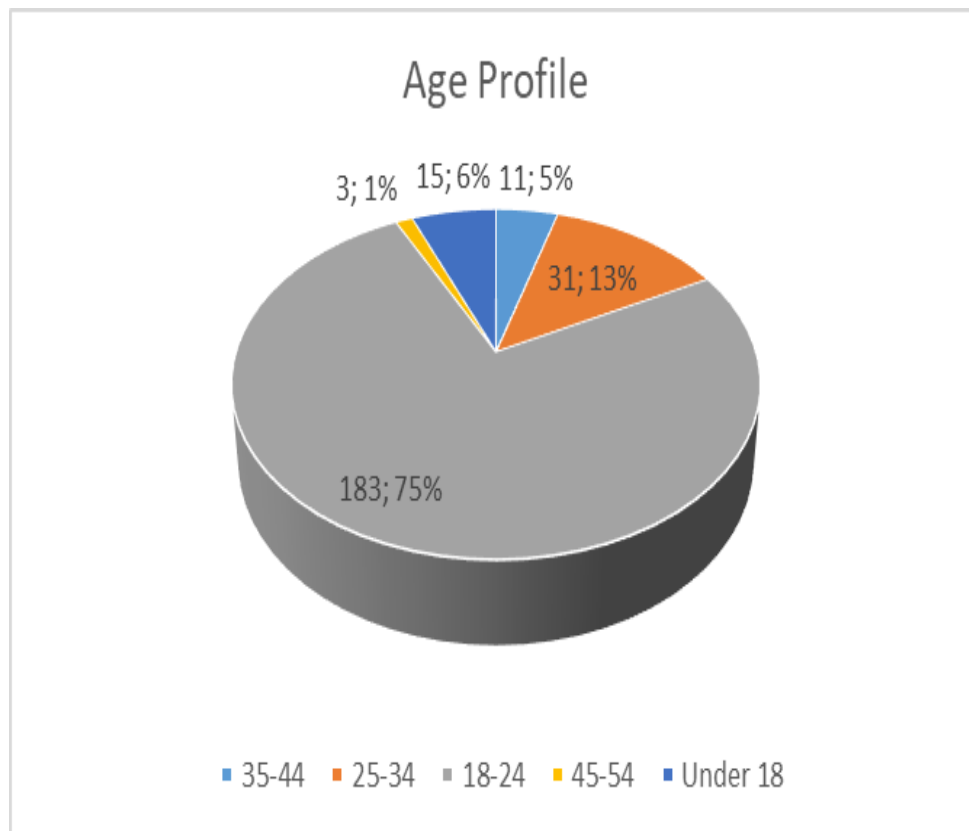
Figure 1



Source: Authors Compilation

- II. **Age:** The majority of respondents (32 responses) were between the ages of 18 and 24, followed by those between the ages of 35 and 44 (18 responses) and 45 and 54 (7 responses).

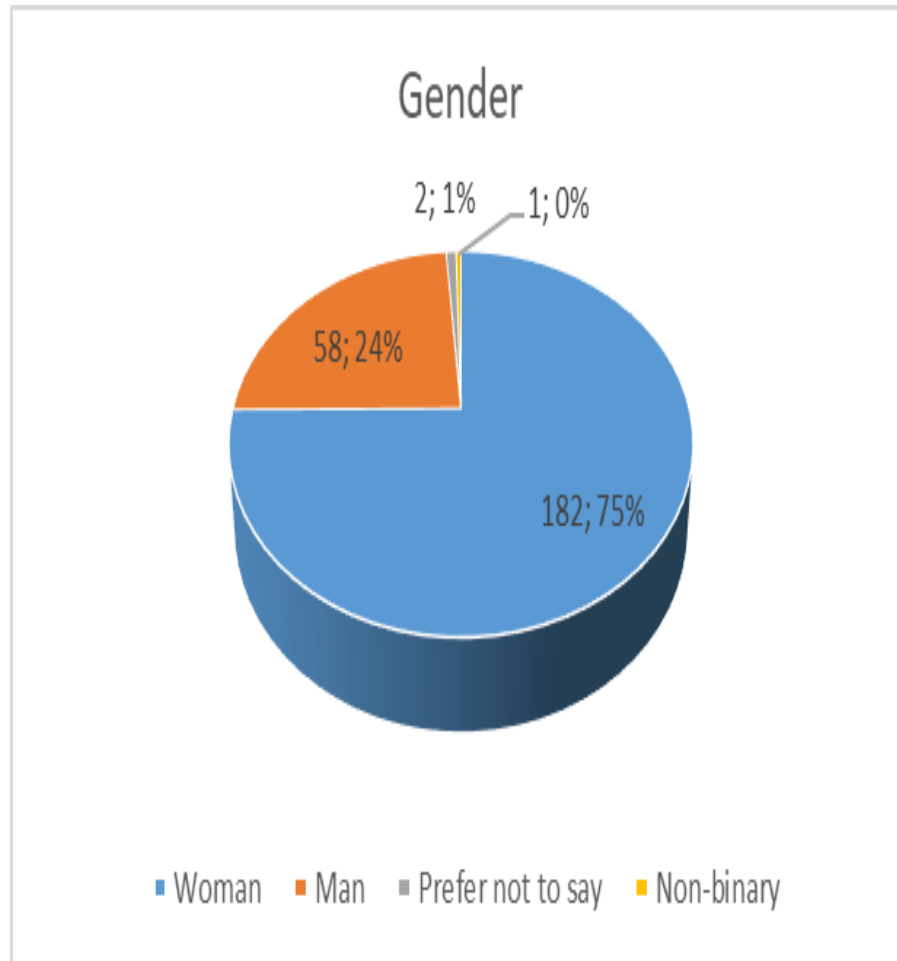
Figure 2



Source: Authors Compilation

- III. **Gender:** The respondents consisted of 75% women, 24% men, with 1% of non-binary and prefer not to say responses respectively.

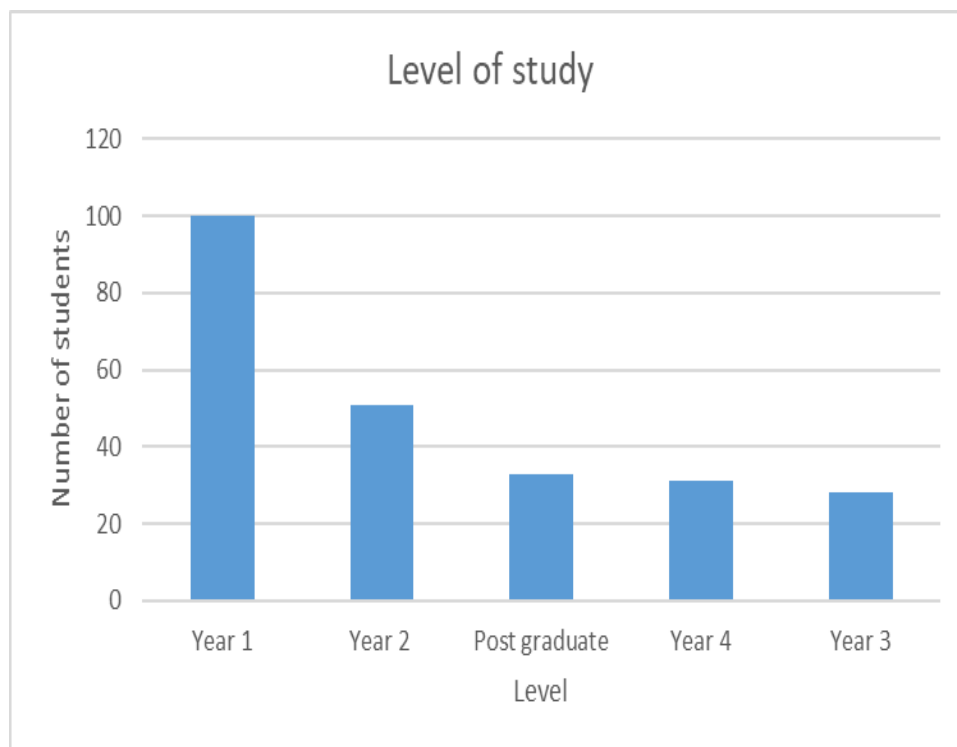
Figure 3



Source: Authors Compilation

- IV. **Year of Study:** Most of the respondents are from year 1, followed by year 2, postgraduate, year 4 and least responses came from year 3.

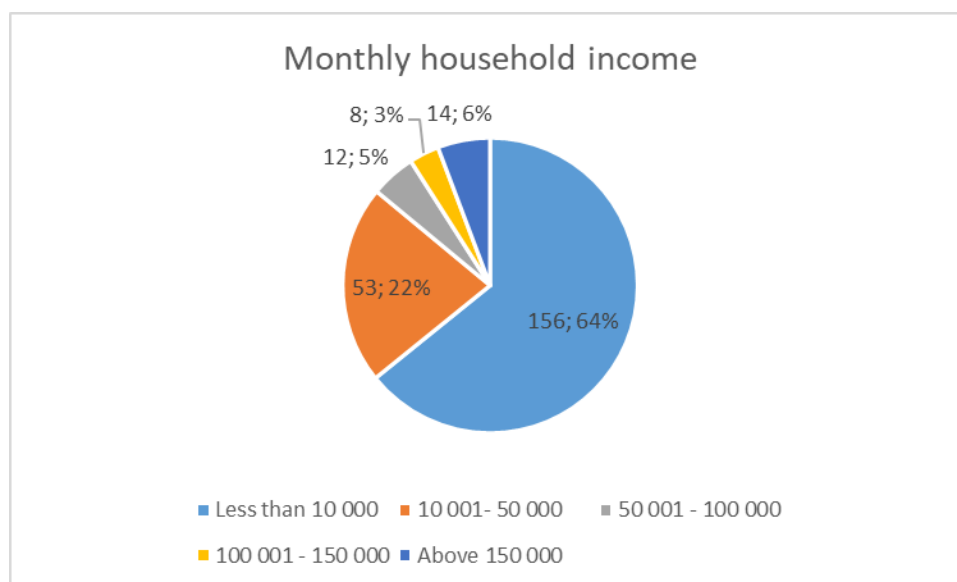
Figure 4



Source: Authors Compilation

- V. **Income status:** Majority of the respondents are from the income bracket of less than BWP/ZAR 10 000

Figure 5



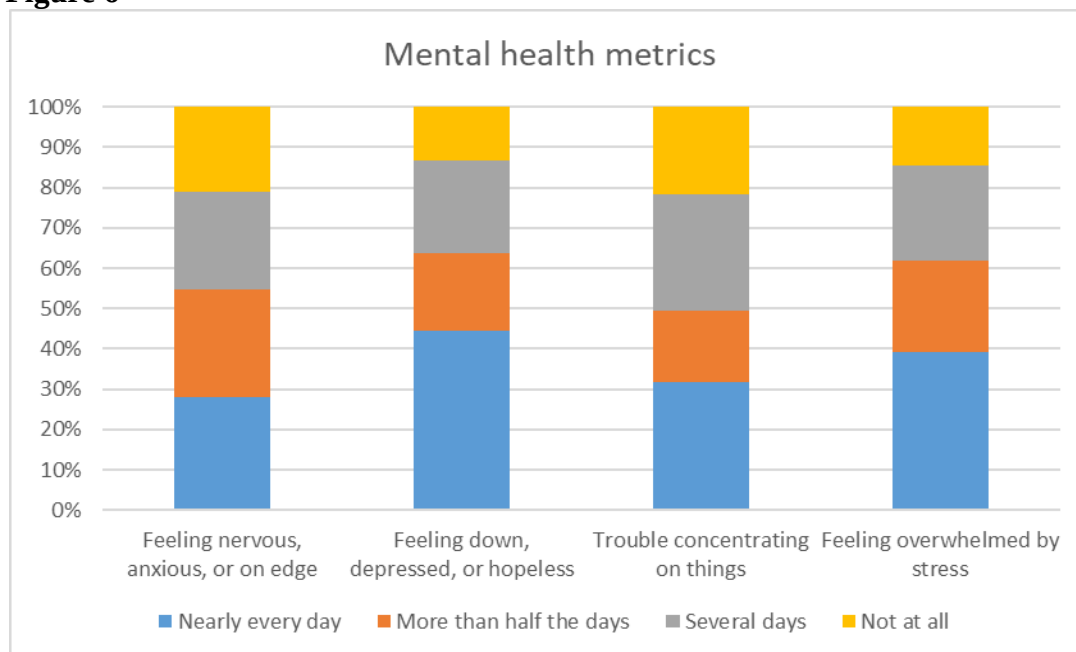
Source: Authors Compilation

Mental Health Matrix and Academic Performance

Combining nearly every day and more than half the days, it is visible that depression and stress had the highest number of respondents who experienced them at least more than half the days. This contributed

to a low GPA as illustrated by figure 6, figure 9 and figure 10.

Figure 6



Source: Authors Compilation

This study examined the relationship between anxiety, depression, concentration and stress and their measurable impact on GPA. The following summaries are the results of this modelling exercise.

Figure 7

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,746 ^a	,557	,549	,756

a. Predictors: (Constant), Stress, Concentration, Anxious, Depressed

Source: Authors Compilation

The R-square is about 55% which means the four variables can explain 55% of the performance of the respondents. The figure 8 below summarizes their statistical significance.

Figure 8

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	,944	,176		5,370	<,001
	Anxious	-,015	,045	-,015	-,334	,739
	Depressed	,655	,049	,638	13,293	<,001
	Concentration	,039	,043	,040	,904	,367
	Stress	,212	,048	,206	4,415	<,001

a. Dependent Variable: GPA

Source: Authors Compilation

The results show that stress and depression have the highest impact on students' academic performance. This agrees with the below figure 9, mental health metrics which shows that most respondents reported feeling stressed or depressed

at least more than half the days. The respondents' performance is generally low, which correlates well with students as shown by figure 10 below mental health metrics.

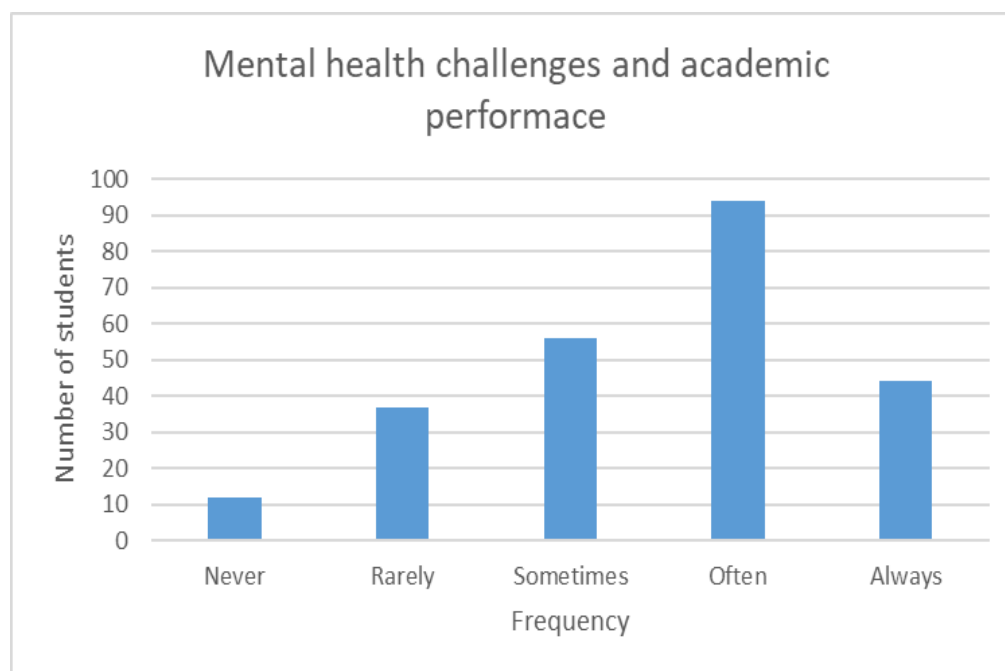
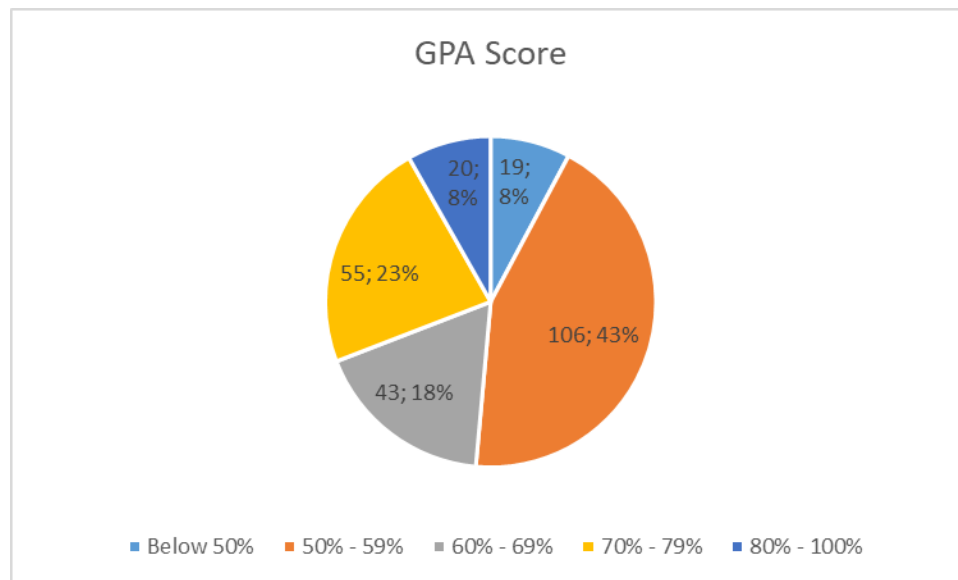
Figure 9**Source:** Authors Compilation

Figure 10

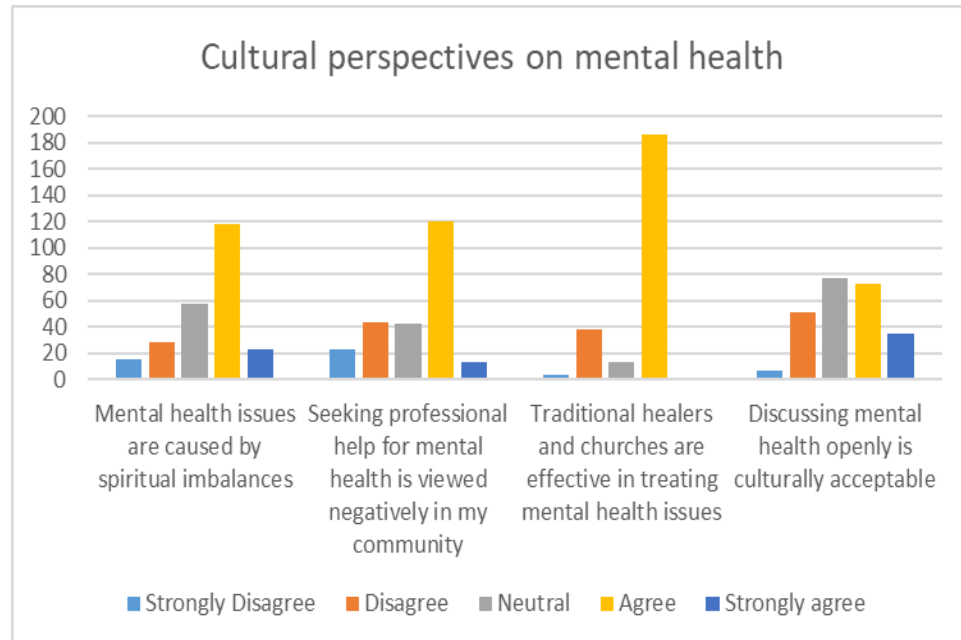
Source: Authors Compilation

Cultural Perspectives on Mental health

Majority of the students agreed with statements that mental health issues are caused by spiritual imbalances, seeking professional help for mental health is viewed negatively in their communities, traditional healers and churches are effective in treating mental health issues and discussing mental health openly is culturally acceptable as

shown in figure 11. This makes the cultural perspective on mental health visible which are probable in influencing help seeking behaviors or exacerbating the mental health stressors.

Figure 11



Source: Authors Compilation

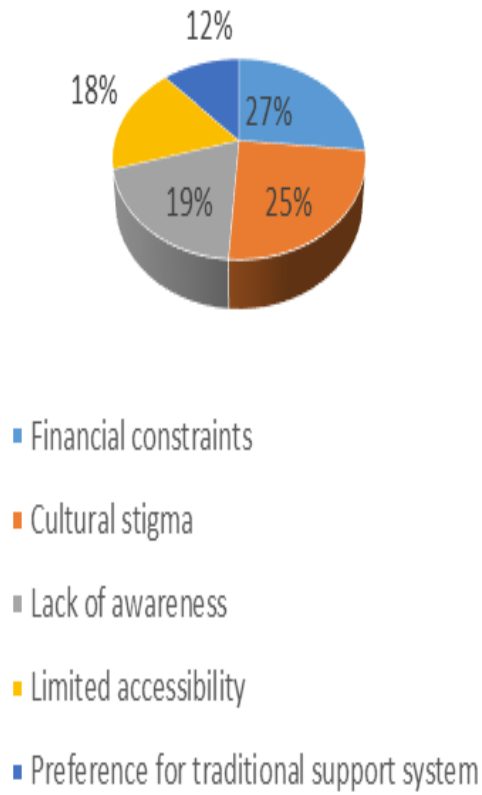
Help Seeking Behavior

Majority of the respondents reported not seeking any professional help for mental health issues as shown by figure 13 and highlight that they perceive approaching churches and traditional healers as the most effective support system, see figure 14. This is consistent with this research findings that cultural perspectives influence the individual decision making when deciding the type

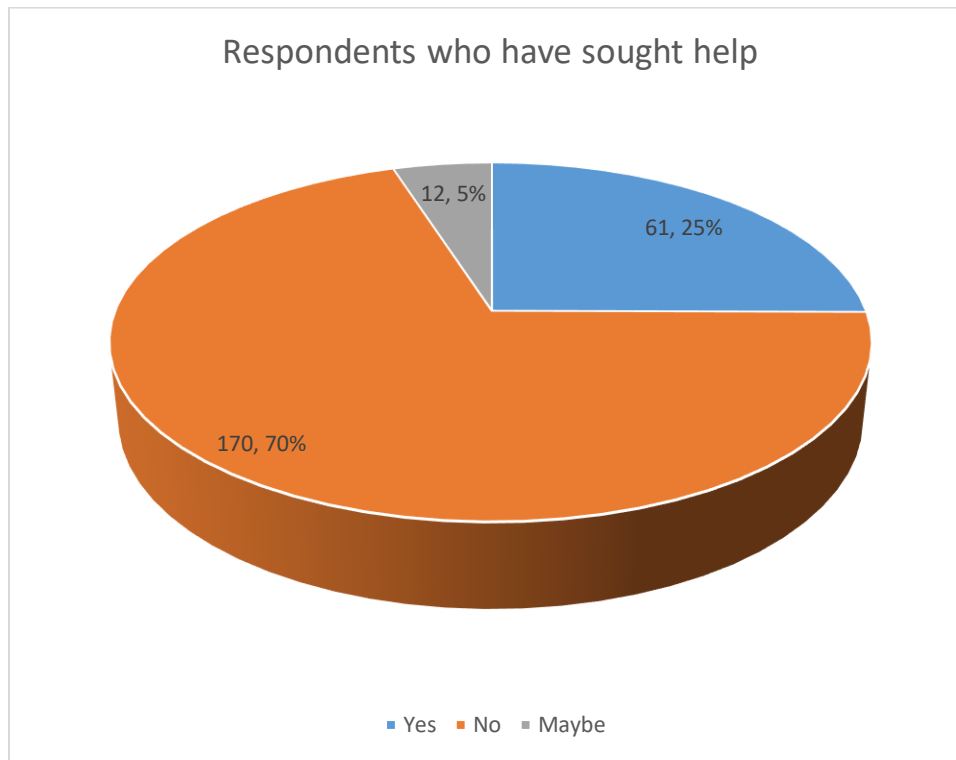
of intervention to take when seeking help on mental health issues.

Figure 12

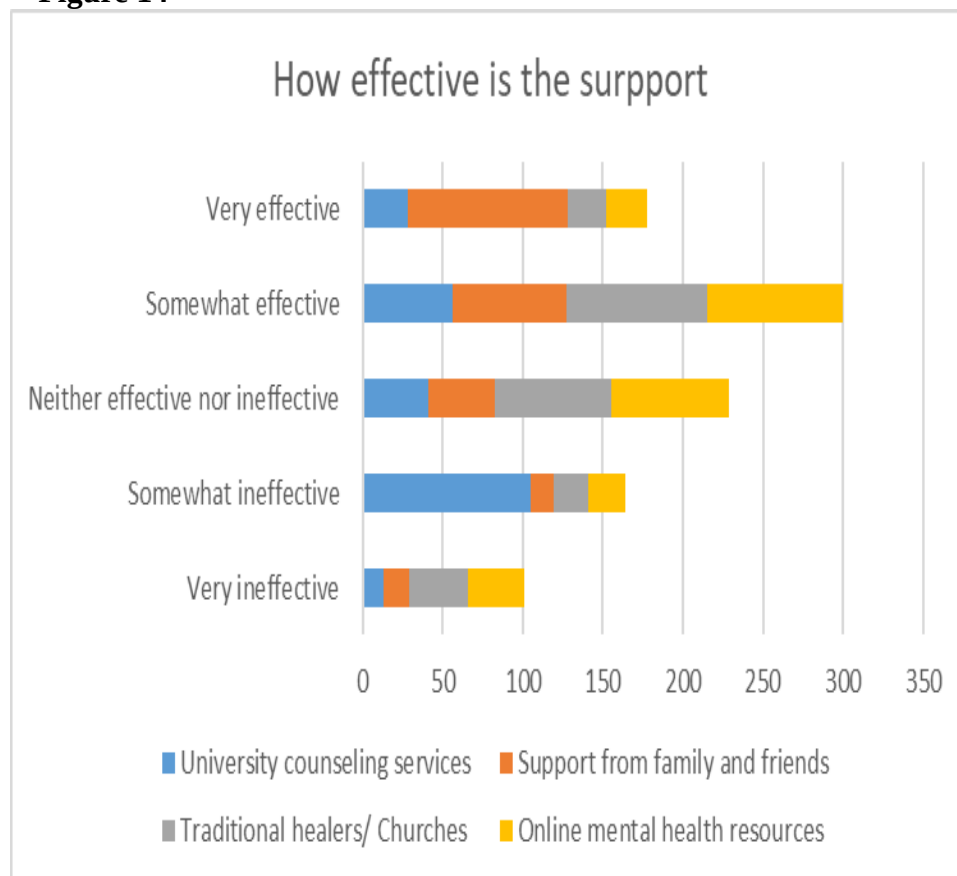
Barrier to seeking professional mental health services



Source: Authors Compilation

Figure 13

Source: Authors Compilation

Figure 14

Source: Authors Compilation

Discussion of Findings

Academic underperformance among students in Botswana and South Africa was found to be strongly and statistically significantly correlated with mental health issues, including stress and depression. This finding is consistent with regional and international research, such as those

The regression analysis's R-squared value of 55% demonstrates that stress, anxiety, depression, and focus taken together account for over half of the variation in academic performance (as determined by GPA). Significantly, the two biggest predictors of low GPA were stress and depression, which is consistent with earlier research by (Goga et al., 2015) and (Mosetse., 2019), who identified psychological discomfort as a significant obstacle to academic achievement in South African and Botswana institutions, respectively.

Additionally, the study discovered that stigmas and cultural beliefs had a significant impact on behaviour related to seeking treatment. In line with previous research by (Muyanga., 2017) and (Sorsdahl et al., 2009), which demonstrates how spiritual explanations for mental illness are still common in African societies, the majority of respondents think that spiritual imbalances are the cause of mental illness and that talking about it in public is discouraged. Instead of referring students to clinical support networks, these cultural narratives frequently lead them towards traditional healers and religious organisations.

Most students believe that churches and tradi-

of (Patel et al., 2007) who highlighted how mental illness can impact students' motivation and cognitive abilities, hence compromising their academic performance.

tional healers are more successful than institutional mental health services, which supports this cultural preference. Although these unofficial support networks give solace, students who depend on them report higher stress levels and unresolved symptoms, demonstrating that although cultural systems may provide coping strategies, they might not adequately meet clinical mental health needs.

Furthermore, despite their existence, institutional services are frequently underutilised because of ignorance, a belief that they are useless, and enduring stigma; this trend has been supported by (Nduna & Jewkes., 2012) and (Nkomazana et al., 2015). To improve accessibility and acceptance, the findings highlight the necessity of context-sensitive mental health solutions that combine conventional wisdom with contemporary therapies.

The ecological systems theory provides a helpful lens through which to interpret these findings: students' perceptions and behaviours regarding mental health are greatly influenced by macrosystem-level cultural norms and microsystem-level influences (such as family and religious beliefs), which in turn have an impact on their academic performance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In summary, this study highlights the intricate relationship between academic achievement, mental health, and cultural viewpoints among South African and Botswana higher education students. Research indicates that stress, anxiety, and depression have a substantial negative impact on academic performance, and cultural beliefs can

be a deterrent to seeking professional assistance as well as a factor in the dependence on unofficial support networks. Effective intervention is hampered by deeply ingrained cultural stigmas, spiritual interpretations of sickness, and a lack of awareness, even in the face of institutional mental health facilities. The results emphasise the

need for multi-layered, culturally sensitive, holistic, and socially and spiritually relevant mental health interventions that are also easily available. It is imperative that psychological support and cultural awareness be included into higher education institutions in Southern Africa as mental health issues become more prevalent.

Based on the findings and the discussions, this study makes the following recommendations.

- I. **Culturally Informed Mental Health Programs** – Higher education institutions should try out workshops where school
- II. **Enhance Institutional Mental Health Services** - Higher education institutions need to make their mental health services more visible and easily accessible. Decentralised, campus-based counselling services will lessen the logistical obstacles and the sense of exclusivity that frequently discourage students from getting help (Nduna & Jewkes, 2012). Counsellors should also receive cultural competence training so they can interact politely and sympathetically with pupils from a variety of traditional and spiritual backgrounds, (Nkomazana et al., 2015).
- III. **Include Mental Health in the Curriculum** - Awareness of mental health can be added to educational programs that are already in place. For example, modules in African Studies or Sociology could include sections on how people in the past dealt with health issues, how people today deal with mental health stigma, and new psychological treatments. First-year students should learn how to deal with stress, develop emotional intelligence, and learn about the school's tools during orientation. Integrating wellness into the curriculum will help students learn preventive techniques early on in their university careers

counsellors and local traditional healers work together. These workshops could help official and informal providers trust each other more, come up with ways to help each other, and share information. Institutions could also hire culture liaison officers to help community elders and student support units talk to each other. To co-create mental wellness methods that speak to students' lived experiences, cooperation with student organisations, religious organisations, and traditional leaders is crucial (Muyanga, 2017) and (Sorsdahl et al., 2009).

and normalise conversations about mental health (Visser & Law-van Wyk, 2021).

- IV. **Address Financial and Structural Barriers** – Reaching pupils from lower-income homes requires lowering obstacles by offering free or subsidised psychological therapies (Bateman, 2020). Universities also need to give student support services more funding, especially on campuses that are underfunded or in rural areas.
- V. **Further Research** - This study suggests that more research be done on the cultural aspects of mental health among Southern African students. To track how cultural ideas change and impact mental health behaviour over time, longitudinal research is especially necessary. Additionally, comparing the efficacy of institutional and Traditional interventions might yield evidence-based insights for creating mental health solutions that are more inclusive. (California State University, Los Angeles & Drost, 2011)

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.23>**INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE UPTAKE OF HIV TESTING AMONG MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW****Kofi Atakorah-Yeboah Junior¹, Edith Phalane¹, Thomas Agyarko-Poku², Kyeremeh Atuahene³, Refilwe Nancy Phaswana-Mafuya¹**¹South Africa Medical Research Council/ University of Johannesburg Pan African Centre for Epidemics Research Extramural Unit, Faculty of Health Sciences, South Africa²Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Department of Social Pharmacy, Kumasi, Ghana³Department of Research, Monitoring and Evaluation, Ghana AIDS Commission, GhanaCorresponding author: Prof Refilwe Nancy Phaswana-Mafuya, South African Medical Research Council/University of Johannesburg Pan African Centre for Epidemics Research Extramural Unit, Email: refilwep@uj.ac.za, Tel: +27632376425**Running head:** HIV Testing Interventions for MSM in sub-Saharan Africa**Abstract**

HIV testing is the foundation of the HIV cascade, informing treatment initiation and viral load suppression. It is particularly critical for key populations such as men who have sex with men (MSM), who face a disproportionate burden of HIV due to systemic barriers including stigma, discrimination, and legal hindrances. These challenges limit access to HIV testing and necessitate tailored interventions. This systematic review aimed to assess innovative strategies to improve HIV testing uptake among MSM in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Guided by the “Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA)” guidelines, a comprehensive search of databases, organisational websites, and manual sources was conducted for studies published from January 2000 onward. The review was registered with “International Prospective Register of Systematic Reviews” (CRD42022346821). Twenty-three studies focusing on MSM aged 18 and above in SSA were included from an initial pool of 4,248 records. The findings revealed effective approaches such as point-of-care testing, self-testing, and community-based models. Peer-led and community-driven strategies significantly enhanced testing uptake by improving accessibility and acceptability. However, persistent barriers such as stigma, discrimination, cost, limited counselling, and negative provider attitudes, undermined intervention effectiveness. Hence, addressing these barriers is essential to ensure the success and sustainability of HIV testing strategies among MSM in SSA. The review contributes to the literature by consolidating existing evidence, identifying critical gaps, and informing the development of effective, contextually appropriate interventions.

Keywords: HIV testing, HIV testing interventions, Men who have sex with men, sub-Saharan Africa**Introduction**

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) has disproportionately high prevalence in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), where a substantial portion of the global HIV burden is concentrated. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2023), approximately two-thirds of all people living with HIV (PLHIV) globally re-

side in SSA, establishing the region as the epicenter of the epidemic. Key populations (KPs), including “men who have sex with men (MSM), female sex workers (FSWs), transgender individuals, people who inject drugs (PWID), and incarcerated persons”, carry a disproportionate burden of new infections (UNAIDS, 2022). In 2021, these groups collectively accounted for over 51% of new HIV cases in SSA (UNAIDS, 2022). Among

these KPs, MSM face particularly heightened vulnerability to HIV due to a complex interplay of biological, behavioural, and structural factors.

Despite growing evidence highlighting the elevated risk faced by MSM, they remain significantly underserved and underrepresented in HIV prevention and care programmes across the region. This disparity persists despite the widespread implementation of prevention efforts such as awareness campaigns, HIV testing drives, and condom distribution (Zuma et al., 2016). MSM in SSA often experience multiple, intersecting forms of marginalisation including criminalisation of same-sex relationships, cultural stigma, and systemic discrimination, which severely restrict their access to healthcare services. These barriers contribute to low testing uptake, reduced medication adherence, and delayed diagnoses (Zuma et al., 2022; Bassey and Miteu, 2023). As a result, MSM are frequently excluded from mainstream health interventions and remain hidden within the broader epidemic.

Although HIV testing is globally recognised as a crucial gateway to treatment, care, and prevention, access for MSM in SSA is hindered by social and legal constraints. Punitive laws, stigma in healthcare settings, and fear of being outed discourage many MSM from engaging with formal healthcare systems (Shangani et al., 2018; Ogunbajo et al., 2018; Adedimeji et al., 2019). These challenges contribute to increased HIV transmission risks and poorer health outcomes, underscoring the urgency for targeted, inclusive, and culturally sensitive testing strategies (Alessi et al., 2023; Sun et al., 2020).

In response, a growing body of research has explored a range of interventions aimed at improving HIV testing uptake among MSM in SSA. These include facility-based services tailored to MSM, HIV self-testing kits distributed through peer networks, mobile testing clinics designed for discretion and accessibility, and community-led outreach initiatives grounded

in cultural sensitivity and trust-building (Makusha et al., 2022; Phiri et al., 2022). Many of these strategies are supported by public health frameworks emphasising decentralisation, harm reduction, and human rights-based approaches. Peer-driven models and community-based engagement have emerged as particularly effective, not only in increasing uptake but also in mitigating stigma and reinforcing linkage to care (Witzel et al., 2019; Young et al., 2020).

Despite these advances, gaps remain in understanding how such interventions function across the region's diverse social and political landscapes. Studies conducted in varied SSA contexts reveal subtle insights into what enables or impedes success ranging from cultural norms and healthcare infrastructure to the training of service providers and the availability of legal protections for sexual minorities. Research has also highlighted the importance of adapting interventions to local contexts to enhance acceptability, feasibility, and sustainability. This review responds to the pressing need for a synthesised understanding of the strategies currently in place to support HIV testing among MSM in SSA. By examining the intervention types, implementation settings, and contextual dynamics across existing studies, it seeks to illuminate effective practices and persistent challenges. The evidence underscores the need for tailored, rights-based responses that go beyond biomedical interventions to address the socio-structural drivers of HIV vulnerability in MSM communities.

This review synthesises existing evidence on HIV testing interventions among MSM in SSA, highlighting both the progress made and the substantial challenges that remain. It examines diverse strategies ranging from community-based testing and self-testing to mobile outreach and point-of-care services, identifying approaches that have demonstrated potential in increasing testing uptake among MSM. It also underscores persistent barriers, such as stigma, criminalisation, and healthcare discrimination, which continue to impede equitable access to testing services.

The study aims to fill critical gaps in the literature, identify effective and contextually relevant interventions, and propose areas for further research to strengthen HIV testing uptake among MSM across SSA. The urgent need to address disparities in testing access and health outcomes provides a compelling rationale for focused policy and programmatic responses. These efforts are not only essential to achieving key global health targets, such as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and 10 (Reduced Inequalities), but are also vital in advancing principles of social inclusion, human rights, and health equity. Ensuring that MSM, like all individuals, have access to respectful, confidential, and effective HIV testing services is a fundamental step toward a more just and inclusive healthcare system in the region.

Materials and methods

Systematic review approach

The protocol for this systematic review is registered with the “*International Prospective Register of Systematic Reviews (PROSPERO)*” under registration number CRD42022346821. This systematic review was carried out using the *Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA)*” guidelines (Page et al., 2021). This was used to ensure a transparent, comprehensive, and standardised approach in reporting the methods and findings of this systematic review. This research set out to identify and characterise the measures that have been put in place to improve MSM in SSA's utilisation of HIV testing services.

Criteria for selection of articles

The design framework of “*Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome, and Study (PICOS)*”, as proposed by Amir-Behghadami and Janati (2020), was employed to determine the qualifying studies for this review (Table 1). Studies that detailed strategies to increase MSM uptake of HIV testing services were considered. These interventions included a range of HIV testing modalities, including self-testing, facility-based testing, community-based testing, mobile testing, and care testing. Comparative studies analysing different modes of HIV testing among MSM were also included, particularly those that highlighted differences in effectiveness, accessibility, or utilisation of various testing methods. Included studies were required to report on outcomes related to the effectiveness, utilisation, and accessibility of HIV testing services among MSM, providing data on increased testing rates, early detection, or reduced HIV transmission rates. Additionally, studies identifying best practices, barriers, and opportunities in HIV testing among MSM were considered.

The inclusion criteria for this study focused on studies conducted in SSA from 2000 onwards involving men who have sex with men (MSM) aged 18 and above and required studies to be available in full text, written in English, and employing observational, intervention, or mixed methods. Studies also needed to report on innovative HIV testing interventions with sufficient detail on the intervention's nature, target population, and outcomes. Exclusion criteria applied to review papers, studies without accessible full texts, those not written in English, studies conducted outside SSA, or involving other key populations such as sex workers, transgender individuals, prisoners, or people who use drugs (Table 1).

Table 1: Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome and Study Characteristics

Item	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
P (population)	• MSM and/or gay men • Aged 18 years and above • Studies reported in SSA countries • Studies published from the year 2000 and onwards	• Other key populations (FSW, TG, incarcerated people or prisoners, PWUD) and the general population • Minors or individuals younger than 18 years • Studies outside SSA • Studies published before the year 2000
I (intervention)	• Innovative HIV testing interventions or strategies implemented to improve the uptake of HIV testing • Interventions that are detailed in terms of the target population, their kinds and contents, their length, their results, the outcomes of HIV testing, their important discoveries, and their efficacy	• Studies that did not report HIV testing interventions
C (comparison)	• The different types of interventions implemented to improve HIV testing • HIV testing services are available in the following formats: self-testing, point-of-care, facility-based, community-based, and mobile.	• None
O (outcome)	• Explored different types of HIV testing interventions among MSM • Evaluated the viability, accessibility, and sustainability of these treatments across SSA nations. • Assessed the achievements and difficulties of the HIV testing programs that were put into place. • Examined the results of HIV testing, including HIV positive, tests completed, etc.	• None
S (Study Design/ Characteristics)	• Observational and intervention studies using quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods • Studies available in full-text • Studies written in English	• Review papers • Full text of studies not accessible • Non-English-language studies

Context	• Studies on HIV testing interventions among MSM that were conducted in SSA. • Studies that provided insights into the local context, cultural factors, and specific challenges within SSA	• Studies not related to HIV testing interventions among MSM in SSA. • Studies conducted in different geographic regions without specific relevance to SSA

Search strategy and databases

The search strategy was informed by the Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) and the PICO framework. Boolean operators "AND" and "OR" were used to combine search terms logically. The search terms included: "HIV testing" OR "HIV screening" OR "human immunodeficiency virus testing" AND "HIV testing intervention" OR "HIV testing technologies" OR "HIV testing strategies" AND "HIV self-testing" OR "facility-based HIV testing" OR "point-of-care HIV testing" OR "Community-based HIV testing" AND "Sub Saharan Africa" OR "SSA" OR "Sub-Saharan Africa" AND "Key population" OR "KPs" OR "MSM" OR "Men who have sex with men" OR "Gay men" were among the terms used. An online database search was done using PubMed, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Scopus, and Medline. Additional studies were identified through manual searches of reference lists from eligible studies.

Review selection

The first author (KAYJ) screened each paper independently and removed any duplicates during the title and abstract review. After the first title and abstract review, all remaining publications were subjected to a thorough full-text screening process to ascertain their eligibility based on predetermined inclusion criteria. The second author (EP) supervised the abstract and full test screening. In cases where disagreements arose regarding the eligibility of an article, consensus was reached through discussion and final decision by the third author (RPM).

Data screening and quality assessment Utilising appropriate quality assessment techniques, each article that was included in this re-

view had its methodological and research quality evaluated. The entire texts and abstracts of eligible papers were independently evaluated by the first author (KAYJ) utilising predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria and a mutually agreed-upon score methodology. If an article failed to score well enough on any of the quality evaluation instruments, it was removed. Using the “*Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist*” (Supplementary Material 1) as a reference, the titles and abstracts were first screened for relevance (CASP, 2021). After that, KAYJ carefully examined the complete texts of pertinent publications using an eligibility criterion, eliminating duplicates from the study. The rest of the authors (RPM, EP, TAP) supervised the data screening and quality assessment.

Data extraction

The data extraction modules tailored for each article encompass a comprehensive array of essential elements. These include details such as authorship, publication year, geographical locale, research settings, the design of the study, the sample size employed, key indicators of interest, intricate population particulars, and an exhaustive examination of structural, socio-demographic, and behavioural variables. Additionally, the instrument delves into the multifaceted realm of implementation strategies specifically devised to bolster HIV testing among the MSM population. This encompassing approach extends to the meticulous capture of testing outcomes and the methodologies employed in their measurement. In the subsequent phases of the analysis, the outcomes stemming from these implementation strategies, aimed at catalysing HIV testing uptake among MSM, were subjected to rigorous scrutiny. These results were meticulously scrutinised, organised, and classified thematically. The culmination of

this exhaustive analysis is artfully presented in the form of a narrative synthesis, offering a profound and enriched understanding of the diverse strategies implemented and their impact on promoting HIV testing among the MSM community.

Results

Search results

A total of 4,248 articles were found through the

initial search of multiple databases. After removing duplicates, papers with a non-SSA origin, unrelated to KP, lacking full-text access, non-English, and pre-2000, etc, 1,467 articles were retained. Afterwards, 1,399 articles were eliminated through title and abstract screening, thus, 68 articles met the criteria. A quality assessment that focused on incompatibility with inclusion criteria, review articles, articles that did not obtain ethical clearance and predatory journals saw 23 articles retained for the systematic review (Figure 1).

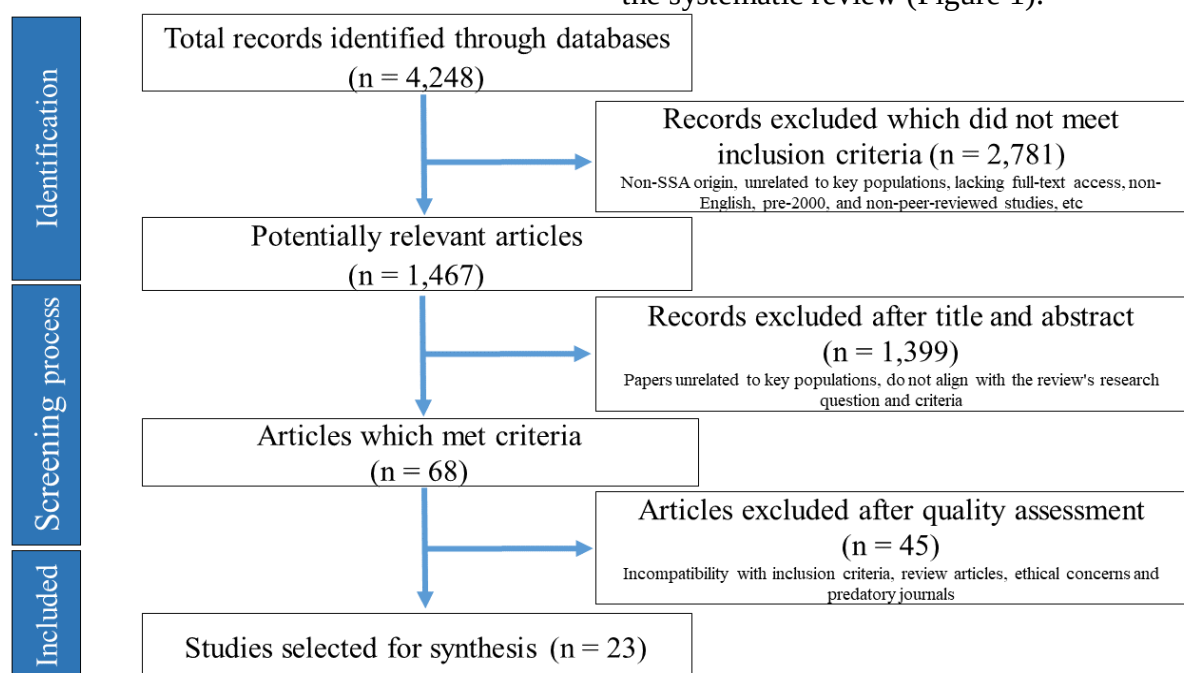


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram employed in this study

Characteristics of included studies

Table 2 shows the characteristics of the 23 eligible studies included in this review, consisting of qualitative, mixed-methods and quantitative studies. This amalgamation of research methodologies underscores the rich tapestry of approaches utilized in the pursuit of knowledge within the SSA region. The participant demographics across these studies were varied, with age ranges spanning from 16 to 60 years. This broad age distribution reflects the inclusion of both younger and older individuals,

capturing the perspectives of a wide segment of the population. The studies also utilized different sample sizes, with participant numbers ranging from as few as 20 to as many as 391 (Table 2). This variation in sample size highlights the diverse methodological approaches used in the research, with some studies focusing on more in-depth, smaller-scale qualitative analyses, while others employed larger sample sizes for more generalized findings. Together, these studies contribute valuable insights into the health and social dynamics of the communities studied across these regions.

Table 2: Characteristics of the eligible studies

First author, year	Country	Age	Study period	Sample size	Study design/approach
1. Skovdal et al. 2023	Zimbabwe	Not stated	April and August 2018	28 rapid HIV testers	Qualitative and interview guides
2. Sekoni et al. 2022	Nigeria	17 – 59 years	2017	20 MSMs	A hybrid methodology, incorporating in-depth interviews and focus group discussions
3. Inghels et al. 2022	Côte d'Ivoire	>18 years	25 April 2018 to 1 February 2019	518 MSMs	Respondent-driven sampling (RDS) survey
4. Dirisu et al. 2020	Nigeria	16 – 24 years	November 2016	23 MSMs	In-depth interviews were conducted with MSM, accompanied by two focus group discussions with key opinion leaders.
5. Okoboi et al. 2020	Uganda	22 – 35 years	June to August 2018	297 MSMs	A pilot study
6. Holland et al. 2014	Cameroon	18 – 23 years	2011	150 MSMs	A comprehensive Biological and Behavioural Surveillance (IBBS) survey was executed, employing the RDS
7. Okoboi et al. 2021	Uganda	Not stated	June to August 2018	297 (150 intervention group) and 147 (control group)	Ingredient-based approach
8. Abubakari et al. 2021a	Ghana	Not stated	Not stated	61 MSMs	Community-based intervention
9. Tun et al. 2018	Nigeria	median age = 25 years	May and September 2017	319 participants	Cohort study
10. Ndungu et al., 2023	Kenya	18 – 60 (Majority 18-24) years	July 2018 and June 2019	391 MSM	Snowballing technique, questionnaire-based study
11. Lippman et al. 2018	Southern Africa	65% were between 18-24 years	June 2015 – May 2017	127 HIV-negative MSM	A longitudinal study

12. Melon et al. 2024	Kenya	Not specified	August 2019 - July 2020	7,011 MSM	Combination of interviews, reviews of monitoring data, and polling booth surveys for data collection.
13. Baral et al. 2009	South Africa	over 26 years	January to February 2009	200 MSM	Anonymous probe using venue-based sampling
14. Bhattacharjee et al. 2019	Kenya	Not specified	April 2019 – July 2020	351 MSM for the socio-sexual network research, 1400 MSM for the bio-behavioural survey, and 72 MSMs for qualitative longitudinal cohort research	A mixed-methods approach to program science was employed, utilizing bio-behavioural surveys, qualitative cohort research, socio-sexual network analysis, regular monitoring, program costing, and mathematical modelling to evaluate the outcomes. This comprehensive approach integrated both quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a holistic understanding of the program's impact and effectiveness.
15. Brookmeyer et al. 2014	South Africa	Not specified	Not provided	Not specified	Agent-based modelling
16. Farquhar et al., 2022	Nigeria	Not specified	Not specified	336 MSMs	A combination of publicly available social media apps, including Grindr, Facebook, and WhatsApp, along with peer navigation, was utilized.
17. Vu et al. 2013	Nigeria	18 years and older	Not specified	712 MSMs	Respondent-driven sampling (RDS)
18. Dramé et al. 2013	Senegal	18 years and older	15 months	119 MSMs	Pilot cohort study
19. Wirtz et al. 2013	Malawi	18 - 25 years	April 2011 to March 2012	338 MSMs	Cross-sectional study using RDS methods
20. McNaghten et al. 2014	South Africa	Not specified	To be in October 2014	200 MSMs	Agent-based HIV transmission modelling, formative stigma-related research, community engagement, MSM healthcare pro-

					vider training, and a pilot intervention assessment
21. Siegler et al. 2015	South Africa	Not specified	Not specified	34 MSMs	Qualitative study
22. Gyamerah et al. 2020	Ghana	Not specified	2010 to 2011	Not specified	Secondary analysis of cross-sectional surveys
23. Nelson et al. 2021	Ghana	Not specified	Not specified	216 MSMs	Cluster randomized controlled trial

Of the 23 studies reviewed, 10 were conducted in West Africa, covering countries such as Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Senegal. One study was conducted in Central Africa (Cameroon), while six studies each were carried out in Eastern Africa (Uganda, Kenya, and Malawi) and Southern Africa

(Zimbabwe and South Africa), respectively. These studies collectively represented a wide geographic spread across Sub-Saharan Africa, offering insights into diverse regional contexts.

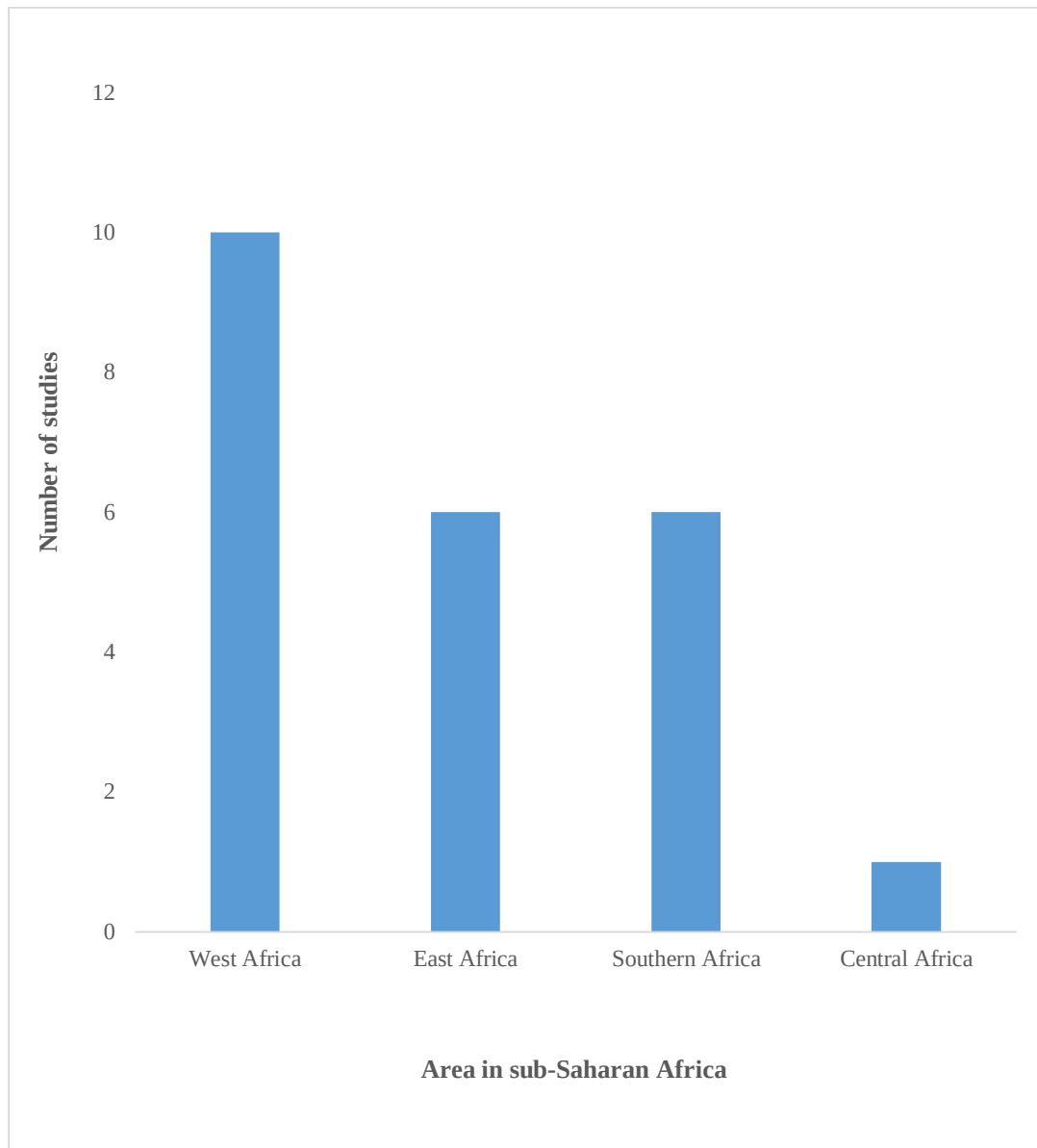


Figure 2. Number of articles based on the sub-Saharan Africa location

Innovative interventions for enhancing HIV testing MSMs

In terms of HIV testing approaches, nine studies reported HIV self-testing (HIVST), followed by other forms of studies/unstated and

barriers to HIV testing, community-based testing, and POCT being reported in seven, five, and two, respectively.

HIV Self-testing

The effectiveness of HIVST within the MSM community has garnered attention in recent research (Tun et al., 2018; Dirisu et al., 2020; Okoboi et al., 2020; Witzel, 2020a; Abubakari et al., 2021a; Sekoni et al., 2022) (Table 3). Sekoni et al. (2022) underscored the pivotal role of Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) in championing and enabling HIVST among the MSM. The study emphasised the imperative need for KOLs possessing specific skills and qualifications to proficiently disseminate and advocate for HIVST. Moreover, implementing strategies aimed at augmenting demand and fostering acceptance were deemed crucial components in addressing the need for MSM to be subjected to long waiting hours at healthcare facilities and increasing testing rates (Dirisu et al. (2020).

Okoboi et al. (2020) conducted a study focusing on the secondary distribution of HIVST within MSM peer networks, showcasing an impressive completion rate of 95%. This investigation demonstrated the viability and effectiveness of distributing HIV self-testing (HIVST) through MSM networks, facilitated by peer involvement, which led to new HIV cases compared to traditional HIV testing methods. Similarly, a cohort study by Tun et al. (2018) in Nigeria reported an impressive retention rate of 80.7%, further supporting the potential benefits of this approach. Participants expressed high satisfaction with the HIVST kit, emphasizing its user-friendly design, assured privacy, and convenience. Abubakari et al. (2021a) in Ghana highlighted the success of the 3MV intervention in boosting HIVST adoption among MSM. The intervention effectively engaged MSM, resulting in increased HIV testing rates and heightened awareness of the importance of testing for prevention.

Community-based HIV testing

Of the 23 eligible articles, Inghels et al. (2022) in Côte d'Ivoire, Holland et al. (2014) in Cameroon, and Abubakari et al. (2021a) in Ghana

focused on assessing the performance and improvement in HIV testing using community-based driven approaches (Table 3). Inghels et al. (2022) reported MSM preferences for HIV testing sites, revealing diverse inclinations, with 34.1% favouring MSM-focused facilities, 37.0% preferring undifferentiated HIV testing centres, and 28.7% expressing no specific preference. Confidentiality was a primary motivator for those favouring undifferentiated sites. Holland et al. (2014) in Cameroon demonstrated a higher likelihood of MSM accessing NGO/CBO services or engaging with outreach workers when presenting STI symptoms, highlighting the effectiveness of community-based services. Similarly, Abubakari et al. (2021b) in Ghana showcased successful interventions, including locally led programmes and mobile apps, in engaging MSM individuals and improving HIV prevention and care. Abubakari et al. (2021a) implemented culturally grounded interventions, such as the "Many Men Many Voices (3MV)" programme, the "Auntie's Corner" mobile app, and the "HIV Education, Empathy, & Empowerment (HIVE3)" peer support intervention, which collectively strengthened outreach and improved HIV testing rates among MSM. Additionally, because using applications like Auntie's Corner improved symptom reporting and enhanced contacts with nurses, there was potential to increase HIV self-testing. On the other hand, if MSM in Douala reported having more male sexual partners or were living with HIV, they were more likely to interact with NGO/CBO services/outreach workers. MSM in Yaoundé were far less likely than those in Douala to have used these services in the previous year (Holland et al., 2014).

Point-of-care and other forms of HIV testing interventions

In this review, only one study by Skovdal et al. (2023), delved into the nuances of point-of-care HIV testing for MSM. According to Brookmeyer et al. (2014), there is a four-component HIV prevention package in South Africa that includes enhanced HIV testing, PrEP

coverage, ART coverage, and a decrease in unprotected anal intercourse (UAI). Farquhar et al. (2022) demonstrated the success of social network-based strategies in Sub-Saharan Africa. Their study significantly increased HIV testing uptake and ensured high linkage to care without compromising safety or confidentiality. Siegler et al. (2015) successfully integrated HIVST into existing MSM prevention programmes in South Africa, emphasizing the effectiveness of community-based approaches

and partnerships with local health authorities and CBOs. Finally, Nelson et al. (2021) described a multi-level stigma reduction intervention in Ghana aimed at increasing HIV testing among MSM. By addressing stigma at the healthcare facility, peer group, and individual levels, that study aimed to improve testing uptake and provide comprehensive support to MSM.

Table 3: Innovative interventions implemented to improve HIV testing among MSM

First author, year	Objective of the study	Country	Type of HIV testing intervention	Place	Did the intervention improve up-take of HIV testing (HIV testing outcomes)
1. Skovdal et al. 2023	Examine how "rapid" HIV testing differs in time and provide an explanation for incorrect diagnoses given at the point of service in Zimbabwe.	Zimbabwe	Point-of-care	Community-based	The intervention identified and addressed temporal discrepancies in rapid HIV testing at point-of-care, helping to reduce misdiagnoses and improve confidence in HIV testing accuracy.
2. Sekoni et al. 2022	Implement the distribution of oral HIV self-testing kits to MSM in a setting that is strongly anti-homophobic, with an emphasis on the lessons learnt from Nigeria.	Nigeria	HIV Self-testing	Target individual and group-based	Advocates for the role of KOLs in championing and facilitating HIVST within the MSM community
3. Inghels et al. 2022	Recognising MSM in Côte d'Ivoire's choices and accessibility to community-based HIV testing facilities	Côte d'Ivoire	Community-based testing	Community-based	Community-based testing sites were a preferred choice for MSM participants, emphasizing the impact of community-based services.
4. Dirisu et al. 2020	Determine the viability and acceptability of HIV self-testing among MSM in Lagos, Nigeria	Nigeria	Self-testing	Group-based	The study showed widespread acclaim for HIVST's convenience. MSM individuals particularly lauded its ability to bypass the necessity of queuing at healthcare facilities. Acknowledged by KOLs was HIVST's potential to elevate testing rates, especially among employed MSM, and its flexibility, enabling discreet testing at any time or place
5. Okoboi et al. 2020	Pilot the distribution of HIV self-test	Uganda	Self-testing	Group-based	Peer distribution of HIV self-test

	kits among peers in MSM peer networks, and assess the tool's effectiveness in identifying HIV infection that has not yet been identified in Uganda.				kits within MSM peer networks significantly increased testing uptake and identified undiagnosed HIV infections by leveraging trust within peer groups
6. Holland et al. 2014	Analyse MSM's access to HIV services at community-based and non-governmental groups in Cameroon.	Cameroon	Community-based	Cohort-based	Access to community-based and non-governmental organizations improved testing rates by providing MSM-friendly environments where individuals felt comfortable seeking HIV services
7. Okoboi et al. 2021	Compare the cost-effectiveness of MSM peer HIV self-test kit distribution in Uganda to hotspot testing that is standard of care.	Uganda	Self-testing	Group-based	The cost-effectiveness of peer-delivered HIV self-testing kits, compared to hotspot testing, increased HIV testing uptake by making testing more affordable and accessible
8. Abubakari et al. 2021a	In Ghana, MSM should be encouraged to self-test for HIV and be connected to care through community-based programs.	Ghana	Community-based	Community-based	Community-based interventions that leveraged peer networks and local leaders improved HIV self-testing engagement and linkage to care by providing culturally sensitive support
9. Tun et al. 2018	To target MSM, promote HIV self-testing, and ease treatment linkage in Nigeria, a pilot initiative utilising influential figures is being implemented.	Nigeria	Self-testing	Cohort study	The use of KOLs in a peer-driven approach to promote HIV self-testing significantly increased uptake and facilitated easy linkage to treatment
10. Ndungu et al., 2023	Assess the acceptability and adoption of HIV self-testing within Nairobi, Kenya's MSM population.	Kenya	Self-testing	Community-based	By addressing factors related to the acceptability of HIV self-testing, including cost and education on its use, this intervention improved testing uptake among MSM in Nairobi

11. Lippman et al. 2018	Investigated the impact and acceptability of HIV self-testing and network distribution among MSM in South Africa.	South African	Self-testing	Community-based	Introducing HIV self-testing and network distribution among MSM in South Africa increased testing frequency by offering more convenient and private options for testing
12. Melon et al., 2024	To investigate how HIVST can improve MSM's ignorance of their status and enhance links to prevention and treatment by increasing testing coverage, frequency, and early adoption.	Kenya	Self-testing	Targeting MSMs in communities and health facilities	HIV self-examination enhanced coverage and frequency of testing among MSM who were unaware of their HIV status, promoting early diagnosis and referral to preventive and treatment programs
13. Baral et al. 2009	To assess the frequency of HIV infection and its correlations with MSM living in Cape Town's peri-urban areas	South Africa	Venue-based	Venue-based sampling by recruiting MSMs from specific venues they frequently visit	Venue-based sampling in peri-urban townships successfully reached high-risk MSM, improving testing rates by recruiting from locations MSM frequented
14. Bhattacharjee et al. 2019	To assess the effects of community-based HIVST delivery options on decreasing HIV infection that goes undetected and enhancing MSM in Kenya's access to care, treatment, and preventive resources.	Kenya	HIVST	Hotspot-based and virtual site-based	The community-based HIVST delivery strategies reduced undiagnosed HIV infection and facilitated linkage to care through hotspot and virtual site-based testing services, increasing accessibility
15. Brookmeyer et al. 2014	Considering combinations of ART, PrEP, behavioural interventions, and HIV testing campaigns, to assess the efficacy of HIV prevention packages for MSM in South Africa.	South Africa	Modelling HIV prevention	Model-based	A combination of HIV prevention methods, including ART, PrEP, and behavioural interventions, significantly boosted testing rates by integrating HIV testing into a broader prevention package
16. Farquhar et al., 2022	To encourage MSM in Nigeria to take HIV tests and connect with care	Nigeria	Combination of social media apps and peer navigation	Media-based	Social network-based strategies using media platforms and peer navigation improved HIV testing uptake and linkage to care by reaching MSM in discreet, accessible ways

17. Vu et al. 2013	To determine the determinants linked to HIV infection among MSM, give population-based estimates of HIV prevalence among MSM in three major Nigerian cities, and guide upcoming HIV preventive initiatives.	Nigeria	Rapid HIV testing without confirmatory testing	Respondent-driven	The use of respondent-driven sampling to offer rapid HIV testing without confirmatory testing provided quick and accessible testing, increasing HIV testing uptake in large Nigerian cities
18. Dramé et al. 2013	To evaluate the viability of prospective studies on HIV prevention, considering HIV incidence and cohort retention rates, among Senegalese MSM.	Senegal	Community-based	Selected points of contact	The intervention, which assessed the feasibility of HIV prevention studies, increased testing by utilizing selected points of contact to engage MSM in a community-based setting
19. Wirtz et al. 2013	The development of comprehensive HIV preventive programs and the characterisation of the HIV load among Malawi's MSM.	Malawi	Respondent-driven with socio-behavioural surveys and voluntary counselling and testing for HIV and syphilis	Voluntary syphilis and HIV testing, and counselling	Respondent-driven sampling combined with voluntary counselling and testing for HIV and syphilis enhanced testing rates by offering confidential, community-based testing services in Malawi
20. McNaghten et al. 2014	To create and assess a comprehensive set of community-based, behavioural, and medical HIV prevention programs and services for MSM in South Africa.	South Africa	Pilot study	HIV transmission models based on agents and formative, stigma-related qualitative research	The use of biomedical, behavioural, and community-level interventions significantly improved HIV testing uptake by offering a comprehensive prevention package tailored to MSM
21. Siegler et al. 2015	To investigate MSM's stated histories of HIV testing and the reasons for their test-seeking behaviour in two South African cities.	South Africa	HIV testing promotion messaging and programing aimed	Activity-based in-depth interviews including a timeline element	Activity-based messaging and HIV testing promotion programming encouraged repeat testing among MSM in two urban areas, significantly improving testing uptake

				at encourag- ing repeat testing	
22. Gyamerah et al. 2020	To quantify incidences of violence, discrimination, and stigma based on sexual orientation among MSM in Ghana and evaluate their influence on HIV testing behaviour	Ghana	Community-based	RDS for recruitment	Addressing stigma, discrimination, and violence through community-based interventions improved HIV testing behaviour among MSM by reducing fear and barriers to accessing services
23. Nelson et al. 2021	Develop and evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of a multi-level intersectional intervention aimed at reducing stigma and increasing HIV testing among MSM in Ghana.	Ghana	Not stated	Not stated	The intervention aimed at reducing stigma at multiple levels, including healthcare, peer, and individual, which indirectly improved testing uptake by addressing key barriers faced by MSM

Barriers to the HIV testing interventions among MSM in sub-Saharan Africa

The studies on HIV testing interventions among MSM (n=15/23) in various African contexts reveal a complex landscape of barriers and successes (Table 4). Fear of stigma and discrimination significantly hampers MSM's willingness to engage in HIV self-testing (HIVST) (Ogunbajo et al., 2018). Concerns about inadequate counselling and links to treatment further complicate the adoption of HIVST (Sekoni et al., 2022). Disclosure of same-sex behaviour, stigmatized in countries like Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, and South Africa, also hinders peer-distributed interventions (Okoboi et al., 2020). Factors such as unclear instructions, lack of post-test support, and preferences for specific self-test kits negatively affect intervention effectiveness (Dirisu et al., 2020; Ndungu et al., 2023).

Privacy concerns and fears of discrimination complicate community-based and point-of-care testing approaches (Holland et al., 2014; Skovdal et al., 2023). Inghels et al. (2022) found that MSMs preferred undifferentiated HIV testing sites, citing worries about confidentiality and anonymity at community-based

locations. The desire to avoid public scrutiny and perceived judgment from health professionals significantly impedes testing efforts. Similar sentiments were expressed in Kenya, where study participation could reveal engagement in stigmatized behaviours (Bhattacharjee et al., 2019). This highlights how psychosocial factors, including internalized stigma and privacy concerns, complicate the roll-out of the HIV testing strategies among MSM.

Additionally, the costs and knowledge gaps associated with HIV self-test kits challenge uptake and scalability (Dirisu et al., 2020). MSM in Dar es Salaam reported barriers such as the limited MSM-tailored health services, financial issues, and negative attitudes from health workers (Megasa et al., 2014). High costs of self-test kits were identified as a primary obstacle to uptake (Ndungu et al., 2023), suggesting that peer-delivered HIV self-tests are more cost-effective than standard care (Okoboi et al., 2021). These findings underscore the need for holistic, culturally attuned approaches that go beyond technical aspects of HIV testing, focusing on stigma reduction, improving healthcare access, and integrating educational programs.

The success of the HIV testing interventions among MSM in sub-Saharan Africa

Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) play a vital role in advocating for HIV self-testing (HIVST) within the MSM community, leveraging the trust MSM have in them to promote community-driven approaches (Sekoni et al., 2022). By empowering and educating KOLs, HIVST programs can be strengthened, enhancing their ability to maintain connections with MSM (Fernandez et al., 2023). The convenience of HIVST, particularly for employed MSM, showcases the potential of innovative testing methods to increase testing rates (Dirisu et al., 2020). Peer distribution of self-testing kits has

proven effective in reaching new HIV infections within MSM networks (Okoboi et al., 2020). Moreover, these interventions offer cost-effective alternatives to conventional testing methods, particularly in resource-limited settings, often identifying undiagnosed HIV infections more effectively (Okoboi et al., 2021). Community-based approaches highlight factors influencing access to NGO/CBO services among MSM, underscoring the success of culturally relevant interventions (Holland et al., 2014; Abubakari et al., 2021a). Additionally, Inghels et al. (2022) noted that preferences for HIV testing sites are essential in fostering patient-centred care and accommodating choices (Table 4).

Table 4: Challenges and successes in the implementation of the HIV testing interventions among MSM

First author, year	Type of HIV testing intervention	Challenges of the Innovative Interventions	Successes of the innovative intervention
1. Skovdal et al. 2023	Point-of-care	<i>“Participants faced risks associated with revealing their HIV status or same-sex relationships”.</i>	<i>“Provides novel insights into the temporal dynamics of HIV testing, offering a deeper understanding of the challenges and inaccuracies associated with rapid HIV test kits in high-frequency testing scenarios”.</i>
2. Sekoni et al. 2022	HIVST	<i>“The study, conducted in an educated cosmopolitan setting, may limit generalizability; the small pilot size prevented stratification by key characteristics, and the absence of perspectives from participants who didn't use HIV self-testing kits underscores the need for further research on the effectiveness of KOLs across diverse segments of the MSM community”.</i>	<i>“Role of KOLs in advocating and facilitating HIVST within the MSM community, emphasizing their potential as reliable resources for promoting testing”.</i>
3. Inghels et al. 2022	Community-based testing	<i>“The use of seeds from MSM non-governmental organizations in the survey may introduce selection bias, and like other RDS methodologies, our sampling method encountered challenges in recruiting older MSM”.</i>	<i>“The survey employed phone-based respondent-driven sampling (RDS), conducting both peer recruitment and interviews by phone, encompassing diverse types of MSM, including those residing in remote areas”.</i>
4. Dirisu et al. 2020	HIVST	<i>“Cost and knowledge about the use of self-test kits could affect their uptake”.</i>	<i>“Underscores the convenience of HIV self-testing, especially for employed MSM, eliminating the need to queue at healthcare facilities and potentially increasing testing rates”.</i>
5. Okoboi et al. 2020	HIVST	While HIVST distributed through peer networks	Demonstrates the efficacy of peer-to-peer HIV

			was effective, challenges may have arisen from the disclosure of same-sex behaviours, which can be stigmatized in some contexts.	self-testing kit distribution, which may increase the number of new HIV infections discovered and improve early diagnosis and treatment.
6.	Holland et al. 2014	Community-based	The lack of data on the proportion of previously unknown HIV diagnoses and potential bias in the sampling method was mitigated by RDS adjustment, which corrected for bias towards MSM who accessed NGO/CBO services, though the sample skewed towards younger individuals.	Identifies specific factors influencing access to NGO/CBO services among MSM, shedding light on crucial elements that affect service utilization. It helps in understanding how to better reach and serve this population.
7.	Okoboi et al. 2021	HIVST	Estimating the cost-effectiveness of a public health intervention may require significant resources, including funding and personnel.	Cost-effectiveness of the implemented intervention strategy, indicating that it can outperform standard-of-care testing in identifying previously undiagnosed HIV infections.
8.	Abubakari et al. 2021a	Community-based	Some participants expressed concerns about the privacy of their health information and HIV status when accessing healthcare services.	Successfully implement multiple interventions for MSM, positively impacting HIV self-testing, engagement, and linking to care. The culturally grounded approaches highlight the potential for tailored strategies in healthcare.
9.	Tun et al. 2018	HIVST	It was difficult to retain all the participants thus, an 80.7% response rate.	Reveals a high utilization rate of HIV self-testing among MSM, emphasizing the positive user experiences, preferences, and barriers associated with self-testing.
10.	Ndungu et al., 2023	HIVST	Barriers to HIVST uptake, such as the cost of self-test kits and the need for education on their usage, which can vary among MSM	Identifies associations between willingness to self-test, frequency of previous HIV testing, and other factors. These insights can help tailor interventions to specific preferences and address barriers more effectively.
11.	Lippman et al. 2018	HIVST	Despite efforts to generate a representative sample, the mainly young participant composition may not fully represent all MSM in the area, especially older MSM networks; our data suggest	Underscores the high acceptability of self-testing among MSM, indicating a preference for specific testing methods. This success highlights the potential of self-testing in enhancing

		HIVST increases testing, but there's limited evidence on its effectiveness in reducing time to HIV diagnosis and reaching previously non- or infrequent testers.	HIV detection.
12. Melon et al., 2024	HIVST	The evaluation faced challenges like self-reported data bias and difficulty reaching MSM in virtual spaces. Ensuring clinical follow-up for reactive testers required more MSM-friendly services.	The HIVST intervention among MSM in Kenya was highly feasible and acceptable. It increased testing frequency and improved linkage to care. Success was driven by the active involvement of the MSM community and effective adaptations during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the use of virtual peer educators.
13. Baral et al. 2009	Community-based	Low awareness of HIV status and inconsistent condom use are significant challenges. Human rights violations, including blackmail and fear of healthcare, complicate efforts. Socioeconomic factors like unemployment and rural origin increase HIV vulnerability.	The study identified a high-risk, underserved MSM population in peri-urban areas. It highlighted the need for targeted HIV prevention and supported including MSM in large-scale prevention trials. The findings stressed comprehensive approaches combining biomedical, behavioural, and structural strategies to reduce HIV risk.
14. Bhattacharjee et al. 2019	HIVST	Potential biases may arise from self-reported data by MSM and their partners. Participation could expose illegal and stigmatized behaviours, risking discrimination and harm. Additionally, HIV sero-status disclosure poses risks of stigma and discrimination if revealed inadvertently.	The study integrates HIV self-testing within MSM HIV prevention and treatment programmes using a community-based approach. Partnerships with the National Key Population Programme and Ministry of Health ensure relevance to local needs and policy development. Collaborative sensitization and crisis management strategies with CBOs and government officials address challenges.
15. Dramé et al. 2013	Community-based	Significant loss to follow-up, limited retention strategies, high mortality among participants, and potential exclusion of the most isolated MSM due	Demonstrated feasibility of implementing HIV prevention interventions through community-

		to recruitment through community networks.	based organizations, highlighting the high burden of HIV and incidence among MSM and identifying the need for improved retention strategies and comprehensive HIV prevention approaches.
16. Wirtz et al. 2013	Community-based	High levels of stigma and discrimination, potential response bias, limitations of cross-sectional design in establishing causality, and analytic challenges with RDS methodology.	Identified high HIV prevalence and correlates of infection, highlighting the need for comprehensive HIV prevention services including regular confidential testing, condom and lubricant provision, and addressing structural factors like stigma and discrimination. Demonstrated the feasibility of using RDS to reach a diverse sample of MSM.
17. Siegler et al. 2015	Community-based	The innovative interventions faced several challenges, including potential biases from self-reported data by MSM and their partners. Participation in the study could reveal illegal and stigmatized behaviours, leading to discrimination and potential harm. Additionally, the disclosure of HIV serostatus posed risks of stigma and discrimination if inadvertently revealed.	The study integrated HIV self-testing into existing MSM HIV prevention and treatment programs using a community-based approach. Partnerships with the National Key Population Program and Ministry of Health ensured relevance to local needs and aided policy development. Collaborative strategies with CBOs and government officials effectively addressed challenges.
18. Gyamerah et al. 2020	Community-based	Stigma, discrimination, and violence against MSM, particularly related to accessing healthcare services and societal acceptance, pose significant challenges to HIV testing and overall well-being.	The study sheds light on the prevalence of stigma, discrimination, and violence experienced by MSM in Ghana, providing critical data to inform policy and practice aimed at addressing these issues and improving HIV testing and healthcare access for MSM.

Discussion

The review sought to identify innovative interventions implemented towards improving HIV testing uptake among MSM, as well as gaps and successes of these interventions. In this regard, three main interventions for improving HIV testing were identified namely community-based testing, HIV self-testing and point-of-care testing. Community-based HIV testing was effective, convenient, and cost-efficient. HIVST significantly boosts testing uptake by providing privacy and reducing stigma, making it more accessible to hard-to-reach populations, while POCT offers quick results but requires enhanced accuracy and operational environments for more reliable and effective diagnoses. The barriers to HIV testing interventions included stigma, discrimination, privacy concerns, high costs of self-test kits, insufficient counselling, cultural insensitivity, and judgmental healthcare professionals.

HIV Self-testing

According to Lippman et al. (2018), Tun et al. (2018), Bhattacharjee et al. (2019), Dirisu et al. (2020), Okoboi et al. (2020), Okoboi et al. (2021), Sekoni et al. (2022), Ndungu et al. (2023) and Melon et al. (2024), among the 23 studies that met the eligibility requirements, HIV self-testing was the most reported method of HIV testing among MSM in the SSA setting. When compared to conventional HIV testing programs, the HIVST is linked to increased rates of new HIV infection detection. Similarly, a meta-analysis conducted by Njau et al. (2021) in Africa found a significant rise in the adoption of couples' HIVST, with a Rate Ratio of 2.64 (95% CI: 2.51 to 2.79) and a Rate Ratio of 3.10 (95% CI: 1.80 to 5.37) from the random-effects analysis. The efficacy of utilising peer networks for early diagnosis and transmission reduction has been demonstrated by the effectiveness of peer-led HIVST programs in identifying new HIV infections (Matovu et al., 2020; Gesesew et al., 2021; Hlongwa et al., 2023). Similarly, Witzel et al. (2020b) reported that HIVST resulted in 1.45 times increase in testing uptake (RR=1.45; 95% CI 1.20, 1.75).

High levels of satisfaction with HIVST kits,

particularly due to the assurance of privacy and confidentiality, can help reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV testing, encouraging more individuals to get tested (Harichund and Moshabela, 2018). Offering a variety of HIV self-testing kit types, including oral fluid-based tests, blood-based tests using fingerstick or lancet methods, and rapid lateral flow tests preferred by MSM, is essential to cater to individual preferences and promote HIV testing uptake (Mantell et al., 2022). HIVST interventions are cost-effective, offering an efficient approach to identifying undiagnosed MSM, in contrast to traditional testing methods with higher financial and logistical demands (Okoboi et al., 2021; Creese et al., 2002; Mbonigaba, 2014). These findings are consistent with Witzel et al. (2016) and Nicholls et al. (2022) who described the convenience and privacy offered by HIVST as key facilitators of HIV testing in the UK, and England and Wales, respectively.

The absence of support mechanisms for post-test follow-up, linkage to ART initiation and HIV care in HIVST was echoed by Sekoni et al. (2022). Cost and knowledge associated with HIV self-test kits impact scalability (Dirisu et al., 2020). Ndungu et al. (2023) identified the high costs of HIV self-test kits as a major hindrance to HIVST uptake. Notably, peer-delivered HIV self-tests emerged as a cost-effective alternative compared to the standard of care (Okoboi et al., 2021). Beyond financial barriers, Dirisu et al. (2020) and Ndungu et al. (2023) pointed out issues related to the clarity of instructions for performing and interpreting results accurately.

Community-based HIV testing

Treatments for HIV testing in the community aim to remove barriers to testing for the virus in facilities. In addition to structural obstacles like poverty and lacklustre health infrastructure that prevent people from accessing HIV testing facilities, these include the stigma attached to obtaining an HIV test at a medical facility (Sullivan et al., 2020). Mobile HIV testing campaigns, home-based HIV testing, hybrid approaches, collaborations with reputable community leaders, and social behaviour change

communication campaigns are a few examples of community-based interventions (Palk et al., 2020). Holland et al. (2014) suggest that increased availability might lead to a rise in the use of community testing. On the other hand, Sundararajan et al. (2022) found that mobile outreach, hybrid techniques, and home-based self-testing have improved HIV test results among priority populations and in low-resource environments.

In line with this study, Indravudh et al. (2019) proposed that community-based HIV testing programs might improve testing coverage and aid in HIV diagnosis at an early stage. The effectiveness of customised approaches is demonstrated by the community-based HIV testing programs, however, there is still a gap since participant privacy issues need to be addressed. This HIV testing method has challenges related to the potential disclosure of sexual orientation impact on the confidentiality of services, pointing towards the need for nuanced approaches that balance privacy and outreach (Holland et al., 2014). The disclosure of HIV status and sexual orientation of individuals may further aggravate the existing discrimination and harm among MSM. Bridging this gap is crucial for sustaining successful HIV testing interventions and maintaining continuous HIV testing uptake within the community.

Point-of-care HIV testing

Point-of-care HIV testing offers rapid and convenient testing, addressing the unique needs and challenges faced by MSM communities in accessing HIV testing services. A study by Skovdal et al. (2023), showed temporal parameters associated with rapid HIV test kits. These kits, designed with specific timeframes in mind for accurate results, were found to exhibit substantial disparities when applied in real-world, high-frequency testing scenarios within resource-constrained healthcare facilities in Zimbabwe. One of the key findings of the study was the stark contrast between the intended temporal parameters of these rapid HIV test kits and the actual temporal dynamics experienced. This divergence shed light on the root causes of diagnostic inaccuracies in these settings, particularly the premature interpretation

of test outcomes. Beyond merely pointing out the temporal discrepancies, the study's findings have broader implications. They underscore that the speed and efficiency of rapid diagnostic technologies are intrinsically linked to the operational environment in which they are deployed (Wood et al., 2019). In essence, the study highlights that achieving true "rapid" HIV testing is contingent upon creating a deliberate, methodical, and controlled milieu within healthcare facilities. These findings relate directly with the findings of Leber et al. (2013) who described point-of-care as primarily a rapid HIV detection process in London, UK. In addition, the rates of satisfaction among early adopters (MSM) of POCT were high in Australia (Mullens et al., 2019).

Enhancing HIV testing services among MSM in sub-Saharan Africa

To significantly reduce the barriers against MSM, it is essential to enhance capacity-building programmes for healthcare providers, community health workers, and peer educators are integral to ensuring culturally sensitive and non-discriminatory services. Public awareness campaigns, school programmes, and online resources aim to reduce stigma and promote accurate information about HIV prevention. Training healthcare providers to offer non-discriminatory care and advocating for policy changes that support MSM's rights and healthcare access are crucial components and offering a variety of HIV testing options. Continuous monitoring and evaluation, resource allocation, and collaboration among multiple sectors and countries in the region are key components of this comprehensive policy plan. Together, these efforts strive to make HIV testing more accessible, reduce transmission rates, and improve the overall health outcomes of MSM in sub-Saharan Africa. This outlines a comprehensive approach to enhance HIV testing services among MSM in sub-Saharan Africa. By addressing legal protections, capacity building, awareness and education, service delivery, monitoring, resource allocation, and collaboration, we aim to reduce HIV transmission rates, combat stigma and discrimination, and improve the overall health and well-being of MSM communities in the region.

Strengths and limitations

The systematic nature of the review allowed for a search across multiple databases to comprehensively identify studies aligned with predetermined inclusion criteria. The incorporation of diverse methodological approaches in the selected studies enriches insights into HIV testing approaches among MSM. Notably, the inclusion of studies presenting real-world findings enhances relevance and strengthens the synthesis's applicability. However, limitations include the potential of not capturing the entirety of interventions, barriers, and facilitators related to HIV testing, partly due to the geographical focus on a limited number of African countries. Efforts were made to address this by thorough examination of references and diligent scanning for additional studies. Language constraints were mitigated by restricting inclusion to English-language publications, recognizing potential language bias. Despite these limitations, the synthesis's strengths lie in its systematic and comprehensive approach to understanding diverse aspects of HIV testing among MSM.

Conclusion

Targeted HIV testing services for MSM are important in achieving the HIV epidemic control, guiding tailored strategies for prevention and care. The HIV testing intervention identified in this review showed a great potential for enhancing early detection of HIV among MSM. In particular, the effectiveness of the HIVST encompassing of peer networks and supported by KOLs was demonstrated. Interventions such as mobile apps and peer-led efforts were effective in promoting HIVST and addressing stigma. Community-based HIV testing may offer differentiated access to HIV testing. The study challenges conventional rapid HIV testing, emphasizing the role of the testing environment and personnel for truly rapid and accurate results. Addressing multifaceted barriers, including stigma, discrimination, and violence, is imperative. HIV testing interventions should be tailored to address structural and legal barriers to healthcare services among MSM to address psychosocial issues. This underscores the imperative for adopting comprehensive and contextually sensitive approaches that

not only strive to improve HIV testing uptake among MSM but also diligently mitigate potential social, cultural, and health-related harms.

Ethics consideration

This systematic review is part of the lead author's doctoral research, which received ethical approval from the University of Johannesburg Research Ethics Committee (Approval No: REC-2588-2024).

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Competing interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Contributions

K.A-Y.J., R.N.P-M, E.P., and T.A-P. conceived the study. R.N.P-M, E.P., and T.A-P. supervised K.A-Y.J. on this work as part of his doctoral degree. K.A-Y. J., E.P., T.A-P., and R.N.P-M did the study implementation, data management and methodology. K.A-Y.J. did the literature search, review, methods and data analysis under the supervision of E.P., T.A-P., and R.N.P-M. K.A-Y.J. did the original draft of the manuscript whereas E.P., T.A-P., R.N.P-M and K.A reviewed it and provided constructive input. All authors read and approved the final manuscript before submission.

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Supplementary Materials 1: Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) Checklist**CASP Checklist:** 10 questions to help you make sense of a **Systematic Review**

How to use this appraisal tool: Three broad issues need to be considered when appraising a systematic review study:

- ▶ Are the results of the study valid? (Section A)
- ▶ What are the results? (Section B)
- ▶ Will the results help locally? (Section C)

The 10 questions on the following pages are designed to help you think about these issues systematically. The first two questions are screening questions and can be answered quickly. If the answer to both is “yes”, it is worth proceeding with the remaining questions. There is some degree of overlap between the questions, you are asked to record a “yes”, “no” or “can’t tell” to most of the questions. A number of italicised prompts are given after each question. These are designed to remind you why the question is important. Record your reasons for your answers in the spaces provided.

About: These checklists were designed to be used as educational pedagogic tools, as part of a workshop setting, therefore we do not suggest a scoring system. The core CASP checklists (randomised controlled trial & systematic review) were based on JAMA ‘Users’ guides to the medical literature 1994 (adapted from Guyatt GH, Sackett DL, and Cook DJ), and piloted with health care practitioners.

For each new checklist, a group of experts were assembled to develop and pilot the checklist and the workshop format with which it would be used. Over the years overall adjustments have been made to the format, but a recent survey of checklist users reiterated that the basic format continues to be useful and appropriate.

Referencing: we recommend using the Harvard style citation, i.e.: *Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (2018). CASP (insert name of checklist i.e. Systematic Review) Checklist. [online] Available at: URL. Accessed: Date Accessed.*

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Paper for appraisal and reference:.....

Section A: Are the results of the review valid?

1. Did the review address a clearly focused question?

Yes	☐
Can't Tell	☐
No	☐

HINT: An issue can be 'focused' in terms of

- the population studied
- the intervention given
- the outcome considered

Comments:

2. Did the authors look for the right type of papers?

Yes	☐
Can't Tell	☐
No	☐

HINT: 'The best sort of studies' would

- address the review's question
- have an appropriate study design (usually RCTs for papers evaluating interventions)

Comments:

Is it worth continuing?

3. Do you think all the important, relevant studies were included?

Yes	☐
Can't Tell	☐
No	☐

HINT: Look for

- which bibliographic databases were used
- follow up from reference lists
- personal contact with experts
- unpublished as well as published studies
- non-English language studies

Comments:



4. Did the review's authors do enough to assess quality of the included studies?

Yes	☐
Can't Tell	☐
No	☐

HINT: The authors need to consider the rigour of the studies they have identified. Lack of rigour may affect the studies' results ("All that glitters is not gold" Merchant of Venice – Act II Scene 7)

Comments:

5. If the results of the review have been combined, was it reasonable to do so?

Yes	☐
Can't Tell	☐
No	☐

HINT: Consider whether

- results were similar from study to study
- results of all the included studies are clearly displayed
- results of different studies are similar
- reasons for any variations in results are discussed

Comments:

Section B: What are the results?

6. What are the overall results of the review?

HINT: Consider

- If you are clear about the review's "bottom line" results
- what these are (numerically if appropriate)
- how were the results expressed (NNT, odds ratio etc.)

Comments:



7. How precise are the results?

HINT: Look at the confidence intervals, if given

Comments:

Section C: Will the results help locally?

8. Can the results be applied to the local population?

Yes	☐
Can't Tell	☐
No	☐

HINT: Consider whether

- the patients covered by the review could be sufficiently different to your population to cause concern
- your local setting is likely to differ much from that of the review

Comments:

9. Were all important outcomes considered?

Yes	☐
Can't Tell	☐
No	☐

HINT: Consider whether

- there is other information you would like to have seen

Comments:

10. Are the benefits worth the harms and costs?

Yes	☐
Can't Tell	☐
No	☐

HINT: Consider

- even if this is not addressed by the review, what do **you** think?

Comments:

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THE EXPERIENCES OF FAMILY MEMBERS LIVING WITH YOUTH USING NYAOPE IN SOSHANGUVE, GAUTENG PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

Since 2000, the use of nyaope, a harmful psychoactive substance composed of antiretroviral drugs, cannabis, low-grade heroin, and other additives, has significantly increased in South Africa. This study explored the experiences of family members living with youth who use nyaope in Soshanguve, Gauteng Province. Using a qualitative design and in-depth interviews with purposively selected participants, four key themes emerged: the youth's behaviour, strained family relationships, emotional impacts on family members, and their perceptions of nyaope use. Despite families developing coping strategies and informal interventions, nyaope misuse continues to be a profound mental health and social challenge within affected households.

Keywords: *Experience, family members' support, nyaope, youth conduct.*

Introduction

Substance abuse and dependence are indeed escalating concerns in South Africa, as highlighted by Grelotti et al. (2014). One of the more alarming trends is the rise of Nyaope, an increasingly prevalent and highly addictive drug, particularly among the youth in townships. The fact that Nyaope is both cheap and easily accessible makes it a significant public health issue, as it not only leads to addiction but also creates long-term societal challenges, including the potential loss of a generation of responsible adults.

Nyaope is a dangerous mixture that contains heroin, dagga (cannabis), and a variety of harmful substances, including rat poison, cleaning detergents, and crushed antiretroviral drugs, as noted by Ghosh (2013). These additives not only increase the toxicity of the drug but also complicate treatment and recovery efforts. The widespread use of Nyaope, coupled with the potential health risks posed by its composition, underscores the

urgent need for effective interventions to address substance abuse in South Africa. Without such efforts, the long-term impact on the youth and the country's social fabric could be devastating.

Mthebi, Mwenesongole, and Cole (2018:115) refer to nyaope as a street drug found in South Africa that is a mixture of low-grade heroin, cannabis products, antiretroviral drugs, and other materials added as cutting agents. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC 2012; 2014-2015), substance abuse, including nyaope, is worsened by complex socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, poverty, and crime. Masombuka (2021) further states that socioeconomic challenges result from parents who fail to take their children to school due to financial problems, loitering, loneliness, and hanging out with peer groups. However, for the users of nyaope to access nyaope for the next fix, they should hustle for money. Those who are involved in the use of nyaope are usually unemployed and have no sustainable income to depend

on so that they can maintain their access to nyaope (Mokwena & Makuwerere, 2021). Waini (2015) states that the challenges and coping resources of parents whose children are addicted to chemical substances, master's Dissertation, Dept. of Social Work, University of South Africa.

Modis, Mokgaola, & Sehularo (2021) alleged that nyaope abuse not only affects the abuser but also their significant others, parents, siblings, partners, extended family members, and the community, leading to the breakdown of both the family and the community at large. Family members endure psychological pain due to their experiences with substance abuse, particularly when faced with harassment, property damage, job loss, dropping out of school, and the time spent providing emotional support.

There is an outcry in the communities of Black townships regarding the use of nyaope, and Soshanguve is not an exception. The use of nyaope has created many problems for families, and failure to find a solution to drug abuse can lead to economic problems and jeopardise the social development of the country, as well as threaten the life and health of the people involved (Makhawula, 2018).

According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, fifth version (2015:481, DSM-5), drug abuse is characterised by repeated failure to responsibly fulfil the social roles at home and work. This results in job loss and the inability to develop and sustain close relationships while continuing to expose oneself to physically threatening situations because tolerance results in the need for increased amounts of the substance to avoid withdrawal symptoms. Mathibela, & Skhosana, (2021,) further allege that social pathologies such as the use of nyaope alter the person's mind and social functioning leading to poor decision-making, which further limits future life opportunities resulting in dependence and a disrupted social life that maintains poverty and indirectly increases the burden of psychological instability (Matheba, 2020). These include crime, violence

and aggressive behaviour, risky sexual behaviour, academic problems, physical and mental symptoms

Research problem

The rise of Nyaope use in South Africa, particularly in areas like Soshanguve, has become a significant social concern. Despite various efforts by the Department of Social Development (DSD) and other community stakeholders to address the issue, the negative impact of this street drug remains a pressing problem. The DSD (2013) has expressed serious concerns about how Nyaope use is affecting communities, with Soshanguve being a particularly affected area. The researcher in this context observed antisocial behaviour exhibited by youth who use Nyaope in the region, which contributes to further social instability.

Antisocial behaviour, as defined by Hopkins-Burke and Hodgson (2014), encompasses a range of actions from minor offences and nuisances to more severe criminal activities. These behaviours not only disrupt the daily lives of community members but also create an atmosphere of fear and disorder. Such behaviours can include petty crimes like theft, vandalism, and drug-related violence, as well as public disturbances. The prevalence of antisocial behaviour linked to Nyaope use is particularly troubling because it affects multiple aspects of society. For governments, non-governmental organisations, the private sector, and communities, it raises concerns about public safety, social cohesion, and the overall well-being of individuals and families. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, focusing on prevention, intervention, and support for both individuals struggling with addiction and the communities affected by their actions.

As noted by Modiga and Mokwena (2022), living with a relative who is dependent on alcohol or illicit drugs like Nyaope creates substantial strain on other family members. This strain manifests in several forms, including financial burdens, disruptions in family interactions, and interruptions to the daily family routine. The study

highlighted by these authors reveals that the severity of Nyaope dependence is strongly correlated with these family burdens, further amplifying the challenges faced by users' loved ones.

Understanding the experiences of families living with Nyaope users, particularly in areas like Soshanguve, is crucial for developing targeted interventions. Policymakers and decision-makers must be informed of the wide-ranging consequences of Nyaope use on families and communities. The research objective will provide valuable insights to help guide effective strategies for addressing this social problem and reducing its impact on families.

Research methods and design

A qualitative research approach with an explorative and descriptive research design was employed to provide knowledge and insight into the phenomenon under investigation. The qualitative approach enabled the researchers to collect data by giving participants time to describe their experiences and give opinions about the phenomenon being studied.

The researcher is a qualified Advanced Psychiatric Nurse who is an expert in Psychiatric services. In addition, the researcher is registered with the South African Nursing Council (SANC) and thus adheres to a professional code of ethics

Study design

The study used a qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive design, and data were collected through in-depth interviews.

Study setting

The study was conducted in a township in Tshwane, where nyaope use is rife. Within the township, data were collected at the homes of the family members at their convenient time, including the needs of families whose problems emanate from nyaope use within their homes, such as attempts to get help for their relatives who use psychoactive substances.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited from the Social Development Centre in the township. The clearance certificate from the Sefako Makgatho University

Research Ethics Committee was used to negotiate for permission to conduct the study from the Gauteng Social Development Centre, and that approval letter was presented to the local Social Development Centre as support for the request to conduct the study. The social worker within the centre was requested to identify individuals who contact the centre regarding problems related to nyaope use by members of their families. The individuals could be parents, siblings, partners, extended family members, and the community of the nyaope user. The social worker would inform them about the study, and those who were interested were referred to the researcher for further details about the study and their potential participation.

Population and Sample

The study population for this study consisted of parents living with youth misusing *nyaope* in Soshanguve Township. The family members include parents, siblings, partners, extended family members, and the community. The study sample comprised eight parents of *Nyaope* users. In this study, the sample of ten parents provided responses that reached saturation after the tenth interview. The researchers knew that the saturation point was reached when the repetition of information became evident. However, because of the stigma attached to substance misuse, parents of youth misusing substances are a difficult population to reach. Therefore, purposive sampling was appropriate in guiding the researchers to select relevant participants for the study (Creswell, 2013). Subsequently, the sample size of ten parents living with youth misusing *nyaope* was recruited from the rehabilitation centre. Permission to conduct the study was sought from the rehabilitation centre with the assistance of the social worker. In addition, the researcher and research Assistant were mobilised for support to telephonically inform identified participants about the study. Thereafter, face-to-face meetings were scheduled with the respective parents where the researchers were officially introduced and presented the purpose of the study.

To ensure that the study was completely voluntary, the researcher, as an Advanced Psychiatric Nurse, facilitated the process of signing the informed consent forms. All signed informed consent forms were in the possession of the researcher and research Assistant, who commenced the actual data collection process.

Data collection

Individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews, informed by an interview guide, were used by researchers as a data collection method. Rosetto (2014) stated that the main purpose of the semi-structured interview in qualitative research is to gather information and facts. Therefore, in this study, all interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent. Each semi-structured interview lasted between 35 and 45 minutes. In addition, the participants' preferred language for the interview was English. Furthermore, observations and open-ended questions were employed by the researchers to explore the experiences of parents living with youth misusing *nyaope*. Thereafter, the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed by the researchers and the independent coder for an in-depth understanding of the responses. It is noteworthy that all interviews were conducted by the researchers.

Data analysis

Tesch's framework guided the process of qualitative data analysis (Creswell, 2013). The framework was deemed appropriate for this study as it allowed the researchers to analyse responses related to the participants' experiences. In analysing data, the researchers worked with an independent coder who employed Tesch's framework.

FINDINGS

The findings of the study are presented in the following section.

Biographical data of the participants.

Relationship to the Nyaope user	Race	Employment status	Marital status	Age
Father	Black	Unemployed	Married	35
Father	Black	Employed	Married	37
Mother	Black	Employed	Married	39
Mother	Black	Employed	Divorced	42
Mother	Black	Unemployed	Divorced	44

Measures of trustworthiness

To ensure the reliability of this study, the independent coder and the researchers coded the data separately and then held a consensus discussion on the themes and subthemes, which were presented as research findings. Conformability of the study was ensured by ensuring that the findings reflect the experiences and coping strategies of participants rather than the values and characteristics of the researchers. A comprehensive description of the research methodology employed was provided. The process was guided by Guba's model for assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative data (Krefting, 1991).

Ethical considerations

The Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University granted ethical permission to go on board with this study, and the ethics number SMUREC/H/189/2028:2018 was allocated. The principle of informed consent was observed by ensuring that participants were fully informed that participation was purely voluntary, and they had the option to exit the study at whatever time they felt uncomfortable. In addition, confidentiality and anonymity were observed by ensuring that the participant's identity and data furnished were not disclosed to those outside the research fraternity. In addition, pseudonyms were used as opposed to the real names of the participants. The audio recordings were stored in a locked office, and only the researchers had access to them.

Notably, a free debriefing session or any type of counselling that the participants might require following data collection was set up due to the delicate nature of the phenomenon being studied.

Mother	Black	Self-employed	Married	46
Father	Black	Unemployed	Married	49
Mother	Black	Unemployed	Married	52
Mother	Black	Pensioner	Widow	66
Mother	Black	Employed	Single	60

In the racial profile, all participants were black with ages ranging from 35 to 60 years. In terms of gender, most of the participants were women. Three of the participants were men. In terms of marital status, six of the participants were married, one was single, one was a widow, and two

were divorced. Regarding employment status, four participants were employed, four were unemployed, one was self-employed, and one was a pensioner; the participant was aged 66. The themes for discussion that emerged from the analysed data are indicated in Table 2.

TABLE 2 THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

Theme 1	Sub themes
Youth's conduct	<i>Youth's Constant Need for Money to Maintain Nyaope Use</i> <i>Youth's Delinquent Behaviour (Stealing)</i> <i>Youth's Disrespectful Behaviour (Rude/Aggressive)</i>
Theme 2 Family relationship problems,	<i>Distrust in Family Relationships</i> <i>Youth Rejected by Family and Community</i>
Theme 3 Family members' emotional experiences	<i>Concern, Worry, Guilt and Disappointment</i>
Theme 4 Family members' perceptions of nyaope use	<i>Family Members' Awareness of Nyaope Use</i> <i>Family Members' Perceptions of Reasons for Nyaope Use</i> <i>Family Members' Response Towards Youth's Friends</i>

Theme 1

Youth's conduct

The youth who use nyaope do not meet their parents' expectations. For these parents, their children's deviant behaviour can be challenging and frustrating. "Change" is persistent and has a detrimental effect on them. Some of the participants' views included the following:

Youth's Constant Need for Money to Maintain

Nyaope Use

"Having a child who is using nyaope, it's a challenge when people beat him up after stealing from them, he runs to me, and I'm the one who has to rescue him, I have to make a plan" **Participant 3.**

"I don't want to lie; there's no parent who will feel okay if their child is not doing the right thing.

I feel bad, especially since he's the eldest." **Participant: 1**

"The other day we were going to a funeral, and I asked him why don't wear the sneakers that I bought him, he said to me "I didn't have money so I gave them as a guarantee for R60.00" I had to give him R60 so that he can go and collect the sneakers, He wore them only on that day, and I've never seen him wearing them again, it seems it's been held as a guarantee'" **Participant: 10.**

Youth's Delinquent Behaviour (Stealing

The family members do not trust their children in their own homes; they feel unsafe. Nyaope users would do anything to get the next fix, such as all sorts of crime, stealing from their family members, housebreaking, robberies, and killings. These start in families and gradually spread to the community. Participants said the following:

"What's hurting me the most was that he had already started stealing from our neighbours, so such things would lead to people ending up killing him..." **Participant: 9**

"...if you can see my bedroom it looks like a dumping site, everything, we throw everything in there, and then we lock it, we have changed our locking system because the normal ones he was able to make a duplication, so we lock the butler as well, he does no longer has access to my bedroom not unless I forget to lock..." **Participant: 7**

Theme 2

Family relationship problems,

When children behave in a socially unacceptable way, their family members and the people around them experience some form of tainted relationship between the user and parents, siblings, relatives, and the community. The following quotes express the views of the participating parents:

"It's a problem because, you can't leave him alone in the house, if he's in the house one of us has to be next to him, for example, his mother is

going for an appointment somewhere I have to remain so that I can keep an eye on him, the only time you can be away from him is when you go to the toilet and back" **Participant: 6.**

"...the only problem is if you give him money to go buy bread, he doesn't come back with, his father took out the money and said to him, please buy bread and milk it was R25.00, he ran away he never came back, he came back the following day," **Participant:9.**

Theme 3

Family members' emotional experiences

Living with youth using nyaope is challenging, as is evident in the parents who experience feelings of concern, worry, guilt, and disappointment, leading to a sense of helplessness, hopelessness, and despair.

"...life does not excite me; nothing is too exciting for me in life." **Participant: 7**

"...that is what I experience daily, I am always stressed, I can't even focus, and I'm not comfortable with that because I'm always nervous because I don't know what is going to happen next." **Participant: 2**

"Yes, it is a painful challenge, because I tell myself that this child can't defeat me because he has a bright future, but his future is being disturbed, I don't cope, I am always heavily burdened" **Participant:1**

Theme 4

Family members' perceptions of Nyaope use

According to the participants' experiences, when a child's behaviour and personality change, their parents' perception of them completely changes, especially if they go from being good to bad. By the time one realises the reason behind the behaviour and personality change, it manifests as disbelief, denial, anger, depression, and acceptance, followed by a loss of hope.

Most individuals were unaware until their professors, neighbours, or others noticed altered be-

haviours and alerted them. They then experienced various phases of mourning. What the parents said was as follows:

"That is why I'm saying it can't be because of the divorce, if that was the case, he would have long started using it" **Participant**

"...No, for him I think it's peer pressure because his friends are attending local schools and there's no order before they go to school, they can manage to smoke..." **Participant: 5**

"What he said was that one of his friends said to him, 'taste this, ' and he tasted" **Participant**

"His problem is his friends, when he comes back, they will be around him telling him how they missed him, once he goes with him when he gets to where they smoke, he will go back" **Participant**

"It is not easy to notice the child when they first start, by the time you notice them, it's already too late. I started noticing him when he stopped going to school, it's almost six years now" **Participant: 9**

"Yes, I can't remember who told me that he is using nyaope, but we will deny it because when you tried to correct him he was referring to brother, so we said there's no way he can smoke it because already he's seeing what it's doing to his brother, I've even had open a case for the brother, I didn't believe it, I went around asking people and the child next door said "that rumour it's true" I also asked one lady who is selling food, and she said "I'm not saying you must shout at him or what, he is using nyaope" she didn't believe her eyes as well because she said she saw him at where they sell nyaope" **Participant: 8**

"It is not easy to notice the child when they first start, by the time you notice them, it's already too late. I started noticing him when he stopped going to school, it's almost six years now" **Participant**

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The Findings of the study confirmed that drugs

are addictive and lead to constant use, including nyaope. According to Khumalo (2020), nyaope is highly addictive, causes severe side effects, and exposes users to intense withdrawal symptoms. Many drug addicts find it difficult to withstand the withdrawal pain. Thus, instead, they continue taking the drug to make themselves comfortable. They continue taking the drugs, not for any pleasurable feelings but to avoid the excruciating pain of withdrawal symptoms. Choate, (2015) corroborated that nyaope abuse not only affects the abuser, but it also affects significant others; parents, siblings, partners, and extended family members leading to the breakdown of the family as a system, as they can do anything to satisfy their next fix, from robberies, stealing, killing, and more.

STEALING

These children steal from their parents, siblings, neighbours, and the community at large. They steal money, home appliances, jewellery, and furniture. Having stolen from neighbours, their families try to protect them from being beaten up or sent to jail. Therefore, they replace what they have stolen from the neighbours. This leads to families having financial difficulties (Nkosi, 2017:45). Because of their socially unacceptable behaviour, one can only imagine how challenged their parents, siblings, neighbours, and members of the community are. Hence, when these children are taken to prison because of their deviant behaviour, it often comes as a relief to their parents, who are harmed by their children's behaviour. Family members become victims of theft; this indicates that their children steal to get money to buy nyaope (Masobuka, 2020).

One can imagine how frustrating it is for family members of youth using nyaope whose personality has changed to cope. Personality change is analogous to a change in behaviour. Consequently, these children's behaviour is characterised by aggression and violence, as well as anti-social and criminal behaviour (Mafa & Makhubalele, 2020). Mathibela (2017) asserts that the

use of nyaope can trigger violent behaviour in some ways. Firstly, nyaope causes cognitive impairment that can decrease the ability of a person to understand complex interpersonal conflicted interactions. It can also increase the likelihood of aggressive responses to conflict. Matheba, Kgadima, & Mabelane (2021) further indicate that intoxication increases the heart rate, panic reactions, and paranoid feelings associated with violent behaviour. Secondly, withdrawal can also produce irritability and anger that can lead to aggressive behaviour. There are traumatic events that can be damaging to one's emotional health and lead to stress or inability to cope with life (Mohasoa, 2018). Nyaope users are prone to the inability to control their emotions. This then leads to anger outbursts. Some substance abusers invariably start trouble from nowhere, pick fights, or easily get irritated (Mokwena & Huma, 2014:110). It is evident from the data obtained that family members of youth using nyaope are challenged by the behaviour of their children. These nyaope users are disrespectful (rude/aggressive) and such behaviour is caused by being under the influence or being sober and the need for the next fix (Moodley, *et al.* (2012:34). In support of the above statement, Mondlana (2013:43) states that parents experience personality changes in their children, which include aggression and violence, as well as antisocial and criminal behaviour, resulting in parents perceiving their homes as a jail. Hence, they feel helpless, hopeless, and filled with despair.

These children behave in an inconsiderate manner, under the influence of nyaope, not caring for those who care for them. They seem not to care for themselves and others; they display poor personal hygiene and often resort to stealing and selling goods to sustain their habit (Mokwena, 2015:1). Carelessness ranges from neglect of own hygiene, surroundings and health responsibility, leading to a lack of immunity and being susceptible to diseases and death. Death is the worst physical effect that every parent thinks of

when a child is on drugs, be it from the effects of drugs to overdose and infections caused by shared needles contaminated with HIV and hepatitis (Nkosi, 2017:15). The desire becomes so strong and all-encompassing that it removes all other considerations before it, in a myopic and single-minded search for the object of desire (Mahlangu, 2016:40).

Van Niekerk (2017: 102) agrees with the above statement that substance abuse, including nyaope, leads to fatigue and premature ageing. She further alleges that behaviour includes irresponsible decisions and leads to one being unable to make wise decisions.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS

Kalm & Mthembu (2018) suggest that substance use affects all members of the family, with parents often experiencing heightened emotional strain due to consistent conflicts and disharmony at home. Van Niekerk (2016) corroborates this by emphasising the emotional toll on family functioning, particularly parents, who are often at the centre of these struggles. This insight underscores the importance of addressing these issues to restore family cohesion and well-being.

The negative impact of nyaope on family relationships is significant, leading to a breakdown in communication and strained interactions among family members. According to Ngantweni (2018), the use of nyaope by youth within families results in a lack of communication and ineffective dialogue, creating distance and misunderstandings, Waini (2015), further explains that damaged communication makes it increasingly difficult for families to address issues and find solutions, as the behaviours of the youth spiral out of control and become unmanageable. Additionally, Van Niekerk (2016:81) highlights the feelings of distrust and disappointment that arise within families because of drug use, noting that youths often resort to stealing from family members and show no remorse for their actions. This behaviour exacerbates tensions, deepening the

emotional and relational divide within families affected by drug abuse.

Youths who start using nyaope get rejected by the community. The community members threaten the users with mob justice. This not only puts stress on the user but also the family members, as they also get stigmatised as a family of a bad child. They try to hide the fact that their children use drugs. Parents might feel anger towards their community members who talk about their children. This can lead to broken relationships between members of the community, such as neighbours, church members, and members of social groups. Parents of Nyaope users get poor treatment from the community. They must pay the price for their children's deeds, as communities struggle to deal with the nyaope problem. This has resulted in neighbours turning against each other, ending in their social life becoming difficult because of the lack of trust between them (Smith, Estefan, & Caine, 2018).

Masobuka (2013:79) also indicated that parents of nyaope users live in constant fear of vigilantism. On several occasions, the community goes on a rampage and targets houses of nyaope users looking for stolen goods. When they are found, they get beaten up or murdered. Unfortunately, the parents are caught in the middle of the chaos. To them, this creates trauma that becomes unbearable.

FAMILY MEMBERS' EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES

Makhawula (2018), confirms the findings that family members experience emotional distress because of their children's use of substances. They resort to isolation, lack of support, and guilt. In their attempt to hide their children's nyaope use, some parents may experience a sense of isolation and thus would not enjoy the support of their extended family and friends (Mohashoa, 2018). Families are also torn apart when loved ones go to prison for drug-related crimes (Tran, Moir, Latkin, Hall, Nguyen, & Ha, 2019).

Parents get disappointed when discovering that their children use drugs, including nyaope, and consequently mistrust their children (Van Niekerk, 2016:103). This author asserts that parents become fearful that the negative impact of drugs, including nyaope, may harm their children and adversely affect their physical being and schoolwork (ibid). Ngantweni (2018:45) further says the youth's changed behaviour included not being at home for several days, going out at night, and stealing from the community. As a result of this behaviour, parents whose children steal from the community display a significant degree of anxiety. They worry because they fear that the community members will harm their children.

FAMILY MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS OF NYAOPE USE

Participants believe that their children were hooked while they were experimenting with substance abuse. They emphasised peer pressure as one of the main problems in substance abuse (Jacobs & Slabert, 2019). There are other contributing factors found by Mohasoa and Mokoena (2017:108) wherein young people are derailed by the use of substances for reasons known to them. These authors' study identified factors contributing to substance abuse: they are readily available in the surrounding communities and are affordable to learners, the way the children are brought up, who they associate with, and whether they have access to money to buy the drugs.

In support of the above, Mahlangu (2016:15) concurs that it is perceived that nyaope is the preferred drug of choice, as it is cheap and easily accessible.

FAMILY MEMBERS' AWARENESS OF NYAOPE USE

The data gathered for this study made it clear that most parents received notifications about their kids' drug use from a variety of sources. Teachers

or neighbours called them, and they noticed behavioural changes in their kids. Peer pressure and bad company were cited by most parents. It should be mentioned that other parents may not become aware that their children are using drugs for years until they respond to an ongoing crisis involving the teen abusing drugs or alcohol (National Institute on Drugs Abuse, 2017:3). Substance abuse is a generational culture in other families (Mohasoa & Mokwena, 2017:115). Permissive parenting styles compromise the lives of youth using drugs (Mahlangu, 2016:15).

FAMILY MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS OF REASONS FOR NYAOPE USE

The apartheid system was replaced by the new dispensation of freedom. As much as structural systems have changed, a complete transformation of societies has not politically, socially, or economically improved the lives of the poor (Radebe 2015). Furthermore, the formation of multipronged trade networks has unearthed non-negotiated mechanisms of infiltrating illicit drugs into communities, causing instability and insecurity (Mokwena, 2015:15).

Reports from the literature show that there are unconscious motivations and conflicts within some individuals that are manifested by a lack of self-control when faced with painful life experiences such as poverty and unemployment, then they resort to compulsive substance use (Khumalo, 2020).

According to Mahlangu (2018), peer influence is a direct influence or pressure by peers to follow or conform to their ways of doing things. This may affect the youth's attitude, values, or behaviours. Some youths may be involved in violent behaviour only because they want to be accepted or to conform to a specific group's values and attitudes. Individuals may be involved in risk-taking behaviours such as drinking alcohol or taking drugs, or being part of a social group where vio-

lent behaviour is part of the group's norm (Mahlangu, 2018). Mokwena (2015) states that her study results showed that factors identified as contributory to drug use include unfavourable social conditions such as poverty, unemployment, and a lack of recreational facilities.

Family Members' Response Towards Youth's Friends

Most participants are aware that their kids have more than one friend; they accept the relationship but do not approve of seeing them in their yards, as they continue looking for opportunities to steal anything they come across. Other participants believe friends continue to disrupt their children's process of focusing on treatment or of going clean from drugs, including nyaope. They continue to learn more tactics to use to get the next fix. Social learning theorists argue that people learn from others, via observation, imitation, and modelling (Mohasoa & Mokwena, 2017:110). Parents are concerned about the influence of young friends. Van Niekerk (2016:104) cites that other learning theorists hold the view that substance abuse is a learned behaviour.

The findings that emerged from the research are supported by social learning theories focusing on the interaction between the individual and the environment in shaping patterns of substance use. According to these theorists, adolescents abuse drugs because they have seen their parents, peers, and other people abuse drugs (Department of Education, 2013; Griffin & Botvin, 2011; Mothibi, 2014 in Mohasoa & Mokwena, 2017:110).

YOUTH'S PATTERN OF NYAOPE USE

The pattern of nyaope use differs with the province's social influences, culture, drug availability, acceptance, and tolerance of the behaviour, and the characteristics of the use (Masombuka & Qalinge, 2020). Mokwena (2015) supports the youth's pattern of nyaope is exclusively used by Black young people who are unemployed. Furthermore, it is relatively cheap to buy, with an average price of R25-R30 a joint. These amounts are contributed within a group of friends and thus

become easily accessible. These groups start around school premises, parks, and busy outlets.

Conclusion

According to the study's findings, schools have a big influence on parents' awareness of their teenagers' overuse of *nyaope*. The conclusion drawn from the parents' experiences and coping mechanisms is that working together with schools helps parents become more aware of their teenagers' overuse of social media. The researchers concluded that parents of teenagers who abuse *nyaope* require psychosocial support and protection against the teenagers' criminal activity, including the issue of parents becoming victims of theft.

It is also concluded that the adolescents' loss of interest in personal cleanliness is distressing to parents. From the shared stories, it is evident that parents are genuinely concerned about the extent of damage caused by the adolescents' misuse of *nyaope* within the family system. The researchers concluded that the behaviour of the adolescents misusing *nyaope* leads to conflict and disintegration of the family as a unit and has the potential to collapse the entire family system. Furthermore, it is concluded that parents, as the centre and backbone of a family system, require support to save the entire family system from collapsing because of their adolescents' misuse of *nyaope*.

In addition, the researchers concluded that the adolescents' misuse of *nyaope* inevitably leads to a breakdown in family relationships as family members spend more time away from home. In response to parents giving misusers money to purchase *nyaope*, it is concluded that there is a need for programs to educate and support parents of adolescents misusing *nyaope*. Finally, it is concluded that religious institutions such as churches have a significant role to play in supporting parents of adolescents. There is also a need for collaboration between social workers, parents, families, educators, church leaders, and

law enforcement agencies in combating adolescents' misuse of *nyaope*.

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Authors' contributions

All authors have contributed to the conceptualisation, acquisition, and analysis of data, as well as drafting and refining the manuscript.

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Data availability

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.25>**GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND APPOINTMENT OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT OFFICIALS: AN EVALUATION OF THE OFFICE OF THE PREMIER IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA.*****Ellah Nkhensani Ngobeni (1)****Department of Youth In Development
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This paper seeks to probe the causes of non-compliance with the 50/50 Employment Equity Target by Limpopo Provincial Departments in South Africa on the appointment of members to senior management positions. South African Cabinet Decision 85(A) of 2005, the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill of 2013, and the existing policy reform to address gender inequality in the public service are among the important pieces of legislative frameworks that provide for gender parity at the workplace and if adhered to, the 50/50 employment equity can be realized. The paper aims to evaluate the extent of employment equity (gender mainstreaming) in its implementation and enforcement in the appointment process of senior management in the Office of the Premier, Limpopo Provincial Government. The study uses feminist theories as guiding tools to understand the root causes of inequities in workplaces especially between men and women. An exploratory qualitative approach was embarked upon. Interviews with Directors and Chief Directors responsible for Human Resources Management and Corporate Services were also conducted as well as the review of existing documents and reports of the provincial government. The recommendations made are that there is a need for the strengthening of the employment policies so that they do not appear to be nepotistic.

Keywords: *Employment equity, Feminism, Gender, Gender Equality, Gender Inequality, Gender Mainstreaming.*

Introduction

South Africa continues to face challenges of gender mainstreaming especially concerning Senior Management positions in many of the public and private sectors of the economy despite the existing national and provincial pieces of legislation and directives that are geared towards

the amelioration of gender discrimination. In South Africa, the Employment Equity Act of 1998 was promulgated to promote equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination to re-

dress the employment imbalances of the designated groups. The South African Cabinet Decision 85(A) of 2005, the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill of 2013, and the existing policy reform to address gender inequality in the public service are amongst measures put in place to redress the imbalances of the past. Musetho, Isaac and Dobrin (2021) indicate that the South African government implemented different legislative mechanisms in an attempt to address gender equality in the workplace, and discrimination, and to empower women. All these measures and policies are not yielding the expected results. The Office of the Premier of the Limpopo Province in South Africa is still struggling to comply with its approved Employment Equity and Human Resources Plans to make gender mainstreaming a reality.

Adisa, Gbadamosi and Adekoya (2015) contend that unfair treatment, discrimination and gender representation in employment are the challenges confronting women working in male-dominated occupations in a patriarchal setting. Mcilongo and Strydom (2021) concur and contend that historically, patriarchy has manifested itself in the workplace and influenced career opportunities afforded to women in the public sector. Gender Mainstreaming as a globally accepted strategy established in the Beijing Action Platform in 1995 has the ambition to transform the norms and behaviours that create inequalities (Mergaert and Lombardo, 2014) and to promote gender equality in the recruitment process in the workplace. Therefore, gender mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a strategy, an approach, and a means to achieve the goal of gender equality. Mainstreaming ensures that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities including policy development, planning, resource allocation, implementation and monitoring of programmes (UNWomen, 2021). Dube and Dziva (2014), argue that women are marginalized and relegated to peripheral positions and decision-making as a result of ineffective implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies. On the other hand, there are some arguments from other scholars that gender mainstreaming is a contested concept and process, as

there are competing definitions of goals and theoretical underpinnings which include equality, social justice, transformation, sameness, differences, and human rights.

Gender discrimination and violation of women's inherent rights and freedoms make headlines all over the world (Zia, 2018) and thus necessitate further research through the use of mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming, according to the International Labour Organization (2017), is not about adding a "woman's component" or even a "Gender equality component" into an existing activity but should be perceived as a means of bringing the experiences and interests of both women and men onto the development agenda.

The United Nations (2014) asserts that gender equality is an essential expression of human rights and that women's rights are human rights. It is not only a fundamental human right but also a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. The attainment of gender equality should not be seen as an end in itself or a compliance issue but should be viewed as a prerequisite for sustainable development (United Nations Population Fund, 2018). The United Nations (2013) identified gender equality (Goal 5) as one of the Sustainable Development Goals that should be complied with. Gender equality between men and women. It does not mean that women and men have become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities should not depend on whether one was born male or female (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2017). UNPF (2018), posits that gender equality requires equal enjoyment by women and men, and this is supported by section 2 (Chapter 2) of the Bill of Rights in the Republic of South Africa Constitution of 1996.

South Africa's success in bringing about gender equality has perhaps been most visible in executive decision-making, particularly in national and provincial parliaments like most countries in the world (Makgale and Chibwe (2019). The World Bank (2019) indicates that globally, in 2019, South Africa fell within the top ten countries with the highest proportion of seats held by women in national parliament. Makgale and Chibwe (2019)

further state that reports indicate that in 2009 in South Africa, 43 percent of Members of Parliament and 41 percent of Ministers were women and 5 of 9 Provincial Premiers were women while at provincial legislature women stood at 41 percent.

However, in South African public service, women are still underrepresented in all nine (9) provinces while men are over fifty per cent.

The Office of the Premier is not the only one in

Limpopo Province to struggle to reach the 50 per cent target at its Senior Management Service (SMS) level. The equity status of all Limpopo Provincial Departments which have not been improving is reflected in the tables below from 2020 until 2022. The situation might mean the recruitment policies and Employment Equity Policies are flawed or there are deliberate efforts by those responsible for the final appointments to disregard their laws.

**Table 1: SMS EMPLOYMENT EQUITY STATUS
FOR ALL PROVINCIAL DEPARTMENTS IN LIMPOPO AS AT JUNE 2023.**

Department	Female	Percent- ages (%)	Male	Percentages (%)	Total
Office of the Premier	27	42.2	37	57%	64
Education	20	32.8	41	67.2	61
Agriculture & Rural Development	18	47.4	20	52.6	38
Treasury	20	40.8	29	59.2	49
LEDET	16	40.0	24	60.0	40
Health	36	43.9	46	56.1	82
Transport & Community Safety	11	28.9	27	71.1	38
Public Works, Roads & Infrastructure	12	36.4	21	63.6	33
COGHSTA	21	42.0	29	63.6	50
Social Development	14	51.9	13	48.1	23
Sport, Arts & Culture	8	40.0	12	60.0	19
TOTAL	199	40.0	299	60.0	497

Limpopo Office of the Premier

The table above show that gender representation in the Office of the Premier has been between 42 to 46 percent while males were 54 to 56 percent respectively. However, having two provincial departments that are above 50 percent shows that the 50 percent equity target is achievable.

Problem Statement

Employment equity/gender representation at the senior management level is a worldwide problem. In South Africa, particularly in Limpopo Province, progress on meeting the employment equity target and gender representation at the

senior management level is slow. The recommendation of who should be appointed remains the responsibility of the Recruitment and Selection Committee while the final approval or decision for this level in line with the delegations issued by the Minister of Public Service and Administration is granted by the executive authority, who in this case are the Ministers, Premiers and Members of Executive Council (MECs). Chapter 9 institutions such as the Public Service Commission (PSC), Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) and Public Protector are only tasked with oversight functions focusing on investigations instead of putting measures in place

to monitor the recruitment processes. The Department of Employment and Labour has the mandate to impose a penalty of R1,5m on institutions that do not comply with the Employment Equity Act, of 1998. However, the issue of gender representation or 50/50 percent gender equity is not covered by the mandate of this institution. An absence of visible evidence on the penalties imposed on government departments concerning gender inequality necessitated an evaluation of the missing link between the coordination and monitoring mechanisms in existing employment policies and processes that are followed in recruiting and selecting senior managers. This study is therefore relevant in that it evaluates the extent of employment equity in its implementation and enforcement in the appointment process of senior management personnel in the office of the premier in the Limpopo Provincial Government.

Objective of the study

The objective of the study is as follows:

To evaluate the extent of employment equity (gender mainstreaming) in its implementation and enforcement in the appointment process of senior management personnel in the Office of the Premier in the Limpopo Provincial Government.

Research question

The research question of this study is as follows:

What is the extent of the implementation of the employment equity (gender mainstreaming) and enforcement in the process of senior management personnel in the Office of the Premier in the Limpopo Provincial government in South Africa?

Significance of the study:

this study adds a new scientific body of knowledge on the appointment of members of senior management in the public service and the challenges thereof. The study would also add value to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Programme Goal 5 on Gender Equality for all countries to achieve gender parity by 2030. The study will positively contribute to social transformation in gender equality and women empowerment with a clear intent to transform historical gender imbalances and achieve 50/50 percent of Employment Equity (EE) targets.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The International Labour Organization (2017) defines “gender mainstreaming” as the process of assessing the implications for women or men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women and men as an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres. Such a strategy would allow women and men to benefit equally, and inequality would not be perpetuated in the public service. It is evident from the United Nations Economic and Social Council (2010) that the goal of gender mainstreaming seeks to capture the key concepts of design, implementation, evaluation and monitoring, which are suitable for use in projects and programmes at all levels.

Nhlapo and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2016) contend that gender mainstreaming constitutes a clear example of policy succession or policy adaptation, prompted by the desire to overcome the limitations of existing policies. It is based on this conceptual clarification that gender mainstreaming can be a workable solution for the challenge of gender inequality in the appointment of senior personnel in the public service (Sebola, 2015). Ngomane (2017) posits that the gender equality effort is informed by the third wave in the 1990s which calls for women to be appointed to senior positions in employment today as a global issue. Hence, the researcher argues that gender mainstreaming could be used effectively and progressively to achieve and promote equality in the appointment of women at senior management positions in addressing challenges of gender representation. The process of identifying gender gaps and alleviating women’s concerns and experiences is integral to the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes in all sectors of life to ensure that equality is achieved (Office of the Status of Women, (2013).

The generic concepts of the definition focus on how policies and programmes are developed, implemented, monitored as well and evaluated to cover both men and women. Hence, the use of “re-organising and improvement” as espoused by the European Institute for Gender Equity (2022)

argued that gender mainstreaming is not a policy goal in itself, but a means to achieve gender equality between women and men and a necessary condition for the achievement of the European Union objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion.

Institutional structures do exist in some countries such as South Africa (Ministry of Women, Youth and Persons Living with Disabilities), Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), Zimbabwe created the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development, Rwanda- Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, is due to lack of political will, support and commitment, that seem not to be effective. All these institutions are responsible for gender issues in their key performance areas. The Limpopo Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Gender Mainstreaming Policy (2016) also supports this view indicating that gender mainstreaming seeks to create a value system in which equality is a core value, critical, and a must for both women and men.

As highlighted above, the possible grey area or gap in South Africa on the failure of the existing structures not to perform as expected might be due to a lack of enforcement strategies and consequence management while the issue of political will and support cannot be ruled out. Olsson (2016) concurs with the statement by stating that gender mainstreaming is the central approach to enforcing the current gender inequality.

Gender mainstreaming should be a strategy for policy-making that takes into consideration both genders' interests instead of being one-sided. In the same policy, it is argued that when decision-makers and employees understand the practicalities of gender mainstreaming as a strategy, they are much more likely to abandon the narrow focus on women, but broadly consider both genders. In the past, the gender mainstreaming tendency only focused on women's issues and men were hardly mentioned in gender-related issues (Tu, 2017). However, Siukola & Huma (2017), argue that effective implementation of gender mainstreaming requires the fulfilment of certain measures or mitigating factors that government institutions should take into consideration in ensuring that there is political commitment, visible and measurable goals, and the development of a

plan for implementing gender mainstreaming in all policy areas. It is the researcher's view that the absence of or lack of politics might create a comfort zone for administrators in implementing the strategy due to the absence of consequence management for transgressors.

Gender mainstreaming requires that efforts be made to broaden women's equitable participation at all levels of decision-making. However, Olsson (2016) argues that leadership is critical because, without it, the much-needed, strategic form of gender mainstreaming will not be possible as it demands consistent and demanding decisions on the implementation. This does not replace the need for targeted women-specific policies, programmes, and legislation; nor does it do away with the need for gender units or focal points (e.g. European International Gender Equality and International Labour Organization, 2022). Zhou and Chen (2019) argue that gender equality is achieved when women and men enjoy the same rights and opportunities across all sectors of society, including decision-making, and when the aspirations and needs of women and men are equally valued and favoured.

The South African perspective on Gender Parity

The apartheid era caused severe pain through racial segregation, injustice and inequality to the majority of the South African people (Meyer, 2014). The majority-led government of the National Unity inherited a country in which gender disparities were deep, and women, particularly in the black population, faced many disadvantages and discrimination through apartheid, entrenched poverty and patriarchy (Larson, 2019). The commission for Gender Equality (2018) indicates that South Africa became a signatory of the main international conventions relating to gender equality and the protection of women as follows:

- Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) ratified in 1995;
- Beijing Platform for Action which was ratified in 1996;
- Millenium Declaration and Millenium Development Goals (MDGs ratified in 2000);

South Africa also ratified the Regional Gender Equality Commitments, namely, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of Women in Africa ratified in 2004 and the SADC Protocol on Gender Equality in Africa ratified in 2004 (Commission for Gender Equality, 2018). Although South Africa has made great strides in gender equality, gender representation is still below the 50 per cent mark for positions that come with a great deal of influence (Bangani and Vyas-Doorgepersad, 2020). This implies that the 50/50 per cent equity target may not be achieved by 2030 as per Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Programme.

As a way to improve gender equality in South Africa, the mainstreaming of gender was identified as a key process for instituting change to the new South African democracy. South Africa ratified the Beijing Platform for Action, an agenda towards female empowerment, and made a firm commitment to the mainstreaming of gender within the public service (Makgale and Chibwe, (2019). South Africa's success in bringing about gender equality has perhaps been most visible in the area of political level, particularly in national and provincial parliaments like the majority of countries in the world (Makgale and Chibwe (2019). The World Bank (2019) indicates that South Africa fell within the top ten countries with the highest proportion of women in national parliament. Parliamentary Monitoring Group (2021) posit that before 1994; the South African Parliament had only a 2.7 per cent representation of women. Toode (2020) states that, during the Sixth Parliament, women Members of Parliament accounted for 48.4 per cent in both the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces according to the People Assembly (Toode, 2020), which is a dramatic improvement in women's representation post-1994.

Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act No. 66 of 1995)

The Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 is the primary legislation governing labour relations and promoting fairness in the workplace, protecting and promoting employee rights and unfair labour practices. The Labour Relations Act outlaw's discrimination in the workplace and sets out clear and explicit measures aimed at protecting and

promoting people who were previously disadvantaged, referred to as "designated groups" in terms of the Employment Equity Act (Department of Labour, 1995). The act requires institutions to establish rules and guidelines for fair labour practices, which also includes the right to be appointed to senior management positions.

In 2022, the Limpopo Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs joined Social Development in meeting the 50/50 per cent Employment Equity target and has an approved Gender Mainstreaming Policy in place. Bypath and Nkabinde (2018) argued that there is simply no real political will and commitment in some departments to transform. Rose (2015) suggests that leaders with low ethics focus on compliance, as opposed to commitment in responding to the legislation. "Low Ethical Leader often focuses on the quality and consistency of enforcement, as opposed to embracing shared values and sustainability of outcomes in deciding on how to respond to legislation including gender mainstreaming "argued Rose (2015).

Section 9(2) & (3) of Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) stipulates that equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights should be realized for the benefit of both men and women. The section further states that the state may not unfairly discriminate - directly or indirectly- against anyone on one or more of the following grounds: race, gender, sex, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, culture, language etc. Labour Relations Act of 1995 was introduced to promote fair labour practices in the workplace while the Affirmative Action and Employment Equity Act, 55 in 1998, was introduced to promote the constitutional right of equality and exercise true democracy in the workplace.

As a measure of meeting the 50 per cent target of women in senior management positions, South Africa has in 2007 developed the Head of Department's 8 Principles Action Plan (PAP) for promoting women's empowerment and gender within the Public Service. However, Ngomane (2017) argues that the objectives of the plan have not been achieved due to a lack of monitoring and consequence management for non-compliance. The researcher's observation is that the tool

(Head of Departments' 8 Principles Action Plan for promoting women's empowerment and gender within the Public Service) is just a plan for compliance purposes as it has not yielded extraordinary results since its development. The tool lacks proper monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to track progress on the set equity target.

Barriers to the Successful Implementation of Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming as a strategy to address gender inequality in the recruitment and appointment process of senior management in the public sector faces challenges such as beliefs and the inherent misconception that gender is designed to favour or support women only (Mendum, Paez and Njenga, 2018). Bangani and Vyas Doorpersad (2020) contend that the discrimination of women and poor representativeness in the workplace can be traced to traditional norms and cultural practices. Wood (2017) argues that gender inequality is as old as the history of the Bible where women are portrayed as secondary role players in God's plan for humanity. Patriarchy remains an obstacle to the transformation of gender because it operates at all levels of society, conferring privilege and prestige on men at the expense of women.

Theoretical framework

This study relied on the theory of radical feminism, which argues for the immediate transformation in gender relations so that the historically marginalized especially in areas of management, governance and economic development can be mainstreamed.

Radical feminism

Lewis (2020) states that radical feminism is a philosophy emphasizing the patriarchal roots of inequality between men and women, or more specifically, the social domination of women by men. Radical feminists believe that men benefit from the discrimination against women when it comes to the appointment of senior management in public service, regardless of whether they deserve it or not. (Dahlin-Jones, 2014). Wood (2017) contends that patriarchy is at its core evil, repressive and oppressive, and needs to be contested and exposed for what it is (Wood, 2019). Radical feminists are based on the fact that gender inequality is the basis of all inequality and

oppression. The repression of women follows and occurs in the patriarchal patterns of male dominance over women. Vukoicic (2017) argues that radical feminism opposes patriarchy, not men, and therefore, gender mainstreaming policies for the recruitment process of senior management in the public sector should be transparent as they will not be against men.

RESEARCH METHOD

A qualitative research approach was used in the study since it provides a greater opportunity for a feminist sensitivity to the problem (Bryman, 2016). Maree (2017) views qualitative research as the exploration and understanding of a central phenomenon. The approach and its exploratory design aimed at experiencing the phenomenon, determining what participants think, feel and experience about gender mainstreaming (employment equity policies) in the appointment process of senior management at the Limpopo Office of the Premier. The paper focused on issues of discrimination, marginality, oppression and positionality of women using the lens of feminism as an analytical tool in advancing to leadership positions. However, MacNabb (2017) states that feminist research is not exclusive to women, but it is often done with an emancipatory emphasis on women and that research must be conducted within institutions that are still patriarchal. The selected research approach investigated meanings, interpretations, symbols, processes and relations of social life (Maree, 2016).

Philosophical Worldviews

The researcher opted for the interpretivism paradigm based on the thinking that suggests that the social realities of people are influenced by their experiences and the social context within which they exist (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020).

Philosophical worldviews are the basic components of a research approach which assist researchers to ensure that when they choose a particular research approach, it necessitates matching research designs and methods. Grover (2015) states that philosophical worldviews originated from epistemology considerations, which determine a paradigm as per the philosophical orientation of the research approach. Epistemological considerations are approached into several categories based on the nature and structure of the

knowledge (Grover, 2015). Two of the philosophical worldviews relevant to this study are constructivism and transformative.

Research Design

The explorative research design was used as it was well suited to respond to the research questions appropriately and adequately. The design was selected as it allowed the researcher to examine the phenomenon in-depth evidence that was obtained from data collection techniques.

The study sample comprised women and men at the levels of Deputy Directors, Directors, and Chief Directors since they were the ones who could be in line for senior management posts as and when they become vacant, as public servants rely on this opportunity for upward mobility. The population was of benefit to the researcher as they provided valuable information and experiences of gender inequality at senior management in the Office of the Premier-Limpopo Province. The non-probability purposive sampling according to (Palinkas et al, 2015), is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest. Hence, a total of nine (9) employees were selected; Deputy Directors (5), Directors (2) and Chief Directors (2) levels were selected from all four Branches of the Office of the Premier-Limpopo Provincial Government. Maree (2016) opines that there are no published guidelines or tests of adequacy for estimating the sample size required to reach saturation or rules for sample size as this choice depends on what research wants to know, the purpose of the inquiry, and the problem to be addressed.

The researcher used semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions as well as secondary sources to collect data. This process was done until the data was saturated.

The data collection methods were described

The biographical information of the participants is presented in the table below.

Participant	Gender	Age category	Occupation	Post-Experience	Number of years in the department	Level of qualification
1	Female	61	Chief Director	12	17	Masters Degree

enough in detail for justification of choice and the possibility of repetition by other researchers or in any other situation as suggested by Grover (2015).

Qualitative interviews afforded the researcher opportunities for mutual discovery, understanding, reflection and explanation of the phenomenon in question (Palinkas et al, 2015). Interviews were relevant to the study as they elucidated subjectively lived experiences and viewpoints from the respondents' perspective on gender mainstreaming strategy in the appointment process of senior management in the Office of the Premier-Limpopo. Interviews also assisted the researcher in exploring the complex phenomenon of gender mainstreaming that was hidden or unnoticed due to the sensitivity of the topic. Participants provided accounts of their explanations and justifications for their actions and opinions. The interview process was recorded through an audio recorder for accuracy during transcription. All the ethical considerations were adhered to in the collection and analysis of the data.

Results

Nine participants, two Chief Directors, two Directors and five Deputy Directors from the four branches in the Office consisting of Corporate Management, Institutional Development Support, Stakeholder Management Coordination and Performance Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation participated in the study, (two (2) Chief Directors, two (2) Directors and five (5) Deputy Directors) were selected in this study.

The selected employees(participants) are in the pipeline and are poised to take different senior management positions as and when they become available. This exercise was analysed using categories that have been developed by the researcher based on the study objectives and research questions and emerged input categories of the participants.

2	Male	50	Chief Director	13	28	Masters Degree
3	Male	62	Chief Director	08	27	Masters Degree
4	Male	58	Director	10	10	Masters Degree
5	Male	49	Director	14	20	Masters Degree
6	Male	47	Director	07	07	Honours
7	Male	58	Deputy Director	06	37	Masters Degree
8	Female	47	Deputy Director	10	17	Diploma
9	Female	52	Deputy Director	15	21	Masters Degree

Table 2: Represents the biographical information of participants.
All nine participants were asked the same questions linked to the objectives.

The researcher used hand coding for the data from a few individuals, although the process was labourious and time-consuming. Data analysis proceeded firstly, from the more general procedure of analyzing the data, and secondly, the analysis was embedded within the narrative de-

sign employing restorying the participants' stories using setting, plot and activities. This research occurred in a natural setting where human behaviour and events unfold. The theme and sub-theme established in the study were as follows:

Theme	Sub-themes
Under Objective 1: Extent of implementing EE policies on gender transformation	• Absence or no implementation of EE plan • Tribalism, Nepotism and Discrimination. • Lack of political will • Cadre deployment

Objective 1, which yielded Question 1 of the study, endeavoured to establish the extent of implementing employment equity policies (on gender transformation) in the appointment process of senior management members in the Office of the Premier. The participants' oral transcripts are as follow as follows;

In answering the question, Participant 1 had this to say:

“Gender mainstreaming policies are not implemented but get spoken about when the Director General and the Premier appear at the Portfolio

Committee during events such as 16 Days of Activism Against Women. Otherwise, gender mainstreaming is considered an operational activity that is not necessarily binding. Gender representation in the Office has in the past ten years hovered between 35-39 percent at SMS level and no one has been subjected to consequence management for non-compliance”.

Participant 2 agreed with Participant 1 by saying the following: “The Office of the Premier has sufficient Human Resource and Employment Equity Plans in place, and is fully and effectively

implemented as women are well represented. The Employment Equity Manager and Employment Equity Forum are in place although there is no Gender Mainstreaming strategy or Policy in place to implement the plans. Updates on the employment equity status are presented during Executive Management Meetings, and shortlisting process to remind members of the goal to achieve a 50 percent equity target at the SMS level. But this is done as a knee-jerk reaction to fulfilling the 50/50 parity on gender mainstreaming.

Participant 3 also said the following:

“The Office does not seem to be committed to implementing the Employment Equity Policy. This is shown by the way our office neglects the 50/50 percent Employment Equity target. The interview panel deviates from the existing and approved Employment Equity Plan. When it is applied, it is partially done. For example, the Employment Equity Officer presents the Employment Equity status during the recruitment process, but the interview panel deviates as they sometimes have their preferred candidates. When enquired, the response will be that no women were meeting the requirements of the advertised posts. The Office does not have a Gender Mainstreaming Policy.

Participant 4 echoed the same sentiment as follows:

“Employment Equity policies are not effectively implemented as the Office always goes against what has been planned in both the Human Resources and Employment Equity Plans. Recruitment and Selection Panels do not follow approved Employment Equity plans because they always deviate from the rule regardless of the plans stipulating the target group envisaged. They always pass the buck to the Executive Authority (Premier) who is responsible for approving the appointment of senior management. In addition, these policies do not yield the intended results as there is an element of tribalism and discrimination. Employees are appointed based on where they come from which is a serious concern. The panel is improvised to do the work assigned to it. For example, appointing people of their choice who are politically connected.

Participant 5 also indicated the following:

“The available Employment Equity policies are applied selectively and haphazardly. Sometimes

it is a matter of preference as to who should be recommended for appointment because when a woman retires, the post is automatically filled by men who are politically connected.

Participant 6 said the following:

“To the best of my knowledge, Employment Equity policies are ineffectively implemented as the majority of the candidates are from outside the Office while internal employees are overlooked. The Office does not have a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy or Policy separate from the Employment Equity and Human Resources Plans”.

Participant 7 also said the following:

“The Employment Equity policies are not applied uniformly hence it is difficult to comply with the required 50/50 percent equity target. There is also inconsistency in the implementation of the existing Employment Equity Act. The Office does not have an approved Gender Mainstreaming Policy, but there are other relevant policies in place.

Participant 8 (female Deputy Director) said the following:

“There is inconsistency in the implementation of the Employment Equity Act. At times it is implemented, and in some cases not. The Office does not have a Gender Mainstreaming Policy which makes it difficult to comply with 50 percent gender representation. The Office also neglects the inclusion of the 8-Principles Action Plan developed by DPSA which requires national and provincial departments to comply and report to the department annually. Employment Equity policies and processes are not applied in the Office of the Premier, especially at the Top Management level.

Participant 9 had this to say:

“The Office is currently improving and performing well in gender mainstreaming due to the implementation of the existing employment equity policies as compared to the past where the bigger portion of senior management was mostly men. The Office also prioritizes the appointment of female candidates in most senior management posts. Over and above the Employment Equity Plan, the Office has recently approved a strategy wherein SMS posts vacated by designated groups, in particular females, are ring-fenced for females.

The above data was useful in evaluating policy

implementation because each participant provided detailed information about how a policy was implemented or provided insight as to why certain procedures were followed for implementation. According to the oral transcripts provided, employment equity is not implemented as set out in the employment equity plan (EEP). When the Director General and Premier are invited to the Portfolio Committees, it seems like they are there to have a talk show or a mere routine activity rather than to solve problems of gender marginalization and discrimination. Because there is no consequence management for non-compliance, the policy on employment equity seems to be an operational occurrence that is not legally obligatory to abide by.

Although EE and HR Plans are in place, there are no implementation steps to follow gender mainstreaming. Top management meetings serve to update and remind members of 50-50 equity targets at the SMS level. Despite EE officers being allowed to present equity status during the recruitment process, the interview panel often has preferred candidates (nepotism) for the post advertised. Women are often found not meeting the post requirements.

The recruitment and selection panels deviate from the rules either through tribalism, discrimination or political connectedness. Preferential treatment is apparent when a woman is replaced by a politically connected male. Internal employees are overlooked to give way to what has recently been called cadre deployment (which means appointments based on one's affiliation to the ruling party).

The slow pace of implementing a gender mainstreaming policy in the Office of the Premier renders the policy of gender parity ineffectual. In this light, Bipath and Nkabinde (2018) explains that the failure to meet equity targets by the Office of the Premier proves that there is no real political will and commitment to transform the province in terms of gender equality. Furthermore, Rai (2017) argues that political will is key for the effective and visible implementation of gender mainstreaming. This is missing in the office of the premier. The appointment of members of Senior Management (Levels 13-16) in the Office is the responsibility of the members of execu-

utive authority which is interwoven with the office of the premier.

Karimi (2016) further shows that political commitment has to exist at both the political and national level to deal with policy failure as well as identifying key and clear messages to the technocrats who are making decisions about appointments. Karimi (2016) reiterated that without political will and buy-in from the key role players both within and outside the institutions, the gender mainstreaming projects of senior management in the public sector are unachievable.

The finding revealed that there are absolutely no consequences for those who are non-compliant with the laws and policies regarding gender mainstreaming. From the oral transcripts, it is evident that the Office of the Premier has employment equity policies and plans in place for the appointment of members of senior management. However, some have reservations about their ineffectiveness. Discrimination occurs when a male replaces a female employee despite the required target of meeting the 50/50 gender parity goals laid down by the government. Often nepotism, favouritism, preferential treatment and political interference become the order of the day in the selection of candidates for these roles. In some cases, posts vacated by females are filled by males. This takes place despite the panel being made aware by Human Resources of the required gender for particular posts. There is also no transparency in the implementation/application of employment equity policies, and the recruitment process is only visible when completed.

It is in this light that Rincon, Gonzalez and Bereto (2017) also posit that many of the gender obstacles facing women are not easy to identify and some require long-term measures and time to eliminate.

Therefore, the equity office needs to avoid litigations from employees who might feel discriminated against. Internal employees might have felt that because they were not sufficiently politically aligned with the party that is ruling, therefore they might not be considered. Participants might also have the perception that the Office does not trust internal candidates who have applied for senior positions.

The other probable explanation of the findings

might be that the absence of trust in internal candidates relates to prejudices, gender stereotypes, and organizational culture, coupled with political interference. The other reason might also be that the appointed recruitment and selection panel have their preferred candidates before the actual process of shortlisting and placement commences. This is a clear deviation from the approved Employment Equity Plan of the Office, as indicated earlier in the study.

The findings from these oral transcripts reveal that the three participants, two females and a man agreed that employment equity policies in the Office of the Premier are not effectively implemented. Whenever these policies are implemented, they are selective and not applied uniformly. Gender Mainstreaming as a policy, is not in place and participants are of the view that following this particular policy will indeed make a difference.

Participants do not trust the management as far as the recruitment process is concerned. This mistrust comes as a result of patriarchal relations as postulated in the radical feminist theories that opine that the patriarchal roots of inequality between men and women, or more specifically, the social domination of women by men is the root cause of women subjugation. The effect of this is the low staff morale, poor performance and despair. Participants believe that the appointment of acquaintances without considering skills, knowledge and experience is unfair. Padgett et al (2019) contend that incompetent members becoming managers ultimately brings along undesirable challenges for the organization (Kerse and Babadag, 2018).

The inclusion or incorporation of the 8-Principles Action Plan for women empowerment and gender equality as indicated earlier, might change how policies are implemented. It is the participant's opinion that if the 8 principles can be incorporated into the existing employment equity plans, improvement can be witnessed in the Office of the Premier and the province as a whole. The participants are anxious that the exclusion of these principles might limit their chances of being considered for higher positions considering that they served the Office for 11 to 20 years and were on the same level for 8 years respectively.

Gender Mainstreaming Policy or Strategy

Six of the nine participants who were interviewed said that the Office of the Premier does not have a gender mainstreaming policy or strategy in place, and the members of the Employment Equity Consultative Forum have confirmed this conclusion. Some participants did, however, the researcher noted that the dearth of awareness campaigns and sessions pertinent to gender equality issues prevented these participants from distinguishing between the various employment equity policies currently in place. The intervention method known as gender mainstreaming aims to make sure that the issues and experiences of both men and women are taken into account when designing, implementing, overseeing, and evaluating transformative policies and programs in all areas of life.

The oral transcripts showed a generalised non-compliance with rules and a widespread absence of enforcement. "Government departments have never faced any penalties from the Department of Labor." According to one participant, this occurs because, if executed, it will appear that the government is punishing itself. For this reason, there is typically insufficient action taken to make up for this accident. This study therefore recommends that gender mainstreaming should take precedence over all the other policies meant to bring about equality amongst all genders.

Discussion of the findings and recommendations

Kanyane (2014) argues that politically connected incompetent people are often deployed in public positions leading to a demoralized public service. The participants are critical to the Office of the Premier as a coordinating department to implement consequence management measures in terms of employment equity policies implementation. Unfortunately, highly qualified personnel have remained in the same post levels for more than eight years and this has a demoralizing effect. This finding concurs with the perceptions of MMS females who are on the verge of retiring. However, women should be empowered with the necessary skills since many are experienced, capable and skillful and can be coached and mentored to perform their assigned responsibilities effectively and efficiently to match their male counterparts. The qualifications the participants

possess and the years they have been employed in the Office of the Premier are proof of their competencies.

Two out of nine participants mentioned that it is imperative to establish a designated directorate if employment equity policies are to be effectively applied in the appointment process of members of senior management in government departments like the Limpopo Office of the Premier as a case study in this investigation. These females have served between 11 and 20 years but have remained in the same post levels for more than eight years. That is why they strongly feel that a devoted directorate should contribute to the improvement of the implementation of employment equity policies.

Stauffer (2018) contends that organs of state must implement legislative frameworks to alleviate gender discrimination at the workplace and in recruitment through the designation of responsibilities and succession planning. On the other hand, Dalton (2017) argues that despite the availability of gender inclusion policies in the world, there is evidence that there are huge gender mainstreaming implementation gaps in the appointment of senior management. This status reveals that there should be continuous monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of existing policies.

Given the above findings, it is critical for government departments such as the Office of the Premier, to put a variety of measures in place to improve the implementation of employment equity policies in the appointment of members of senior management service. Some of the measures that were proposed by the participants could improve gender mainstreaming in the appointment of senior managers in the Office of the Premier. Participants suggested that the implementation of consequence management, empowerment of middle management level officials, the establishment of a designated directorate and the monitoring of recruitment and selection processes could go a long way to improve issues of employment promotional equity. The current achievement in terms of the realization of the set targets viz, 49% for females and 51% for male senior management respectively, in the Office of the Premier, bears evidence to this and also necessitates the implementation of mitigating measures if adherence to

employment equity policies is to be improved in government departments. Siukola and Huma (2017) argues that effective implementation of gender mainstreaming requires the fulfilment of certain measures or mitigating factors that government institutions should consider to ensure that there is political commitment, visible and measurable goals, and develop a plan for implementing gender mainstreaming in all policy areas.

Conclusion

This paper sought to probe the causes of non-compliance with the 50/50 Employment Equity Target by Limpopo Provincial Departments in South Africa on the appointment of members to senior management positions. South African Cabinet Decision 85(A) of 2005, the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill of 2013, and the existing policy reform to address gender inequality in the public service are among the important pieces of legislative frameworks that provide for gender parity at the workplace and if adhered to, the 50/50 employment equity can be realized. The paper also evaluated the extent of employment equity (gender mainstreaming) in its implementation and enforcement in the appointment process of senior management in the Office of the Premier, Limpopo Provincial Government. It is true that the Employment Equity Plan's gender transition implementation is challenging and complex. The history of gender discrimination in South Africa extends back to the time of apartheid. The public service that the current South African administration inherited was heavily impacted by racial and gender-biased hiring practices and rules. Women have been severely underrepresented in decision-making bodies and other governing organizations for many years. The greatest and most adequate rules, regulations, and institutions are currently in place in South Africa to oversee the application and observance of employment fairness. Remarkably, there is no consequence management in place for people who willfully choose not to promote gender equality in the public sector.

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.26>**GENDER AND FORCED MIGRATION IN THE HORN OF AFRICA. ISSUES AND NEEDED ACTION****DOUGLAS NYATHI***School of Public Management, Governance and Public Policy,
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&

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KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College, Durban, South Africa.*Ndlovuj1@ukzn.ac.za**Abstract**

Forced migration in the Horn of Africa continues to disproportionately affect women and girls, subjecting them to specific vulnerabilities such as gender-based violence, economic marginalization, and restricted access to health, education, and legal services. Despite increased humanitarian attention, there remains overwhelming evidence of the systemic neglect of gender-specific needs within national and international migration policies and responses. Existing frameworks often adopt gender-neutral approaches that overlook the structural inequalities exacerbating the suffering of displaced women and girls. This study employs a desktop research methodology to examine the gendered dimensions of forced displacement in Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, and Eritrea. Through a critical analysis of academic literature, policy documents, and regional reports, the study identifies key patterns of exclusion and risk faced by women throughout the migration cycle. Findings reveal that displaced women are disproportionately exposed to sexual and gender-based violence, experience limited access to reproductive healthcare, and are frequently excluded from decision-making processes within refugee camps and host communities. These challenges are compounded by entrenched patriarchal norms and weak legal protections that undermine women's agency and resilience. In response, the study recommends a comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach that prioritizes gender-sensitive migration governance. This includes mainstreaming gender in humanitarian programming, increasing targeted funding for women-led initiatives, and enacting legal reforms to strengthen protection mechanisms for displaced women. Furthermore, community-based education and protection systems should be enhanced to promote safer, more inclusive environments for women and girls. Ensuring the meaningful participation of displaced women in policy design and implementation is essential for achieving equitable and sustainable migration responses in the region.

Keywords: Gender, Forced Migration, Displacement, integration, violence**Introduction**

Scholars have extensively discussed the Horn of Africa globally, with a particular focus on gender and forced migration. According to Admasu (2021) and Ahimbisibwe and Nkiko (2023), the region's fragility and conflict have resulted in forced migration within the Horn of Africa, including South Sudan, Darfur, Ethiopia, Djibouti,

parts of Kenya, Somalia, Eritrea, and Sudan. These countries receive high refugee inflows (Admasu 2021; Solomon, et al 2018, Rondos 2016). Forced migration is defined as the coerced movement of people away from their homes due to conflict, persecution, natural disasters, etc. Ethiopia, situated at the heart of the Horn of Africa and sharing borders with all countries in the

region, has emerged as one of the leading refugee-hosting nations in both Africa and globally (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2023). Several factors contribute to forced migration, including environmental challenges, labor opportunities, political reasons, the search for educational opportunities, family reunification, economic policies, oppression, and famines (Corbet and Záhořík, 2022; Solomon et al, 2018). Notably, gender plays a role in all stages of the forced migration process from the decision to leave the journey to the resettlement (Admasu, 2021). Furthermore, gender can influence an individual's type of forced migration experience. According to Corbet and Záhořík (2022), women are more likely to migrate than men for various reasons, which will be elaborated on later. Consequently, it is unsurprising that the migration trend among women is higher than that among men (Solomon et al, 2019). However, women are more vulnerable during the migration process and more likely to be victims of trafficking networks, particularly in the host country (Crawley and Blitz, 2019). Gender norms and expectations can affect mobility, safety, and access to resources. Researchers agree that populations lacking resources for planned movement are more susceptible to major environmental issues, including droughts, floods, and climate change, which increase the risk of displacement (Bariagaber, 2016). According to Solomon et al. (2019) and Crawley and Blitz (2019), numerous displacements have occurred in Eritrea, with most individuals fleeing Ethiopia and Sudan. Nevertheless, expanding mobility options can reduce the vulnerability of both women and girls. This study examines proposals to alleviate the difficulties experienced by countries in the Horn of Africa, migrants, women, and girls. Ahimbisibwe and Nkiko (2023) discussed the measures taken for conflict resolution, peace building, and sustainable development in their paper on the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and forced migration response in the Horn of Africa: Prospects and obstacles.

The Political, economic and security context of the Horn of Africa (HOA)

For instance, women and girls may face unique challenges such as sexual violence and harassment during their journey (UNWomen, 2021). Additionally, gender can also impact access to resources and opportunities available to individuals during the resettlement process, with women often facing greater barriers in terms of employment and education (International Organisation of Migration, 2023). Therefore, it is crucial to consider the gendered dimensions of forced migration and ensure that appropriate support and protection are provided to all individuals, regardless of their gender (Bariagaber, 2016).

The aim of the engagement and convergence of the (IGAD) on forced migration was to help develop policy frameworks and declarations on aspects of forced displacement such as jobs, livelihoods, self-reliance, health, education, and durable solutions (Admasu, 2021). This measure was implemented to protect the well-being of migrants and its primary objective was to direct member states to grapple with the unique challenges posed by forced migration. While the authors endeavor to comprehend potential strategies to tackle issues related to gender and forced migration, they also emphasize the factors propelling the forced migration of women and girls (Bariagaber, 2016). This study critically examines the gendered dimensions of forced migration in the Horn of Africa, highlighting the specific vulnerabilities and systemic challenges faced by displaced women and girls. It aims to analyze the gaps in current policy and humanitarian responses, assess the role of regional bodies in promoting gender-responsive migration governance, and propose actionable recommendations for more inclusive and effective interventions. This article commences with a definition of forced migration and its general causes, delves into the drivers of forced migration, explores its impact on gender, and recounts the experiences of migrants in refugee camps and host countries.

The Horn of Africa, which comprises Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan,

Sudan, and Uganda, confronts persistent governance, security, and development challenges despite its rich human, social, and natural resources. Disparities persist within and among countries in the region and are characterized by high poverty rates, preventable child mortality, stagnant stunting rates, subpar educational outcomes, and recurrent instances of violence against women and children (UNICEF, 2014). Regional and international risks and threats primarily stem from a lengthy, intricate history of

The Horn of Africa (HOA) currently grapples with four major protracted displacement situations, each presenting a unique set of characteristics while also sharing certain commonalities (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al, 2014). The region comprises several countries that face the complex and interconnected drivers of forced migration (Bariagaber, 2016). Eritrea is marked by significantly mixed migration flows, influenced by political repression, economic hardship, and mandatory military conscriptions (UNICEF, 2014). In Somalia, protracted conflicts and violence in areas of origin are exacerbated by acute food insecurity and the widespread destruction of shelters due to recurrent floods and droughts. South Sudan continues to experience displacement, driven by ongoing internal conflicts and tensions (Fry et al, 2017). In Sudan, forced migration is largely fuelled by longstanding political and eco-

weak governance, further compounded by escalating environmental degradation and entrenched poverty, particularly in marginalized, underserved, and impoverished peripheral border regions (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al, 2014; Bariagaber, 2016). The intricate cultural, social, and political dimensions of these conflicts are further exacerbated by increasing competition for scarce natural resources, especially in areas affected by climate change and ungoverned territories (UNICEF, 2014).

conomic disparities, particularly the marginalization of peripheral regions and the highly unequal distribution of power and wealth between the central and outlying areas. This region has one of the largest concentrations of pastoralist communities globally. Unfortunately, pastoralist systems and livelihoods have often been overlooked in policy and program development primarily because of the perception that these systems are outdated and unsustainable. Consequently, the vulnerability of impoverished pastoralist households has increased, leading to decreased mobility, heightened ethnic- and resource-related conflicts, and subsequent displacement and forced migration. Moreover, droughts have exacerbated tensions within communities over the limited pastures and water resources (Fry et al, 2017). Climate change poses a significant threat to progress in development and prospects (Nyathi, 2024).

Gender and forced migration: a theoretical conjuncture

Gender is a socially constructed concept that encompasses the roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a particular society deems appropriate for both men and women (UNDP, 2008). It is important to recognize that gender is not binary and includes a spectrum of identities and expressions. On the other hand, forced migration refers

In the past half-century, it has become widely recognized that gender plays a crucial role in governance, peace, security, development, and

to the movement of refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and other individuals who are compelled to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence due to armed conflict, generalized violence, human rights violations, or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2019).

humanitarian efforts. When it comes to forced migration, understanding gender is of utmost importance as it sheds light on the unique experiences, vulnerabilities, and needs of individuals

based on their gender identities. Moreover, recognizing and addressing gender-specific factors that contribute to forced migration is crucial for developing effective policies and interventions that promote the safety, well-being, and empowerment of all individuals affected by forced migration. Gender analysis delves into how gender norms and power dynamics intersect with forced migration, thereby affecting access to resources, opportunities, and protection (Fry et al. 2017). It acknowledges that women, men, girls, boys, and individuals with diverse gender identities may encounter specific challenges and require customized assistance in displacement scenarios. Gender is just one of the various intersecting so-

The historical evolution of feminism and gendered analysis of forced migration

Since the 1970s, feminist scholars have challenged the processes that render women invisible in social sciences (Young, 1997; Buckley-Zistel, 2019). Although women were sometimes acknowledged as part of the sociopolitical systems under examination, various theoretical, conceptual, and methodological obstacles to their inclusion in such studies were identified. Feminist scholars advocated placing women at the center of inquiry as subjects and active agents in the knowledge-gathering process to make

This section highlights the primary feminist- and gender-focused paradigms in the field of Development Studies, including Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), and Gender and Development (GAD). These paradigms are crucial in forced migration research. The WID paradigm emerged as an effort to incorporate women into the existing development framework by recognizing their distinct experiences and perceptions of development and societal change. Proponents of WID, such as Moser, rooted in liberal feminism, posited that women's experiences differ from those of men, thus making it appropriate to concentrate research on women's perspectives (Rathgeber, 1990). The WID approach aims to address historical omissions by including women and maximizing their

cial and cultural identities that shape an individual's life experiences and power relationships, alongside factors such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, socioeconomic status, disability, language, religion, caste, citizenship, and nationality, among others. For refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs), gender affects every stage of the refugee journey, from reception to durable solutions (Pittaway and Bartolomei, 2018: 2). However, despite the fact that gender programming is not considered as critical as other life-saving aid, even though it has long been known that situations of upheaval exacerbate gendered inequalities and can cause gender relations to shift rapidly.

women's experiences visible and expose the existing biases and implicit male assumptions present in traditional knowledge (Stacey and Thorne, 1985). The incorporation of feminist perspectives in academic research has led to a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities of women's experiences and the ways in which they have been marginalized and excluded from traditional knowledge (Stacey and Thorne, 1985; Rathgeber, 1990; Buckley-Zistel, 2019). These approaches have significantly influenced changes in Development Studies, mirrored by gendered analyses of displacement from the 1980s to the present.

productivity in socio-economic systems, prioritizing practical goals over interrogating the reasons for their exclusion and consequences (Moser, 1993). In addition, the WID approach recognizes the diverse needs and experiences of women, including those from different cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses (Parpart, 1995). However, critics have argued that this recognition alone does not sufficiently address the systemic barriers preventing women from achieving equal status (Kabeer, 1994).

The WAD perspective emerged in the 1970s, drawing on neo-Marxist feminism to argue that class structures, global inequalities, and exploitation were central to the development system (Mies, 1986; Grown, 1985). WAD proponents asserted that women had always played crucial

roles in economic development, yet were excluded and exploited. However, the approach was limited by its failure to sufficiently address intersecting identity markers and the influence of patriarchy, classification, and racism. Nonetheless, it acknowledged that non-elite men in the Global South were also exploited and that Western middle-class women were not universally privileged (Mohanty, 1988). In contrast, the GAD perspective, which emerged in the late 1980s, was influenced by socialist feminism and postcolonial theory (Young, 1997). While WAD and WID placed women at the center, GAD critiqued the social construction of gender itself, viewing gender as relational, context-specific, and shaped by broader socioeconomic and political systems (Cornwall, 2003; Razavi and Miller, 1995). GAD aimed to investigate not only the exclusion of women and girls but also the roles of men and boys, recognizing them as active agents of social change. It emphasizes structural transformation and the need to challenge institutional power dynamics to promote gender equity (Kabeer, 1999). Although some argue that this framework may risk overlooking individual agency, the GAD underscores the importance of understanding gendered experiences within broader sociocultural contexts and transformation processes.

Gender and triggers of forced migration

The most significant aspect of this situation is the recurring tensions between Sudan and South Sudan, which center on oil and borders, as well as the delicate relationships between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and the ongoing instability in Somalia. Regional conflicts often have a profound impact on internal conflicts and subsequent displacement. The consequences of widespread displacement are exacerbated by internal conflicts spilling over borders, leading to heightened tensions between refugees and host communities over land, resources, and livelihood opportunities (UNHCR, 2023; Crisp, 2000). Furthermore, legal and political issues concerning the status and repatriation of refugees have become growing sources of regional tension (Hyndman, 2010). In recent years, global populations have been increasingly affected by climate change, armed conflict, and regional violence. Most recently,

the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented levels of forced migration and displacement (IOM, 2022; IDMC, 2021; WHO, 2021). Gender intersects with other social variables, such as norms, power relations, and unequal access to resources, rendering women and girls particularly vulnerable to violence, exploitation, and displacement (Freedman, 2016; Oxfam, 2020; UN Women, 2021). Deep-rooted gender inequalities, patriarchal structures, and harmful gender norms contribute to women's vulnerability to violence including sexual violence, conflict, and displacement. Women often face specific risks and challenges due to their gender, such as sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and limited access to protection and resources (Susanne Buckley 2019).

Conflict and violence are significant drivers of forced migration and gender dynamics intersect in various ways. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to specific risks, including sexual violence, exploitation, and forced recruitment, which often compel them to flee their homes (El-Bushra, 2000; Neumayer, 2005). These threats not only expose women and girls to physical danger but also limit their access to education and economic opportunities, perpetuating cycles of poverty and marginalization (Black, 2001; Freedman, 2016). Men and boys are also subjected to violence, including coercion, to become combatants (Connell, 2005). However, the experiences of men and boys are frequently overlooked as attention tends to focus on the gendered vulnerabilities of women and girls (Hyndman, 2000). It is essential to recognize the unique vulnerabilities of male youth in conflict settings, where they are often targeted by armed groups for their physical strength and potential to become soldiers (Mackenzie, 2012).

To address these challenges, targeted interventions are necessary to support male youth in conflict settings, providing them with access to education, mental health services, and protection from forced recruitment (Mazurana, 2004). Moreover, gender-based violence in conflict environments exacerbates displacement. The interlinkages between displacement and gender-

based violence create a vicious cycle, where displacement increases exposure to gender-based violence, and violence, in turn, drives further displacement (UNHCR, 2019). Forced migration can also be influenced by systemic discrimination, marginalization, and gender inequalities, with women and girls facing gender-based discrimination that limits their access to resources such as education, healthcare, and mobility (Moser, 1993; Agorin, 2017). In response, some individuals may seek safety in other locations, whereas others may remain hoping to bring about positive changes (Piguet, 2010). Additionally, marginalized gender identities, including LGBTQ individuals, are particularly vulnerable to persecution and displacement due to widespread discrimination (Browne, 2017; Anderson, 2018).

Economic disparities and poverty are significant drivers of forced migration, particularly for women, who often face restricted economic opportunities, unequal access to resources, and wage disparities. These economic inequalities compel many women to migrate in search of better livelihood and financial stability. Women's migration decisions are often shaped by their role as primary caregivers, and the need to provide for their families can push them to seek opportunities abroad (Nyathi et al, 2024). Men may also migrate, often to escape economic hardship or fulfil their roles as providers. However, while both men and women may be affected by economic challenges, the gendered barriers that women face, such as wage discrimination and limited access to land or credit, amplify their vulnerability and shape their migration experiences (Chant, 2007; Moser, 1993).

On the other hand, environmental factors, including natural disasters, climate change, and environmental degradation, can also contribute to forced migration. Gender dynamics further influence how individuals are affected by environmental displacements. Women, particularly those in rural or agricultural communities, are often more dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods, such as water and land, and are disproportionately affected by environmental changes (Buvinic et al., 2013). The burdens of caregiving and resource collection can be intensified in displaced settings, increasing women's

vulnerability to gender-based violence and reducing their ability to access critical resources such as food, water, and healthcare. Therefore, environmental displacement may exacerbate existing gender inequalities, limiting women's mobility and access to support services in host communities (UN Women, 2018). Gender norms, cultural practices, and social structures influence forced migration. In some societies, rigid gender roles restrict women's autonomy and agency, limiting their ability to migrate freely or seek better living conditions (Marcella, 2015). On the other hand, harmful masculinity, such as the pressure on men to act as providers, can contribute to conflict, migration, and violence. In urban settings, factors such as overcrowding, unemployment, and inequality can lead to political unrest and force displacement, with gender roles affecting the most vulnerable during such upheavals (Hunt, 2016; Nyathi, 2024).

According to IPCC (2014), the implementation of mechanisms to mitigate anthropogenic climate change is expected to impact the frequency and intensity of extreme events, which may exacerbate the drivers of conflicts such as poverty, food insecurity, and inequalities (IPCC, 2014). Research suggests that violence can serve as a significant driving force for forced migration (Moore and Shellman, 2004; Schmeidl, 1997). If climate change leads to conflicts, it may indirectly contribute to forced migration through its effects on resources such as water, food, and arable land (Guy Abel et al., 2019). In general, empirical specifications that consider climate, political factors, economic conditions, and conflict as drivers of migration do not consider the pathways through which migration is determined (Guy Abel et al., 2019). Studies have identified key factors that contribute to forced migration experiences, including the type of environment in which individuals are forced to flee, available options, circumstances of departure, reception in host states, duration of exile, and the likelihood of a long-term solution (Guy Abel et al., 2019).

Gendered impact of forced migration

Forced migration is a significant global issue with a profound impact on various regions, including Africa (Danzinger, 2019). This vast and diverse continent presents a unique platform for

observing how individuals, communities, and nations grapple with challenges posed by forced migration. Gender plays a prominent role in discussions regarding the causes and consequences of migration, both forced and voluntary (Sharma et al., 2020). Gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation influence migration dynamics. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that the intersectionality of these identities also plays a role in shaping migrant experience. For example, a migrant who identifies as both LGBTQ+ and a person of color may face unique challenges and barriers that are not experienced by migrants who identify with only one of these identities. Understanding and addressing these complexities are crucial for creating a more inclusive and equitable migration process. The consequences of forced migration on gender can be complex and far-reaching, with women often facing distinct challenges (Hamdy, 2020). In many cases, women are compelled to leave their homes and families, exposing them to potential violence, exploitation, and discrimination in new environments (Mourtada 2019). Women may also experience economic hardships such as difficulty finding employment or limited access to financial resources (Bayar et al 2019). Displacement affects individuals differently based on their intersecting identities such as gender, age, ethnicity, and disability. Displacement can also have varying impacts on individuals based on their socioeconomic status, educational level, and access to resources, further highlighting the complex interplay between multiple factors that can influence their experiences and outcomes during displacement events. It is vital to amplify the voices of marginalized groups, such as women, girls, and individuals with diverse gender identities, to incorporate their perspectives, needs, and priorities into the decision-making processes. It involves creating opportunities for active involvement, conducting participatory research, and promoting inclusive and diverse leadership styles. It may also involve fostering a culture of collaboration and cooperation in which everyone has a voice and is encouraged to contribute to their unique perspectives and experiences. This can be achieved through various means such as team-building activities, workshops, and training programs that promote diversity and inclusion. In

addition, providing resources and support systems for underrepresented groups can help create a more equitable and inclusive environment. Ultimately, promoting diversity and inclusion is not just a moral imperative, but also a practical one that can lead to better decision-making, more innovative ideas, and ultimately, better outcomes for all. Forced migration often disrupts the family structure and caregiving. Women and girls frequently bear the brunt of increased caregiving responsibilities, including caring for children, elderly, and other dependents. Recognizing and addressing these responsibilities is essential for households' overall well-being and support. It involves providing social support, access to child and elderly care services, and promoting a more equitable distribution of caregiving tasks (Marjorie 2017).

Migrant movements can have a profound impact on national and international stability and security, potentially impeding the ability of states to control their borders and leading to tensions among origin, transit, and destination countries, as well as within local host communities (Hamdy 2020). Hosting refugees can also be a source of political conflict between host and refugee countries of origin (Jolof et al 2022). For instance, the presence of Rwandan refugees in the Democratic Republic of Congo following the 1994 genocide in Rwanda has led to ongoing political conflict between the two nations. In times of armed conflict and forced migration, women and their daughters are at heightened risk of experiencing sexual violence, including coercion, repeated assault, and harassment (Sharma et al 2020). Migrating through illegal or legal routes and living in displacement can also involve significant psychological distress, fear, uncertainty, and danger to their lives, as they witness the death of others and take responsibility for others (including children) during migration, leading to significant psychological distress (Saad 2023). In addition to these challenges, refugees and migrants may also face discrimination and marginalization upon arrival in their new countries, further exacerbating their mental health struggles.

Forced migration frequently exposes individuals to pervasive and intersecting forms of discrimination that impact their well-being and safety at

all stages of their journey (Vigil, 2018). The migration process is often gendered, with women and men experiencing different effects rooted in a globalized sexual division of labor. Women and girls may encounter heightened risks of sexual and gender-based violence (GBV), exploitation, and trafficking during forced migration, as noted by the UNHRC (2020). Xenophobic attitudes and discriminatory practices can marginalize migrants and refugees, impeding their access to basic services and hindering their integration into host societies, as Hamdy (2020) explains. Human trafficking and exploitation exacerbate forced migrant vulnerability, underscoring the need for concerted efforts to combat illegal activities. Although concerted efforts are necessary to combat human trafficking and exploitation, it is also important to address the root causes of forced migration such as poverty, conflict, and persecution to prevent individuals from becoming vulnerable to exploitation in the first place. The experiences of forced migration and displacement can have a profound influence on the mental health and overall well-being of individuals, and gender plays a significant role in predicting various mental health outcomes (Jolof et al 2022). Women and girls face distinct challenges concerning mental health and coping mechanisms during forced migration (DeJesus 2018). The gendered impacts of forced migration emphasize the importance of adopting a gender perspective to comprehend and address the specific challenges and vulnerabilities faced by individuals, particularly women and girls, affected by forced migration (Wood 2019). Armed conflicts can impede access to healthcare services by introducing numerous structural barriers within the population (Hamdy 2020). Child and forced marriages have sexual and reproductive health consequences for women, including elevated HIV risk, early and frequent pregnancies, and increased pregnancy complications, resulting in disabilities such as obstetric fistula and maternal death (Sharma et al 2020). Women, girls, and individuals with diverse gender identities who are displaced often face an elevated risk of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, domestic violence, and exploitation. Factors, such as disrupted social networks, inadequate living conditions, and limited access to protection

mechanisms, contribute to this heightened vulnerability. It is crucial to address gender-based violence through prevention strategies, survivor-centered services, and legal frameworks that hold perpetrators accountable (UNHCR, 2008). Migration presents an opportunity for valuable skills and knowledge transfer between countries (Jolof et al., 2022), benefiting both the host and sending countries in Africa. This exchange can occur in refugee camps, where host countries benefit from the expertise and diverse skill sets refugees bring, leading to innovation, economic growth, and cultural enrichment (Vigil, 2018).

Women's experiences in refugee camps

Difficulties in governing, restricted political liberties, and societal divisions in their homelands drive individuals to seek refuge in these challenging environments (Saad 2023). Simultaneously, the presence of social support systems in host countries, such as access to healthcare, education, and welfare programs, serve as a draw for migrants. These individuals are attracted to countries that offer social safety nets, inclusivity, and opportunities for upward mobility (Bayar et al 2019). The ongoing armed conflicts and protracted crises have resulted in the displacement of populations in search of safety and security (Sharma et al 2020), leading to a significant number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) seeking sanctuary within Africa's borders and beyond (DeJesus 2018). Women's experiences in refugee camps vary widely, and are influenced by a specific camp and its geographical location. However, in general, women in refugee camps face numerous challenges and vulnerabilities, such as a lack of privacy, inadequate healthcare and sanitation facilities, and a heightened risk of violence and sexual assault (Dejesus 2018). Many women in refugee camps bear the responsibility of caring for their families, a task complicated by the limited resources available. Moreover, securing employment or educational opportunities can be difficult for women in refugee camps, leading to feelings of isolation and hopelessness (Jolof et al., 2022). The diverse and complex experiences of forced migration underscore the importance of understanding the unique experiences of different groups based on factors, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and class. These challenges encompass gender-based

discrimination and violence, marginalization of LGBTQ+ individuals, and intergenerational trauma stemming from forced migration experiences. According to the UNHCR, women, girls, and LGBTQ individuals are at a heightened risk of facing discrimination and gender-based violence during displacement, which often persist throughout their lives. They are faced with issues surrounding access to safe shelters and facilities, sexual violence, and trafficking and often encounter barriers to education and employment. Experiencing sexual violence, witnessing violence, and alcohol abuse increase the risk of future violence.

Migration can lead to family breakdown, fragmentation of social networks, and psychosocial stress (Sharma et al. 2020), which, in turn, creates a significant burden for women in refugee camps, with far-reaching emotional implications. Furthermore, migration can also result in the loss of cultural identity and a sense of belonging, which can have long-lasting effects on an individual's well-being and mental health. Additionally, the migration process often involves a significant amount of uncertainty and instability, which can create a sense of anxiety and fear for individuals and their family members. These factors can lead to a range of negative outcomes, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Therefore, it is important to recognize the potential negative impacts of migration and provide appropriate support and resources to individuals and families who are experiencing these challenges. Women in refugee camps across the Horn of Africa, including Kakuma, Dadaab, Bule Hora, and Shagarab, face severe gender-based challenges such as sexual violence, early marriage, and limited access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities (Dejesus, 2018; Sharma et al, 2020). Cultural norms and insecurity further restrict mobility and agency (UNHR, 2020). Despite these hardships, women form self-help groups and participate in empowerment initiatives focused on income generation, social support, and decision-making, offering pathways to resilience and autonomy within highly vulnerable displacement settings. Initiatives focusing on education and economic empowerment for women have been implemented in the Dadaab Refugee Complex in

Kenya, including vocational training programs and small-scale microfinance projects that enable women to engage in entrepreneurship (Oxfam, 2017).

Agency and gender identities in displacement

Forced migration has a profound impact on the autonomy and gender identity of individuals, including those in the LGBTQ+ community. It frequently entails leaving behind established social support systems, such as family, friends, and communities, which can influence individuals' feelings of connection and assistance. This is especially vital for those who depend on these networks for acceptance, empathy, and validation (Pocock & Dhami, 2018). Forced migration frequently undermines individuals' autonomy, restricting their capacity to make decisions about their own lives. This is particularly true for individuals from the Horn of Africa region, who are compelled to flee due to conflict, political instability, and environmental emergencies. For instance, those forced to migrate from Somalia often rely on external aid. Additionally, gender roles and identities are disrupted, posing challenges to the established norms and expectations. Women, men, and gender-diverse individuals may change their roles within households and communities, potentially disrupting prevailing power dynamics and traditional gender norms. For example, in South Sudan and Sudan, when families are displaced because of conflict or environmental disasters, women might take on new responsibilities as primary caregivers and breadwinners, challenging traditional gender roles (Baxter & Alhaj Hamad, 2015). Moreover, forced migration exposes individuals, particularly women, girls, and sexual and gender minorities, to heighten the risk of Gender-Based Violence. Conflict zones, refugee camps, and displacement scenarios can foster an environment where sexual exploitation and abuse are prevalent. Women and girls may be at greater risk of experiencing rape, domestic violence, and human trafficking, while LGBTQ individuals may encounter discrimination, harassment, and violence based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. Furthermore, forced migrants from the Horn of Africa confront various legal and policy barriers

while residing in their host countries. These barriers often include a lack of access to education and employment opportunities as well as discrimination and xenophobia from local populations. Moreover, many forced migrants are subject to exploitation and abuse by traffickers and employers who take advantage of their vulnerable situations. These obstacles include limited access to legal protections, documentation, and fundamental rights. Moreover, they encounter difficulties in acquiring legal recognition for their identities, accessing healthcare services that address their needs, and seeking suitable legal redress in instances of discrimination and human rights violations (Riggan 2018).

LGBTQ individuals are disproportionately affected by discrimination, violence, and persecution in their country of origin, migration, host country, and refugee camp. They may face homophobic or transphobic violence, hate crimes, or harassment. The challenges of forced migration can exacerbate these vulnerabilities, because LGBTQ individuals may encounter unfamiliar cultural, legal, and social environments that are not always accepting or supportive. Access to LGBT-friendly services such as healthcare, mental health support, and legal aid may be scarce or unavailable, further marginalizing and isolating LGBTQ individuals. For instance, in South Sudan, LGBT individuals seeking asylum in neighboring countries face challenges in obtaining legal recognition due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as protection from discrimination due to limited legal frameworks and societal attitudes. LGBTQ individuals who belong to other marginalized groups, such as ethnic or religious minorities, may experience compounded challenges due to intersecting forms of discrimination and oppression. Furthermore, forced migration can disrupt an individual's sense of identity, including their LGBTQ+ identity. Relocating to a new cultural context may involve encountering different attitudes, beliefs, and norms regarding gender and sexuality, leading to confusion, isolation, and loss of community as well as challenges in finding spaces where their identities are recognized and celebrated.

While recognizing the challenges that forced migration poses to men, women, girls, and LGBTQ

individuals, it is crucial to acknowledge the potential for resilience, empowerment, and community building that this situation presents. Despite these difficulties, individuals may discover new communities, develop support networks, and advocate for their rights and well-being (Poteat et al., 2016). To enhance the agency and well-being of LGBTQ individuals in forced migration, it is essential to establish inclusive and safe environments that provide access to LGBTQ-friendly services, implement policies that safeguard their rights, and promote awareness and acceptance of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. Community support and resilience can significantly contribute to affirming agency and gender identities in forced migration settings (Abbink 2016). Communities and support organizations can provide spaces for empowerment, solidarity, and advocacy. They provide opportunities for individuals to express their gender identities, share experiences, and access support networks. For instance, organizations such as the Refugee Coalition of East Africa in Kenya offer support and advocates for the rights of LGBTQ refugees and asylum seekers, fostering community resilience and empowerment.

Men, Masculinities, and Forced Migration

Certain assumptions were made when considering the involvement of men in forced migration. One assumption is that men are typically seen as the primary breadwinners in their families; therefore, forced migration may have a disproportionate impact on the economic stability of their households. Additionally, there is often an assumption that men are less vulnerable to forced migration than women and children, which can lead to inadequate support and protection. Moreover, the cultural and social norms associated with masculinity can influence how men experience and cope with forced migration. Therefore, it is important to consider the specific needs and experiences of men in forced migration and to develop gender-sensitive policies and programs that address their unique challenges. The role of men in forced migration is determined by a variety of elements, including the particular context, nature of the conflict or crisis, cultural norms, socio-economic circumstances, and individual factors (Erica Millar and Donna Youngs, 2017).

Men are generally perceived and expected to act as guardians and supporters within their families and communities and are accountable for ensuring the well-being and safety of their loved ones during forced migration. For example, in Kenya, men engage in activities such as pursuing livelihood prospects, accessing resources, and negotiating the challenges present in refugee camps. Although this notion is consistent with conventional gender roles, it is essential to acknowledge that men's experiences of forced migration can differ. Their experiences are shaped by elements, such as age, social standing, and cultural norms, which affect their roles and responsibilities during forced migration. Men may indeed play protective roles, but they can also confront vulnerabilities, such as physical and psychological risks, displacement, prejudice, detention, and separation from their families (Sigona, 2015).

It is widely believed that men in conflict situations in South Sudan and Sudan are more inclined to join armed groups or engage in military activities, exposing them to the dangers of forced migration including forced recruitment, displacement, and family separation. Similarly, in Somalia, men play a significant role in determining family migration for safety and resettlement reasons (Mathew and Benjamin, 2018). However, due to the threat of forced recruitment and subsequent family separation, women often take on the role of primary decision-makers in seeking asylum and safe migration destinations (Handman, 2018). Men face unique risks, such as detention, exploitation, and violence, which are influenced by factors such as legal status, location, and interactions with armed groups or criminal networks (Raghavan & Ehntholt, 2010).

Another assumption is that men have a high status in the family and community as heads of households and elders. In some cultures, this status is reinforced through traditional gender roles and expectations, in which men are seen as the primary breadwinners and decision-makers in households and communities. Men subjected to forced migration may experience a decline in their sense of status and identity, which can lead to mental health problems. Relocation can disrupt established social roles and traditional notions of masculinity, thereby impacting psychological and emotional well-being (Kienzler et al.,

2017). It is essential to recognize that masculinity is multifaceted and adaptable even in the context of forced migration. Men may face obstacles in accessing mental health and psychosocial services, underscoring the need for tailored support to address unique challenges. These barriers can be influenced by factors such as cultural norms, stigma surrounding seeking help, and the limited availability of gender-responsive services (Hossain & Zimmerman, 2010).

Understanding the intricate dynamics of gender, age, socioeconomic status, and cultural influence is critical for developing a nuanced understanding of the diverse realities and requirements of individuals in forced migration situations. Recognizing these complexities enables us to avoid perpetuating harmful stereotypes and to better address the varied needs of those experiencing forced migration. Embracing inclusivity in response efforts is essential to ensuring that all individuals affected by forced migration receive accurate and effective support. This underscores the importance of acknowledging the complex factors that shape men's experiences in forced migration situations and emphasizes the need for a comprehensive understanding of the diverse factors that influence their experiences.

Gender and responding to forced migration

Mainstreaming gender in responses to forced migration involves incorporating a gender perspective into policies, programs, and interventions to address the distinct needs, experiences, and vulnerabilities of women, men, girls, boys, and gender-diverse individuals. This entails addressing and mitigating the effects of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), ensuring equitable access to resources and services, advocating gender equality and the empowerment of women, and integrating diverse gender perspectives into decision-making processes (UNHCR, 2018). In Somalia, women are particularly susceptible to trafficking and exploitation during their migration. To address this issue, initiatives have been implemented to establish safe environments and provide tailored support services that cater to the specific needs of women in refugee camps and displacement scenarios (Nimo, 2020). Long-term responses that focus on fostering self-sufficiency and economic stability among forced mi-

grants by providing sustainable livelihood opportunities are crucial. This encompasses vocational training, entrepreneurship support, access to employment opportunities, and the development of income-generating activities. It is essential to consider the unique needs and capacities of individuals, including their gender dynamics, to promote inclusive and equitable livelihood solutions in forced-migration settings (ILO, 2019).

Access to education is crucial for individuals affected by forced migration, particularly children and young people. This entails ensuring equitable and inclusive access to high-quality education, addressing language barriers, providing psychosocial support, recognizing and validating prior educational accomplishments, and fostering inclusive learning environments that honor the diversity and safeguard the rights of all learners. In Kenya, initiatives have been implemented to improve women's economic empowerment in refugee camps and in local communities. These efforts involve offering vocational training, facilitating access to credit and financial services, and aiding in income-generating activities. Organizations, such as the UN Women in Kenya, have promoted projects aimed at increasing women's participation in decision-making processes (UNESCO, 2019).

Access to healthcare services is essential for individuals experiencing forced migration as it ensures the provision of fair and culturally sensitive care for various health concerns. These include sexual and reproductive health services, mental health assistance, and addressing the health issues arising from displacement. In Somalia, initiatives have been implemented to provide gender-responsive healthcare services, such as reproductive healthcare and psychosocial support to women and girls affected by forced migration (Nimo, 2020). Additionally, in Sudan, the United Nations Population Fund supports programs that offer antenatal and postnatal care, safe childbirth, and access to contraceptives for women and girls in forced migration situations. Furthermore, initiatives aimed at preventing gender-based violence have been established in these areas and refugee camps, providing medical care and legal aid to survivors of GBV (WHO, 2017; Lindvall, et al, 2020).

Gender-responsive strategies are designed to address the distinct financial needs, abilities, and challenges faced by women, men, and gender-diverse individuals. Access to financial services and credit is crucial to enhance the economic empowerment and resilience of forced migrants. This involves providing financial education; facilitating access to savings, loans, and micro-finance services; and encouraging entrepreneurship and income-generating activities. In Somalia, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supports initiatives that promote women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship, aiming to enhance their resilience and self-sufficiency (UN Women, 2019). In the context of forced migration, human development strategies focus on improving individuals' overall well-being, capabilities, and dignity. This includes ensuring access to documents, legal aid and protective measures. Gender-sensitive approaches recognize the diverse experiences and requirements of individuals, addressing issues related to gender identity, sexual orientation, and safeguarding against discrimination and violence (UNDP, 2018).

The objective of social reintegration and peace building initiatives is to facilitate the seamless integration of forced migrants into host communities, while fostering lasting peace. The ultimate goal of social reintegration and peace building initiatives is to enable forced migrants to fully participate in their host communities, thereby contributing to the development of sustainable and harmonious relationships between different groups and promoting a culture of peace that benefits everyone involved. This involves promoting equitable social policies, addressing social tensions and conflicts, encouraging community participation, and fostering dialogue and mutual understanding between groups. Ensuring gender equality, respecting human rights, and upholding social justice are the essential aspects of these efforts. Recognizing and valuing the input and perspectives of individuals from diverse gender backgrounds in peace building measures is critical for establishing a sustainable and inclusive peace (UNHCR, 2020).

In Uganda, initiatives have been put in place to recognize the importance of empowering women

and girls who have been impacted by forced migration by granting them access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Moreover, men and boys face challenges related to mental health, protection, and economic prospects, which are addressed through gender-responsive programmes (UN Women, 2015). In South Sudan, humanitarian aid efforts have incorporated gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response by establishing safe spaces for women and girls, providing psychosocial support (PSS), and training humanitarian staff using gender-sensitive methodologies. The South Sudan Commission is dedicated to ensuring that the voices and perspectives of women and girls are included in the decision-making processes related to forced migration to address their specific needs (UNHCR, 2018). The adoption of gender-sensitive and inclusive approaches has the potential to bring about more effective and equitable outcomes in a range of sectors, such as livelihoods, education, health, finance, human development, documentation, social reintegration, and peace building (Lindvall, et al, 2020). For example, in the education sector, inclusive practices can ensure that girls and women have equal access to quality education, thereby leading to better job prospects and economic empowerment. Similarly, in the health sector, gender-sensitive approaches can help address the unique health needs of both men and women, ensuring that healthcare services are tailored to the specific needs of each gender. By adopting a comprehensive and inclusive approach to these and other sectors, we can create a more equitable and just society.

Conclusion

This study explores the gendered dimensions of forced migration in the Horn of Africa, focusing specifically on the experiences and vulnerabilities of women and girls in displacement contexts in Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, and Eritrea. It emanates from the study that forced migration intersects with pre-existing gender inequalities, resulting in disproportionate exposure of women and girls to harm and marginalize throughout the migration cycle. Specifically, gendered forced migration is a complex issue that is influenced by historical, political, and socioeconomic factors. Historically, women have faced marginalization

and discrimination during times of conflict and displacement, and the consequences of forced migration for women, girls, and LGBTQI individuals are severe, often involving violence, sexual exploitation, and bias. To conclude, the intersection of gender and forced migration in the Horn of Africa region presents intricate challenges and vulnerabilities for displaced communities. Gender-based violence, ranging from sexual violence to domestic abuse and exploitation, poses a significant danger to women, girls, and those with diverse gender identities. Challenges, such as disrupted social connections, substandard living conditions, and limited access to protective measures, exacerbate susceptibility. Addressing gender-related issues during forced migration in the Horn of Africa requires various strategies. Based on these findings, several key recommendations are proposed. First, migration policies and humanitarian programming must integrate gender-sensitive approaches grounded in intersectional analyses that consider how class, age, ethnicity, and displacement status affect women's experiences. Second, national governments and international actors should increase funding for female-led initiatives that have demonstrated potential in advancing economic empowerment, psychosocial support, and community protection. Third, legal and institutional reforms must be pursued to strengthen the enforcement of women's rights and ensure accountability for gender-based violence and discrimination in refugee and displacement settings. In addition, efforts should be made to institutionalize the participation of displaced women in decision-making processes, ensuring that their insights shape policy design, implementation, and monitoring. Finally, community-based education and protection systems must be strengthened to address harmful gender norms and promote safer and more inclusive environments within refugee camps and host communities. Addressing the gendered nature of forced migration is not only a matter of human rights but also essential for the development of equitable and sustainable migration governance in the Horn of Africa. Only through intentional, inclusive, and rights-based responses can the region begin to dismantle the barriers that continue to marginalize displaced women and girls.

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EFFECTS OF EX-CONVICTS' SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS ON FAMILY SOCIAL SUPPORT IN THEIR REINTEGRATION INTO THE COMMUNITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR CORRECTIONAL SERVICES' REFORMATION AND REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

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Abstract

The study examines self-valuation response made by 40 male ex-convicts (socioeconomic status (SES, Low SES 17.5%; Medium SES 47.5% and High SES 35%) from Minimum Security Prison, Keffi, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The participants responded to a modified version of the "Interpersonal support evaluation list: shortened version- 12 items" (Cohen, Merstein, Kamarek & Hoberman, 1985) scale, adopted for the study. A One-Way –ANOVA? Group means analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether ex-convicts' SES has effects on their family social support in their reintegration into the community. The results showed that, ex-convicts' SES affects their family social support in their reintegration into the Community. As such, a post-hoc analysis was conducted to determine the source of the difference between the three levels of SES and the results showed that, the mean of participants of Low SES was significantly different from others. Therefore, it was concluded that, ex-convicts of Low SES receive more social support from their family during reintegration into the Community than those of the Medium and High SES. As such, Correctional Services should make every effort in ensuring that every inmate attend some form of skill acquisition program during the period of their imprisonment.

Keywords: *Ex-convicts' SES, family social support, reintegration of ex-convicts into the community, Correctional Services reformation and rehabilitation programs, implications of SES to Correctional Services reformation and rehabilitation programs*

Introduction

Reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration are key goals of establishment of modern prison system. Prison is predicated upon the understanding that, those who have fallen foul of our collective norms and laws as expressed in the criminal laws of nations. The primary objective of reintegration program of the prison system is to provide offenders with assistance and supervision that may lead to the prevention of recidivism among ex-convicts.

However, for any reintegration program be termed successful, offenders' characteristics must play important role. The characteristics most relevant in the study is ex-convicts' socioeconomic status (SES). The term 'socioeconomic status (SES)' in the study refers to Ex-Convict's relative position in the Community

which is determined by his Wealth, occupation, and social class (McLoyd, 1998).

As such, ex-convicts' SES is the measure of their social and economic standing within the Community. In doing so, various researches shows that an individual's SES is related to his satisfaction and stability in interpersonal interactions and relationships, including: the quality of his social relationships, and a range of developmental outcomes within the human populations. For example, Karney and Bradbury (1995) in a study regarding socioeconomic status and couple relationships reported that, marital status is one of the primary predictors of interrelation stability and social integration.

Literature Review

Theoretical Review

In this section we consider theoretical perspectives related to the social causation and social selection views that SES should affect interpersonal relationships.

In doing so, a priori research findings on SES have shown that SES influences interpersonal interactions across time, and that socioeconomic disadvantaged status has negative consequences for adults and children alike (for example, Conger et al., 2002; Haas, 2006). This underlying tenet represents an instance of the social causative view which assumes that SES leads to variations in interpersonal interactions.

The other theoretical model assume that, the relationship between SES and family processes is explained by individual differences in the personal characteristics of family members, that might affect both their SES and their family interpersonal relationships. This view represents the social selection perspective which assumes that the traits and dispositions of an individual affect both his present social circumstances as well as his future emotions and behaviors (for example, McLeod and Kaiser, 2004).

The fore-mentioned theories are used primarily to complement each other in such a manner that, an individual's social selection challenge the presumption that his SES disadvantage has a causal effect on his family's social support in his integration and reintegration into the Community. After reviewing the theoretical arguments related to both of these perspectives, we conclude that the theoretical dynamics between SES and family interpersonal relationships may be more complicated and research will be required to fully understand these complexities. As such, the study is set to investigate effects of ex-convicts' demographic variables on family social support during their reintegration into the community. Specifically, the study investigate effects of ex-convicts' socio-economic status on family social support in their reintegration into the community.

Review of Nigerian Correctional Service Reformation and Rehabilitation Programs

The Nigerian Correctional Services, as mandated by the Nigerian Correctional Service Act (2019), focuses on the safe, secure, and humane custody of all legally interned persons, while also implementing reformation, rehabilitation, and reintegration programs to facilitate their return to

society.

In order to achieve its purposes, the Services only attend to its specific mandatary functions as set by the Act, including:

- The Nigerian Correction Service is statutorily expected to take into lawful custody all those duly certified to be so kept by courts of competent jurisdiction, Produce suspects and other prisoners in courts as and when due, Identify the causes of their anti-social disposition, set in motion mechanisms for their ... (a) Taking custody of all persons legally interned;
- (b) Providing safe, secure and humane custody for inmates;
- (c) Conveying remand persons to and from courts in motorized formations;
- (d) Identifying the existence and causes of anti-social behaviors of inmates;
- (e) Conducting risk and needs assessment aimed at developing appropriate correctional treatment methods for reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration;
- (f) Implementing reformation and rehabilitation programs to enhance the reintegration of inmates back into the society;
- (g) Initiating behavior modification in inmates through the provision of medical, psychological, spiritual and counselling services for all offenders including violent extremists;
- (h) Empowering inmates through the deployment of educational and vocational skills training programs, and facilitating incentives and income generation through Custodial Centers, farms and industries;
- (i) Administering Borstal and related institutions;
- (j) Providing support to facilitate the speedy disposal of cases of Awaiting Trial Persons;

- (k) Performing other functions as may be required to further the general goal and functions of the Service
- (l) Administering non-custodial measures, including community Service, probation, parole, restorative justice measures and any other none custodial measure assigned by a court of competent jurisdiction.

In order to achieve its mandates, the Service implements various reformation and rehabilitation programs, including: education, vocational training, counseling, and substance abuse intervention. These programs aims at equipping inmates with knowledge and skills for successful reintegration into their Communities, as well as the reduction of recidivism.

Tarhule (2019) provides a synoptic appraisal of the Nigerian Correctional Service Act 2019 by giving more detailed information of the key reformation and rehabilitation Programs. However, in the study we focused only on those programs that have direct relevant to ex-convicts' SES and reintegration, including:

Education and Vocational Training

Adult Literacy and Educational Programs: The Nigerian Correctional Services partners with the National Open University of Nigeria to offer educational opportunities to inmates, allowing them to continue their education while incarcerated.

Vocational Training: Inmates are trained in various vocational skills through workshops and skill acquisition, including: carpentry, tailoring, printing, building, masonry, furniture making, soap making, and metal works fabrication.

Agricultural Training: The Inmates' Training and Productivity (ITP) Directorate manages correctional farms and industries, and is involved in training inmates in farming methods, animal husbandry, and various agricultural techniques.

Reintegration Support Programs

The Nigerian Correctional Services offer various reintegration Support programs to inmates before their release. The programs includes:

Pre-release/Transition Programs: These programs prepare inmates for release by providing them with information and resources about housing, employment, and other services.

Employment Programs: The Nigerian Correctional Services works to connect inmates with employment opportunities upon release, especially among those that have acquired various vocational skills.

Starter Packs: In some cases, the Nigerian Correctional Services provides inmates who have completed various skills acquisition programs and are released are given starter packs to help them establish themselves as they reintegrate into the Community.

Empirical Review

The whole issue of reintegration of ex-convicts into the Community is very challenging due to variety of demographic characteristics, including: family social support. This is followed by relatively high stigmatization, isolation and social exclusion. Understand that, ex-custodial institutionalized convicts are among a particular typed of marginalized group of individuals in the society. Some of the challenges they are being faced relates to: employment criteria; life style and routines; schooling and professional requirements; various physical and psychological dependencies; and socialization problems and difficulties adapting to certain varieties of social life.

Specifically, studies have shown that a person's socioeconomic characteristics affects his interpersonal relationships, either by social isolation or increasing the level of his social cohesion as well as proper integration and reintegration into his Community. For example, Orbuch et al. (2002); Popenoe (2007); Stanley, Amato, Johnson, and Markman (2006) have variously reported that possessors of greater SES, including: economic and financial resources are positively associated with marital stability. In a similar study, Duncan, Huston and Weisner, (2007) in an experimental intervention program designed to enhance the incomes of poor families, provided preliminary evidence that families experiencing greater economic gains demonstrates greater marital stability than those that are not.

In addition, a number of studies have shown that low income, financial instability, or economic problems are associated with lower levels of marital quality. For example, Amato et al. (2007) showed that, lower levels of income, educational

attainment, and occupational prestige were associated with higher rates of marital problems, less marital happiness, and greater instability. Similarly, Wu and Pollard (2000) examined the role of economic circumstances in the stability of cohabiting couples. They found that, economic deprivation contributes to interrelationship instability among cohabiting couples. Children of families with a low socio-economic status are frequently at risk of not successfully developing the skills they need to achieve at school (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, and Klebanov, 1994; McLoyd, 1998). From the literature, there is evidence that SES is positively related to marital quality and stability and, more tentatively, to the same outcomes for cohabiting partners.

Despite that the reviewed literature provided information consistent with the notion that, SES predicts relationship outcomes, the studies did not provide information about the source and direction of perceived differences among the various levels of SES. As such, our study will perform a post-Hoc analysis on the data, in order to determine the source and direction of any difference among various levels of SES.

Also, the studies that were reviewed provides little or no information in the about effects of Ex-Convicts' SES on family social support in their reintegration into the Community. Our study is focus on examining effects of Ex-Convicts' SES on their family social support in their reintegration into the Community.

In another development, the studies that were reviewed focus mainly on the use of descriptive statistics for the analysis of data but in the study we use both Descriptive and Inferential Statistics.

From the fore-going, the study answered the following question, namely: 'What is the participants' SES?' The following hypothesis was raised to be tested, namely: 'There is no difference in the effects of ex-convicts' SES on family social support during their reintegration into the Community'.

Methods

Study Design

The research design used for the study is 'Ex-post Factor' (Campbell and Stanley, 1963). In this design, the researcher simply measured effects of Ex-Convicts' SES on the social support

giving to them by their family members as they reintegrate into the Community rather than manipulating Independent Variables. In so doing, the various items within the instrument for data collection are structured along SES with the aim of adequately evaluating the process of reintegration.

Participants

Our primary target population for the study are all ex-convicts from the Minimum Security Prison, Keffi, Keffi Local Government Area, Nasarawa State, Nigeria who had undergone various forms of the prison's rehabilitation processes as well as acquisition of educational training & technical skills and capacity building while still in imprisoned. The goal of the various training was to make them become productive and contributing members of the community after the expiration of their various prison terms. A total of forty (40) ex-convicts from the focus group participated in the study. Their eligibility was obtained from the prison's statistical records. However, due to lack of personal contact with the ex-convict, we had to collaborate with the prison's follow-up team for the initiation of the necessary contact. It should be understood that choosing correspondants this way would ensure the needed rapport between the researcher and the correspondant which may positively impact on the process of data collection. Since the ex-convict could also be hesitant to disclose their judicial status to especially strangers and that, since the prison officers know who we have to contact and also that they had gained the ex-convict's trust already, it was also an added advantage for the researcher to go through them. As such, the ex-convict will find it easier to trust the researcher if the letter was introduced by the prison's officers. In so doing, at the end, the researcher got in contact with the ex-convicts.

From the fore-gone information on the description on the procedures involved for the data collection, it can be understood that, the researcher used the Merton, Fiske & Kendall's (1956) method for data collection, christened "focus-group". The method can be explained to mean that the correspondants were selected based on specific characteristics most relevant to their situation which are of interest to the researcher. In other words, this can be referred

to as a phenomenological approach to researcher. It is so described because, it is based on the way ex-convicts experience varying social phenomenal in the process of their reintegration into the community. As such, it is an investigative style characterised by focusing on the meaning the researcher attaches to social phenomenal surrounding the reintegration of ex-convict into the community as well as, the attempt to understand what is happening and why, it is happening. In doing so, in the research, we are seeking an effective understanding and documentation of the processes of the interactions between the levels of ex-convicts' SES and social realities of their reintegration into the Community through formal research methods.

The choice of this facility is based on: **One**, that with the custodial nature of the facility most of the inmates are likely domicile around Keffi which might make the ex-convicts easily accessible to the researcher and/or the research assistants. **Two**, that the prison officials have instituted a follow-up programme called "after-care services" aiming at proper follow-up and evaluation of the successes and challenges being faced by ex-convicts in the process of reintegration to enable for counseling and advice. As such, collaborating with the prison officers paved way for the researcher to easily achieve the objective of the study.

Also the study is delimited to finding the influence of family social support in the reintegration of ex-convicts into the community. The researcher has restricted the study to the influence of family social support assuming that, family social support can impact on the reintegration of ex-convicts into the community.

Instrument

Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection in the study. The adopted questionnaire was the modified version of the "Interpersonal Support Evaluation List: shortened version-12 items" (Cohen, Merstein, Kamarck and Hoberman, 1985). The scale measures perceived social support. The scale is a shortened version of the original version of the "Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL, 40 items, Cohen and Hoberman, 1983)." The scale has three different sub-scales designed to measure three dimensions of perceived social support. The

dimensions are:

- a. Appraisal support
- b. Belonging support
- c. Tangible support

Each dimension is measured by 4 items on a 4-point scale ranging from "Definitely True" to "Definitely False".

Scoring

Items 1,2,7,8,11,12 are reversed scored

Items 2,4,6,11 make up the Appraisal Support Sub-scale

Items 1,5,7,9 make up the Belonging Support Sub-scale

Items 3,8,10,12 make up the Tangible Support Sub-scale

All scores are kept continuous.

The entire questionnaire was subdivided into four (4) subsections, namely: consent requisition, personal data, family data and interpersonal support list shortened version -12 items on perceived social support during the process of reintegration with regards to issues of stigmatization, discrimination, isolation visa-sa vis participants' psychoemotional state, such as: feelings of shame, low self-esteem, dejection and rejection relating to educational opportunities, employment, financial management & control, civic responsibilities and restorative justice. With the questionnaire, the researcher will be able to elicit responses from the respondents to achieve the research objectives, answer or test the research hypotheses.

Procedure

The procedure subsection of the research instrument is considered under the following subheadings, namely: procedure for data collection and validity & reliability of the instrument.

After obtaining permission from each respondent, the researcher through informed consent administered the questionnaire by issuing each respondent a copy. The researcher then requests each respondent to read through each item of the questionnaire while the researcher clarifies the grey areas as the case may be. The researcher requests each respondent to

respond to the questionnaire as applicable. The researcher immediately retrieved the completed copy of the questionnaire from the respondent.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument:

The Purpose of validity and reliability in a research is to achieve the identification of probable spelling and grammatical mistakes, which could bring about ambiguities, inimical to respondents' responses during the course of the actual administration in the field. In order to validate the research instrument, the instrument was submitted to the researcher's thesis supervisor in the Department of Psychology, Nassarawa State University, Keffi to establish its content, criterion-related, construct and face validity and edit the items for technical item-writing adequacies and reviewed for writing clarity.

On the other hand, to establish the reliability of the research instrument, ten (10) available ex-convicts from Gwagwalada Minimum Security Prison were used for pilot testing using the Split-Half reliability method (Spearman-Brown, 1904). Analysis of data obtained from the pilot test revealed a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.78$. By interpretation, the coefficient of correlation was high enough to be relied upon. As such, the researcher is encouraged to use the instrument for this study.

Statistics

Several statistical measures are appropriate in describing and analysing data in a meaningful way. In this study, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Descriptive statistics such as: frequency counts, percentages, mean, range, variance and standard deviation; as well as Inferential statistics such as: t-test and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used where applicable.

However, it should be understood that, the use of the statistical methods depends on the hypothesis to be tested. As such, One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test all the hypotheses.

Ethical Consideration

Before engaging in the data collection, we sort the permission of each of the respondents. To ensure that the respondents felt comfortable during the process of data collection, we explained to each individual the purpose of the study and issued him a consent requisition letter about the study as well as about the issue of confidentiality. We guaranteed anonymity for all the respondents, even if they would have agreed on the publication of their names. This is because there is always a risk that, someone would abuse them in the future. There is also the risk that, the respondents may change their minds about their anonymity in the future. The respondents were also offered the opportunity to read the study when completed to further guarantee anonymity of their responses.

Results

In our society, social stratification is an important variable which help us in systematized objective activities leading to the observation and measurement of events. This is to help us understand, describe, organize, explain, predict, modify or control such events. In the study, stratification depends on the proper coordination of salient demographic variables, like: SES, which is of desirous interest to the study. In doing so, SES plays prominent role in respondents' response options.

As such, we analyzed the SES of respondents, by implication answering the research question and testing the hypothesis and the results presented as below:

Research Question

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Distributions of Participants' Socio-Economic Status

Socio-Economic Level	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent

LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC	7	17.5	17.5	17.5
MEDIUM SOCIO-ECONOMIC	19	47.5	47.5	65.0
HIGH SOCIO-ECONOMIC	14	35.0	35.0	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 above showed that, the highest socio-economic status among the respondents was Medium Socio-Economic followed by High

Socio-Economic and Low Socio-Economic represented by 19(47.5%), 14(35.0%) and 7(17.5%) respectively.

Testing Hypothesis

Table 2: Summary of ANOVA showing difference in the Effects of Socio-Economic status on family social support during the reintegration of ex-convicts into the community.

				ANOVA		
				Socioeconomic Status		
Test of Homogeneity of Variances				Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square F Sig.
Socio-Economic Status				220.080	2	110.040 4.692 .015 ^b
Levene				867.820	37	23.455
Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.	1087.900	39	
11.352	2	37	.000			
				Correc-tional		

- Sig. value greater than 0.05 ($P > 0.05$) indicates acceptance of the assumption for equality of variances between groups.*
- Sig. Value greater than 0.05($P > 0.05$) indicates rejection of the research hypothesis of significance difference between groups.*

A descriptive analysis was conducted to compare respondents' socio-economic status and presented in Table 1 above. The analysis yield 23.1429, 29.6842, and 28.2857 as means for the respective levels of low, middle and high socio-economic status of respondents. The mean socio-economic status for all the groups was estimated at 28.0500.

A One-way between group means analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if there was significant SES difference in the effect of ex-convicts' SES on family social support during their reintegration into the Community. The results of the ANOVA shows significant difference among the three SES groups: $F(2, 37) = 4.692$, $P < 0.05$ (Table 2). This means, Homoge-

Post Hoc Analysis

To determine the source of difference among the three levels of ex-convicts' SES, a Post-Hoc analysis was conducted using Turkey HSD test (Table 1).

neity of variance assumption was violated as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variance ($P < 0.05$). This indicates that ex-convicts' SES affects the social support family members gives during their reintegration into the community. Therefore, the research hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted.

The potential implications of the results includes the fact that, the source of the difference among the three levels of SES is not known, therefore, Correctional Services' Agents could lack the direction of focus during implementation of their reformation and rehabilitation programs within the prison facilities. Therefore, there is need to perform a Post Hoc Analysis to determine the source of difference.

Table 3: Shows summary of Post Hoc multiple comparisons for the source of observed difference between the three levels of ex-convicts' SES.

Dependent Variable: SES

Tukey HSD

(I) Socio-Economic Grp	(J) Socio-Economic Grp	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Low Eco Status	Med Eco Status	-6.54135*	2.14129	.011	-11.7693	-1.3134
	High Eco Status	-5.14286	2.24187	.069	-10.6163	.3306
Med Eco Status	Low Eco Status	6.54135*	2.14129	.011	1.3134	11.7693
	High Eco Status	1.39850	1.70581	.693	-2.7662	5.5632
High Eco Status	Low Eco Status	5.14286	2.24187	.069	-.3306	10.6163
	Med Eco Status	-1.39850	1.70581	.693	-5.5632	2.7662

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The analysis in Table 3 revealed that the mean score for participants of Low SES ($M = 23.1429$, $SD = 8.15042$) was significantly different from the mean score ($MD = -6.54135$, $P < 0.05$) of Medium SES, as well as the mean score of High SES ($M = 29.6842$, $SD = 3.49687$). The result of Tukey post hoc analysis agrees with the argument that, it is most relevant when you are making relatively simple comparisons (Aron A., Aron E. N. and Coups E. J., 2009). Conversely, the mean score of participants of High SES (28.2857 , $SD = 4.21405$) was not significantly different from either those of Low or Medium SES.

Discussions

The study examine effects of Ex-Convicts' SES on their family social support during reintegration into the Community. The study analyzed self assessment responses of forty (40) ex-convicts to a family social support instrument about the support they receive during their reintegration into the Community.

The analysis is presented in Table 1 showed that, Ex-convicts' SES effect on the type of family social support given to them by members of their families during their reintegration into the Community. This means ex-convicts' socio-economic status affects the social support given to them by

members of their families during their reintegration into the Community. The findings supports tenet of the social causative theory (Conger et al., 2002; Haas, 2006), as well as that of social selection (McLeod and Kaiser, 2004). Also, the findings supports various researches on effects of socioeconomic status on people's interpersonal relationships, for example, Orbuch et al. (2002); Popenoe (2007); Stanley, Amato, Johnson, and Markman (2006) have variously reported that couples who possesses greater income and financial resources are positively associated with marital stability. Also, Duncan, Huston and Weisner, (2007) provided evidence that, families experiencing greater economic gains demonstrates greater marital stability than those that are not. In other studies, it is shown that, low income status, financial instability, or economic problems are associated with lower levels of marital quality. For example, Wu and Pollard (2000) in a study that examined the role of economic circumstances in the stability of cohabiting couples found that, economic deprivation contributes to interrelation instability among cohabiting couples. In a similar manner, Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, and Klebanov (1994); McLoyd (1998) reported that, children of families with low socio-economic status are frequently at risk of not successfully developing the skills they need to achieve

at school. From the literature, there is evidence that peoples' SES affects how others support them during interpersonal relationships.

Although the reviewed literature showed effects of an individual's SES on the type of social support he may receive from members of his family during integration or reintegration into the Community, the literature did not indicate extent of the effects of the various levels of SES, nor the source of the difference.

As such, a Post-Hoc analysis was performed to determine the source of the difference between Ex-convicts' various levels of socio-economic status. The result (Table 3) showed that, the mean score of Ex-convicts' Low socio-economic status was significantly difference from the mean score of Ex-convicts' Medium socio-economic status. Conversely, the mean score of Ex-convicts' High socio-economic status was not significantly different from those of either Low or Medium socio-economic status. The findings are in line with Conger et al. (2002) and Haas', (2006) report on the effects of one's SES on his interrelationships. The explanation is that, Ex-convicts' family members showed graduated greater sympathy or empathy towards their Ex-convicts members of Low socio-economic status than those of Medium socioeconomic status and High socio-economic status, respectively. Conversely, ex-convicts from families of Low SES received more support than those from Medium and High SES, respectively. The same expression could also be applicable to the type of social stigmatization faced by ex-convicts in the process of reintegration into the community (Salasin, 1986). In the same way, it could be applicable to the type of threats, stereotype, prejudice and discrimination expressed by family members towards their Ex-convicts members who may be seeking social recognition, political participation, civic responsibilities, and economic control among members of their given Communities. (Major & O'Brein 2005).

Therefore, family members would rather choose to have greater dealings with their Ex-convicts' members on bases of their Socioeconomic status. In doing so, Ex-convicts' family members of Low socioeconomic status were given preferential dealings by members of their families than those of Medium and High socio-economic status, respectively.

Implications

The above findings have practical implications for the reformation and rehabilitation programs of Correctional Services Agencies. Practically, the findings have the indication that, Correctional Services should ensure implementation of the mandate/function given to them by "The Nigerian Correctional Services' Act 2019" (2019), including: the key reformation and rehabilitation Programs and Initiatives offered by the Correctional Services.

Recommendations and Suggestions

Despite the findings of the study, the results should be generalized with caution. This is because the study focused on only male Ex-convicts and more so, from only one prison facility in Nigeria and did not compare those of the female gender. We suggest further studies be expanded to include participants from more than one facility as well as including participants of various gender. Also, the study focused only on participants who under went one form of skill acquisition or the other during the term of their incarceration instead of all ex-convicts in general. Furthermore, the data use for the study was based on information that was collected through self assessment scores provided by the Ex-convicts, which could led to favourable response options that could bias the study toward self exaltation. As such, we suggest that, a multiple comparative study be conducted in future researches in this area. We also recommended that, future researches be conducted on how to guarantee sustainable reintegration programs for Ex-convicts into the Community.

Conclusion

This study found that ex-convicts' SES have significant effect on family social support in their reintegration into the Community. It can, therefore, be concluded that, concerted effort be made by all stakeholders involve in reintegration of ex-convicts into the Community, should design and implement sustainable reformation and rehabilitation programs. In doing so, Ex-convicts will be giving sense of belonging and social acceptability, which will consequently enhance their physical psychological and socio-emotional well-being.

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.28>**MANAGING THE DELIBERATE BIAS TOWARDS ADVANCING THE FEMALE GENDER THROUGH SCHOOLING: A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DECISION****Prof Solomon Modiba**

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Abstract

The paper reflects on whether deliberately advancing the female gender through schooling could not massively and uniquely contribute to the sustainable development agenda. The paper is conceptual and empirical in nature within the qualitative research paradigm. The question guiding the paper is: to what extent can the futuristic decision of deliberately being bias in favour of advancing the female gender through schooling contribute to the sustainable development agenda? Out of the population of eleven secondary schools in one circuit in Waterberg district, in Limpopo province, South Africa, three secondary schools were sampled through purposive convenient sampling. In each sampled secondary school, male and female learners were made research participants. Research findings revealed that firstly, there has been the tendency of deliberate under-representation of females in schooling activities. Secondly, there is socialisation crisis of the two genders. Thirdly, there is implicit maintenance of gender gap in schooling affairs. Fourthly, there is a problem of the sloganeering of education for all when the female gender continues to be excluded. Lastly, there is ignorance of the fading away of the 21st century with less done for the gender parity in schooling. The researcher recommends for the biased and prejudiced stance in favour of capacitating the female gender through schooling to enable them to be on par with their male counterparts. Finally, the researcher recommends for the fostering of a development pattern that leaves no one behind especially the female gender so that this gender helps in reversing under-development of their countries and that of the continent.

Keywords: Bias, Deliberate, Gender gap, Under-representation, Sloganeering

INTRODUCTION

Schooling, either primary, secondary or tertiary in South Africa, still experiences gender inequality and gender exclusion. Gender inequality and the marginalisation of girl children, has been at the centre of modern debates around the globe. Civil society, government and business continues a fight for what can be viewed within the democratic state as a gender gap. Evidently, a solution has to be found for the equal distribution of opportunities for both genders (OECD, 2000). Some ‘old-fashioned’ scholars and commentators argue that the inculcation of certain rights initially denied to girl children, are simply a Western imposition and an attempt to weaken African culture and traditions. This type of short-sighted thinking confirms a Cambodian saying that “men are a piece of gold, and women are a piece of cloth”. In a constitutional democracy such as South

Africa, this kind of utterances are an insult to the female gender, the institutions of democracy and the Constitution African Gender Equality Index, 2015 & Idang, 2015).

This paper sets out to reflect on whether deliberately advancing the female gender through schooling could not massively and uniquely contribute to the sustainable development agenda. South Africa remains one of the unequal societies across the globe, in relation to the capacitation of the female gender. Although culture and gender-equality are various variables of unequitable weights, one does not or at least should not outweigh the other for the benefit of the two continuing to be mutually inclusive. This paper is conceptual and empirical in nature and secondary data were generated through documents review, books, and Census, African Development

Bank Statistics (2015). This paper therefore, concludes that while culture, its practices and traditions remain indispensable in society, it needs to be incorporated into human rights and gender equity, promulgated through the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), pieces of legislations and international treaties and agreements. Of essence, removing the gender gap between male and female learners in schooling, requires refocusing the deliberate bias towards advancing the female gender through schooling to benefit the sustainable development agenda. On that basis statement of the problem which this paper grapples with relates to getting the female gender to be as capacitated as the male gender through education to enable the former to contribute sufficiently to the sustainable development agenda (Amadi & Amadi, 2015). Referring to the African context, from time immemorial, the female gender was marginalised with little or no rights at all. Such a practice was continued in schooling. However, in the interest of sustainable development, 21st century requires that within the schooling sector both male and female genders be afforded equal status. As per the title of this paper, there is a need for catch up on the part of the female gender. That is why the title emphasises gender bias towards the female gender to compensate for the time lost when such a gender was still deliberately marginalised (Jakes, 2023). The gap which this paper fills is that previous studies lamented the exclusion of the female gender without proposing a solution to that state of affairs. This paper bravely moves for the deliberate bias in favour of capacitating the female gender utilising the secondary schooling sector as part of reversing the wrongs of the past against the female gender. Although the enrolment of the girl child in South Africa schools is impressive in comparison to their male counterparts, the challenge is that girl children drop out in large numbers in comparison to the male learners. This is attributable to diverse reasons some of which is not being encouraged to endure despite the existing schooling challenges (Idang, 2015).

Literature review

Jakes (2023) is vocal on the need to utilise education to narrow the gender gap between male

and female learners. Being biased in terms of ascertaining that every female learner access quality education, is one of the surest ways towards enabling the female gender to contribute to the sustainable development agenda (The South African Constitution, 1996). This is part of reversing the gender exclusion against the female gender which has been in practice in almost every society from time immemorial. The idea of ensuring that there is determination to avail quality education to the female gender stands to ultimately be very beneficial especially to the developing countries whose gender gap between the male and the female learners remains alarmingly high (Theil, 2015).

Literature review puts it plainly that deliberately denying the female learners the quality education which from the past was being given to the male learners, is to rob the female gender of the emancipatory value of education. That is why as part of reversing that past state of affairs, there is a suggestion of deliberately being biased towards advancing the female gender through schooling in order to benefit the sustainable development agenda. The study of literature, makes it open and transparent that deliberately segregating against the female gender as regards the provision of quality education, a practice which was embodied in the past like a norm, is as disgusting as it is dehumanising for the female gender. As mentioned earlier, this robs the female gender of a legitimate right and opportunity of contributing to the sustainable development agenda like their male counterparts (Eoseewong, 2016). Apart from enabling the female gender to contribute to the achievement of the sustainable development goals, quality education enables the female gender to lead good life just like their male counterparts.

The review of literature contends that reversing the past imbalances between the male and the female genders is actually not the project of the gender activists and the gender scholars alone (Mathebula, 2014a). The review of literature highlights that the principle and mantra of education for all is likely to turn into a reality imme-

diately there is a deliberate bias towards advancing the female gender through schooling or education. Literature study cautions that the fact that many countries have policies aimed at treating the male and the female genders equitably, it is evidence enough that those policies on gender inclusion could be weak to the level of struggling or failing to close the created gender gap between the male and the female genders (African Gender Equality Index, 2015). That from the population of school going learners the high rate of drop-out rates is found from the female gender has to be the valuable point demonstrating the need to address head-on the deprivation of the female gender from quality and inclusive education.

It is inconceivable that 31 years into democracy in South Africa, there shall still be a debate on how to close the gender gap between the male and the female learners (Idang, 2015). Somewhat this creates an impression that South Africa and its fellow developing nations or countries could be heading to a situation where it will be declared to have missed the 21st opportunity to contribute immensely to the attainment of the sustainable development agenda. One essential points emerging from the review of literature relates to acknowledging the need to be biased in favour and support of the female gender through schooling to enable the female gender to contribute to the elimination of underdevelopment which is characterising most if not all of the countries of the continent of Africa. Literature study is unambiguous in emphasising that with quality and inclusive education being deliberately provided to the female gender, the complaint about gender parity, gender exclusion and the prevailing wide gender gap between the male and the female learners could be subverted (Emis, 1999 & Theil, 2015).

Being deliberately biased towards advancing the female gender through schooling, is an indication of recognising that closing the existing gender disparity between the male and the female learners has to be the collaborative project that involves almost everyone for the reversal of the ages-old patriarchy (Kambarami, 2006). Literature study argues that gender relations, equality

and (or) inequality in South Africa is in some instances being defined in terms of variables and duties perceived to be belonging to the male or the female learners. This is utilised to create cultural meanings and shape what is today perceived as “culturally acceptable”. For instance, firewood collection, domestic chores and baby-sitting are primitively being perceived to be the responsibilities of the female gender (Mathebula, 2014a). Normally males found to be performing such duties run the risk of being scolded and laughed off as being uncivilised or simply effeminate. Literature review shares that this kind of short-sighted thinking subscribes to a Cambodian saying that “males are a piece of gold, and females are a piece of cloth”. It is argued that when a piece of gold drops into mud, it remains a piece of gold while a piece of cloth is stained forever (OECD, 2000). Evidently, this kind of comprehension between the male and the female genders constitutes the serious hurdle towards dismantling patriarchy in schooling to allow the female gender an equal space.

Literature study reminds that there is an existence of a notion that the promotion of gender equality in the form of being biased towards advancing the female gender through schooling, has a potential of interfering with ritual practices. In African countries a high likelihood persists that ritual practices are in conflict with the existing democratic principles. By implication rituals signify complex learned behavioural patterns, perceptions and practices that shape a particular society (Sebola, 2016). Human beings employ rituals to define and explain the reason of their social existence. This is inclusive of promoting a particular gender and suppressing the other one. From the gender parity perspective, this position signifies that gender relations and balances between males and females have always been unequal and were for long being taken to be normal. This signifies and glorifies the dominance of one gender over the other (Sebola, 2014). Review of literature highlights that it been borne in mind that amid the democratic dispensation in South Africa, both males and females are afforded similar status both in a society and in the main stream

economy. An objective scrutiny of the mentioned state of affairs demonstrates that in paper yes, there is parity between the male and the female gender but practically the opposite applies (OECD, 2015).

The study of literature unveils that the marginalisation of the female gender has always been a feature prevalent in all walks of life (Mathebula, 2014a). In spite of that, there are other recent studies that are suggesting an impressive achievement in some African countries such as Rwanda (Sebola, 2015). Although Rwanda is an acclaimed international model of achieving gender parity, such has only been achieved in politics, basic education and business sectors. For example, a little or nothing was achieved in higher education management (Ukwandu, 2015). In Africa, gender disparity has a long historical antecedence in the colonial trajectories extending to symbolic colonial struggles in countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Senegal, Nigeria and others. The return of multi-party elections and the rise of neo-liberal ideologies resulted in the rise of civil society organisations and culminated into the Beijing Conference in 1995 (Amadi & Amadi, 2015). This conference advocated for 35% affirmative action for the female participation in governance and decision-making processes. The review of literature maintains that the dialogue on gender parity continues to gain momentum in South Africa and by the twentieth century, government policies, pieces of legislation institutionalised female privilege and transplanted tools and mechanism to support the '*frenchisation*' of the female gender through schooling (African Gender Equality Index, 2015).

To place this in context, managing the deliberate bias towards advancing the female gender through schooling, is the cornerstone of every democratic society that aspires for social justice and human rights" (United Nations, 2002). As part of the review of literature, Nordon (2015:) stresses that being biased towards the female gender fundamentally implies that, both boys and girls need to have equal power and influence, and equal rights, responsibilities, obligations and opportunities in every area of life. It can therefore,

be concluded from this definition that socio-economic and other opportunities afforded to the female gender, may not automatically result in equality between the two genders, but rather all aspects of life need to be equally distributed to both gender groups irrespective of being biased towards advancing the female gender through schooling to achieve the sustainable development agenda (Albertyn, 2009 & Mathebula, 2014b).

Sebola (2014) is emphatic that the existing literature review unveils myriad countries of the world such as South Africa and Kenya to be battling to be biased towards advancing their female gender through schooling as a compensation for the previous year discrimination of the female gender. In the interest of ascertaining that all genders contribute to the sustainable development agenda, there could be a need for a country to take a stance of advancing the once segregated gender to capacitate such a gender through quality education to prepare the gender for decent living in future. Literature study advises the female gender to continually refuse to be reduced to refuse to be undermined by the male gender in order that the prevailing gender disparity between the male and the female genders is ultimately eradicated (Eosewong, 2016). Weak and contradictory policies pertaining to the advancing of the female gender through schooling to benefit the sustainable development agenda, require urgent revision to enable them to make an impact on the project of reversing the existing gender disparity between the male and the female learners.

Theoretical framework

Imenda (2014) declares that numerous theoretical frameworks exist for gender discussions and feminism theories, such as Marxist, Radical, Socialist, Eco-feminism, Masculinity, Intersectionality and the Liberal theory as examples. This is being espoused by Ngomane (2016) when remarking that each of those feminism theories have their own notions and assumptions of gender equality and perspectives. For the relevance of the discussion of this paper, the Liberal femi-

nism theoretical perspective is selected. This theory holds the assumption that prejudices against the female gender are based on an attitude of ignorance in which the male gender exploits, oppresses and discriminates against their counterparts. The reality is that such an attitude is reversible through among others the deliberate bias towards advancing the female gender through schooling to benefit the sustainable development agenda (Amadi & Amadi, 2015).

Samkange (2015) reminds that the Liberal feminist theory is understood as an idiosyncratic form of theory which focuses on the female genders having their equality through being responsible for their actions and choices. It is also defined as a feminist theory that is grounded on persisting gender inequality which is engendered by among others, the reduced access for the female gender and girls to civil rights and allocation of social resources such as education and employment. The theoretical framework underpinning this paper, further holds the informed view that the male gender is capable of changing and acting reasonably. This implies stopping dominance over the female gender. The female gender, is as well capable of being active other than passive partners who countenance and tolerate ill treatment by the male gender. In the current discourses of deliberately being biased towards advancing the female gender through schooling, the Liberal feminist theory admits that the position of the modern female gender has transformed for the better in the present society in comparison to the past society (Pati, 2006).

Therefore, admitting that the current society is coping well with the envisaged societal changes taking place around the globe, becomes the insightful information. Gender equality is a thorny issue affecting the entire governance across the globe and has been in the agenda of political and social movements around the world for many years. Myriad countries worldwide are competing to be forerunners in implementing gender equity for the attainment of the sustainable development goals (Sebola, 2015). Truth be told, countries of the world inclusive of those in Africa

are moving in a snail's pace as regards being deliberately biased towards advancing the female gender through quality and inclusive schooling. To sum up, the relevance of the Liberal feminist theory in this paper is in terms of such a theory reminding about how across the globe, there is the century long entrenched patriarchal practices which stubbornly refuse to disappear (Amadi & Amadi, 2015). No doubt, that patriarchy interferes with the intervention of being deliberately biased towards advancing the female gender through schooling for the benefit of the sustainable development agenda.

Objectives and research question

This paper reflects on whether deliberately advancing the female gender through schooling could not massively and uniquely contribute to the sustainable development agenda. The second objective relates to measures to be taken and operationalised to ascertain that socialisation crisis entrenched in society which is fuelling inequitable treatment of the two genders is put to rest. On the basis of the expressed objectives, the research question guiding this paper is: *to what extent can the futuristic decision of deliberately being bias in favour of advancing the female gender through schooling contribute to the sustainable development agenda?* Inadequate enthusiasm as regards confronting patriarchy could prolong having a gender parity between male and female learners at schools (Mnisi, 2021).

Research design and approach

Mouton (2014) regards a research design as a set of guidelines and instructions to be followed in addressing the research problem and enables the researcher to anticipate what the appropriate research decisions should be in order to optimise the validity of the research findings. In an attempt to study and analyse how deliberate bias towards advancing the female gender through schooling contributes to the sustainable development agenda, there was a need to select a case study design within the qualitative research paradigm. This is relevant considering that the paper has research participants being sourced from three secondary schools (Wessels & Thani, 2014).

The problem which this paper pursues, namely, managing the deliberate bias of advancing the female gender through schooling so that the female gender like the male gender contribute to the sustainable development agenda, necessitated the design of this paper (Emnis, 1999). Furthermore, the objective of this paper which is reflecting on whether deliberately advancing the female gender through schooling could not massively and uniquely contribute to the sustainable development agenda, necessitated that this paper follows a qualitative research paradigm as against the quantitative one. The choice of the qualitative methodology was triggered by the fact that this paper is being undergirded by interpretivism and the Learning Organisation Philosophy (Moloi, 2005). The researcher saw a need to create a synergy between the two mentioned theoretical perspectives and the qualitative approach as the overriding research methodology. Their combination assisted immensely in terms of illuminating issues of deliberate bias to advance the female gender through schooling in Limpopo province, South Africa to contribute to the sustainable development agenda (Ukwanda, 2015). Research participants amounted to six, comprising three males and another three females sourced from three sampled secondary schools. This signifies that each secondary school contributed two research participants a male and a female learner.

The researcher employed the mentioned theoretical perspectives to reflect on whether deliberately advancing the female gender through schooling could not better contribute to the achievement of the sustainable development agenda with all genders equitably contributing to that process (Sankange, 2015). Amalgamating interpretivism and the Learning Organisation Philosophy within the qualitative research paradigm, aimed at optimising their strengths, to comprehend in its entirety the massive and unique contribution of deliberately advancing the female gender through schooling to enable that gender to add value to the fulfilment of the sustainable development agenda. Their contribution enabled the researcher to make an in-depth un-

derstanding of how despite years of independence in South Africa, there is still a wide gender gap between the male and the female learners at schools (Imenda, 2014).

Such an understanding contributes to the body of knowledge in literature and further helps that one operates from an informed position with regards to why eradicating gender gap and gender exclusion is taking long to be finalised. Out of the population of eleven secondary schools in one circuit in Waterberg district in Limpopo province, South Africa, three secondary schools were selected through the purposive convenient sampling. In each sampled secondary school, a male and a female learner became research participants. Altogether a total of six research participants comprising three males and three females were interviewed. Data were corroborated through documents reviewing regarding deliberately biasing the advancing of the female gender through schooling so that the gender could as well contribute to the flourishing and achievement of the sustainable development agenda (Emnis, 1999). This signifies that interviewing and documents review techniques were employed to generate data for this paper. Interviewing responses were audiotaped for transcription purposes later-on. Both the interviewing and documents review, were helpful in terms of reflecting on whether deliberately advancing the female gender through schooling could not massively and uniquely contribute to the sustainable development agenda (Sebola, 2015).

Findings

Findings arrived at in this paper are in relation to the research topic whose focus is reflecting on whether deliberately advancing the female gender through schooling could not massively and uniquely contribute to the sustainable development agenda (Albertyn, 2009). The basis of the findings is the analysed data which were generated through documents review and the interviewing technique. Responses of the six research participants were reflected upon as regards better servicing the sustainable development agenda by deliberately being biased towards the advancement of the female gender through schooling

(Mouton, 2014). As part of discussing the findings in a clear and free from ambiguity fashion, the six research participants interviewed in this paper are being referred to as Respondents A up to F. Actually, Respondents A & B refer to a male and a female learner from School 1. Respondents C & D refer to a male and a female learner from School 2. Respondents E & F refer to a male and a female learner from School 3. (Amadi & Amadi, 2015).

Research participants were referred to as Respondents A to F to protect their actual identities. The researcher sampled those research participants for interviewing in the area of being biased towards advancing the female gender through schooling for the sustainable development agenda purposes. In view of the interpretivism, the Learning Organisation Philosophy together with the Liberal Feminist theory within the qualitative research paradigm, being the selected theories, they have been adequately instrumental in helping in the analysis of data to ultimately emerge with these findings (Ukwandu, 2015). Findings and discussion for the paper are the following: the deliberate underrepresentation of the females in schooling activities, socialisation crisis of the two genders, implicit maintenance of the gender gap in schooling, the problem of sloganeering of education for all and the ignorance of the fading away of the 21st century (Nordon, 2015).

Discussions

Under-representation of females

Sebola (2014) laments that it is highly astonishing that underdeveloped and developing countries are not doing enough to reverse the inclination of under-representation of the female learners in schooling activities. This stems from the previous year practices where schooling was regarded to be an affair of only the males. On this matter, Respondent B of School 1 complains that *“it is very much unfortunate a sign of injustice that the female gender should continue to be looked down upon with regard to the parity with their male counterparts”*. Respondent D of School 2 is in agreement with what has been ex-

pressed when noting that *“it has to take the female gender to learn to believe in themselves and to genuinely outgrow the pull her down syndrome to successfully reverse and circumvent the tendency of the under-representation of the female folk in schooling and other socio-economic activities”*. The utterances of the research participants demonstrate how the achievement of the sustainable development agenda is likely to drag on due to the female gender folk not sufficiently represented (Sankange, 2015). The researcher commends the observation of the female gender about a need to be equal to their male counterparts.

Maintenance of gender gap

That schooling across the globe somewhat continues to maintain the gender gap, becomes something worth confronting and eradicating. If ever there is any platform where parity of genders has to be witnessed and experienced, that has to be where knowledge is being dispensed, namely at the learning institutions (Theil, 2015). The sad reality though in underdeveloped and developing countries is their failure to protect the female gender against the dominance of their male counterparts. That is why, Respondent A of School 1 reasons that *“it is not us the male gender that maintains the gender gap with our female genders but the manner in which the society has being organised and structured from the beginning”*. The expressed view point is being shared by the Respondent E of School 3 who states categorically clear that *‘yes, the maintenance of the gender gap between the male and female learners at schools is occurring but that such an unfortunate incident has nothing at all to do with the male gender except that it is an essential part and norm found in every society they are born in’*. The review of literature traces this to a patriarchy which has been in existence from time immemorial (Imenda, 2014). The researcher is impressed to note that even the male gender is aware that dominating the female gender has to be confronted collectively for its demise.

Sloganeering of education for all

The essence of gender education cannot be em-

phasised more considering its value and contribution to the achievement of the sustainable development agenda. Both the underdeveloped, developing and developed countries of the world shoulder the responsibility for the creation of gender parity. This can be better attained where there is a deliberate bias towards advancing the female gender through schooling. This signifies that the sloganeering of education for all has to be concretised to benefit the female gender and enable them to make their rightful contribution to the sustainable development agenda (Sebola, 2015). On this matter, Respondent C of School 2 submits that *“in reality both the male and female learners alike deserve access to quality schooling or education, a fundamental shift of preserving education and making it inaccessible and exclusionary only to the male learners has to be discontinued”*. Respondent E of School 3 remarks that *“with unwavering determination to have the female folk being as emancipated as the male gender, then education for all has to be spoken about and at the same time be an actionable reality”*. Views of the research participants are advising that one of the routes towards sustainable development of countries is through equitably spreading education to all genders (Eoseewong, 2016 & Jakes, 2023). The researcher marvels at the realisation by the male research participants about a need to allow the female folk an equal opportunity to schooling just like them.

Conclusion

As demonstrated in the discussion of findings of this paper, both the review of literature and the theoretical frameworks, played a critical role in talking to the findings of this paper. In addition, interviewing technique and documents review together with the theoretical perspectives, provided the better context within which the entire paper had to be located and understood. Small wonder that emphasis on managing the deliberate bias towards advancing the female gender through schooling to enable the achievement of the sustainable development agenda had to be sufficiently highlighted. Some of the key findings emerging in the paper include deliberate underrepresentation of the females in schooling activities and the problem of the sloganeering of

education for all. Evidently, the conclusion arrived at in this paper is in the context of the socialisation crisis of the two genders something that triggers an intervention plan of the deliberate bias towards advancing the female gender through schooling in Limpopo Province, South Africa. Findings of this paper have highlighted that to have all the genders equitably contributing to the achievement of the sustainable development agenda, it is indispensable that the female gender be prioritised through being exposed to quality and inclusive schooling to close a wide gap of lagging behind which was created and maintained in the past here in Limpopo province, South Africa and other provinces.

Recommendations

The basis of these recommendations is the discussed findings which are as follow: there is a need to reverse the tendency and the inclination of underrepresentation of the females in schooling because such a bad practice delays the contribution of the female gender to the achievement of the sustainable development agenda. In addition, there is a need for the dismantling of the present socialisation crisis of the male and the female genders due to its contribution to the widening of the gender gap between the two stated genders. There is also a need to vehemently oppose and discourage any form of implicit maintenance of gender gap between the males and the females. Furthermore, there is a need for the society and its institutions like schooling to desist from the sloganeering of education for all without concretising that as a vivid reality to completely accommodate the female gender in schooling activities. Finally, there is a need for the underdeveloped, developing and developed countries of the world to work tireless to avoid allowing the 21st century to fade away with gender parity between the males and the females having not been achieved. This stands to serve as a betrayal to the agenda 2063 which is gradually approaching.

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PREVALENCE OF DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS AND ASSOCIATED FACTORS AMONG YOUNG MEN LIVING IN SOWETO

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Abstract

Background:

The global high prevalence of depression among males often goes undiagnosed and untreated, which may explain the high suicide rates among men. Despite this, not adequate attention is paid to this public health challenge, thus, this study was aimed at determining the prevalence and associated factors of depression among young men living in Soweto. A cross-sectional quantitative design was used to screen for depressive symptoms using the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) among 405 young men. STATA-14 was used to analyze the data with the use of Pearson chi-square test of association and logistic regression to explore associations between socio-demographic variables with depressive symptoms ($p\text{-value} \leq 0.05$). The majority of the participants were single ($n=345$, 85.19%), unemployed ($n=259$, 63.95%), and used alcohol ($n=325$, 80.25 %). The prevalence of depression was 39.26%, with most exhibiting mild to moderate symptoms. The use of alcohol and employment status of the young men were significantly associated with symptoms of depression. The high prevalence of depression among young men detected in this study indicates the need to pay attention to the mental health of this group of society, and to implement gender-specific interventions for the early diagnosis, prevention and treatment of depression.

Keywords: Depression; young men; mental health disorders; South Africa; unemployment; alcohol use

INTRODUCTION

Global statistics have documented depression as a major contributor to the overall burden of disease, as reflected by high mortality, disability and decreased quality of life. Depression is a clinical disorder accompanied by various somatic and non-somatic symptoms that cause personal distress and disruptions in one's social, occupational, personal or other spheres of life. Depression has been linked as comorbid with other mental health disorders such as anxiety, as well as, with other chronic illnesses such as cardiovascular diseases (Gutiérrez-Rojas et al., 2020), diabetes (Karami et al., 2022) and tuberculosis (Farooqi et al., 2022). Depression has also been associated with increased risk of disability, reduced quality of life and premature death due to suicide (Rathod, 2017; Bantjies et al., 2018; Tomita et al., 2019). The rapid upsurge of depression rates is concerning and needs to be addressed urgently, more so in

low- middle income countries due to the high disease burden observed in these countries (Rathod et al., 2017; Bantjies et al., 2018; Akhtar et al., 2020). For example, it is estimated that 75 % of suicides occur in low-middle-income countries (Tomita et al., 2019). Despite this situation, there is dearth of studies that quantify the prevalence of depression symptoms among people who have not been diagnosed with depression (Akhtar et al., 2020). A national study reported that 25.7% of South Africans were suffering from depression (Bantjies et al., 2018), which highlights the elevated depression levels in the country. However, it is estimated that due to resource constraints and lack of adequate mental health prioritization, only 27 % of those confirmed to have severe mental health disorders, actually receive treatment (Rathod et al., 2017). The lack of attention and resources dedicated to mental illness has detrimental consequences on individuals,

families, communities and the overall health system. There are many factors that contribute towards heightened risk of depression, ranging from sex, age, substance use, chronic disease, race, education levels or employment status (Bantjies et al., 2018; Alvaro et al., 2019; Tomita et al., 2019; Mokona, Yohannes & Ayano, 2019; Posel, Oyenubi & Kollamparambil, 2021; Farooqi et al., 2022; Craig et al., 2022). The high rates of depression among men show that there is gender-specific risk factors. Specifically, for men in South Africa, the various inequalities within the country present many socio-economic challenges which have been linked with increased risk of depression (Craig et al., 2022; Alvaro et al., 2019). For example, some authors have established food insecurity (Tomita et al., 2019; Bantjies et al., 2018), poverty (Hatcher et al., 2019), unemployment (Mokona et al., 2020; Posel, Oyenubi & Kollamparambil, 2021) and the abuse of substances (Mokona et al., 2020) as risk factors for depression, especially among younger men. Moreover, unemployment among males has a more serious impact on the elevation of symptoms of depression due to unemployment, as it affects their self-esteem (Alvaro et al., 2019).

However, some studies have reported higher rates of depression among females as compared to their male counterparts (Steffen et al., 2020), and the discrepancies may be explained by the dynamics of the group under study, the geographical areas and cultural factors (Nzeadibe, Igboeli & Ajaero, 2018; Purborini et al., 2021). On the other hand, suicide statistics show higher rates among men despite lower reported rates of depression, and that suicide among men can be up to three times higher than among women (Kootbodien et al., 2020). This is an indication that depression among men is largely undiagnosed and not given adequate attention, resulting in dire consequences.

It is reasoned that lower rates of depression that are reported among men may be due to their inadequate help seeking behaviors (Mackenzie et al., 2019). Moreover, they are less likely than women to participate in surveys (Sileo & Kershwa, 2020; Staiger et al., 2020).

Increased vulnerability to depression has been reported among those suffering from chronic illnesses such as hypertension, diabetes and

HIV/AIDS (Blasco et al., 2020; Haregu, 2020; MacLean & Wetherall, 2021). One study found that depression was a risk factor for obesity among male adolescents (Alenazi et al., 2019). Other socio-demographic characteristics such as age have also been identified as risk factors for depression among men. For example, some studies have established older age as a risk factor for depression (Craig et al., 2022). Contradictory reports, however, suggest increased risk among younger populations (Ramon-Arbues et al., 2020; Steffen et al., 2020), and that the onset of mental health disorders, such as depression, often starts at the adolescent stage, (Bantjies et al., 2019). Moreover, it has been observed that there is a higher prevalence of suicide among young people between the ages of 15-29 as compared to older age groups (Arensmann et al., 2020), which is often attributed to depression.

Irrespective of increased depression rates, there is still a lack of resources dedicated to alleviating the burden in low-middle income countries, especially among young men. The further negligence of the mental health status of young men will further worsen that state of the country as increases in suicides, disability, premature death, substance abuse, intimate partner violence and other social ills will continue to plague the society as by-products of untreated depression (Pillay, 2019). It is thus necessary to prioritise early detection through increased screening efforts, especially for at risk populations such as young men. Thus, the aim of the study was to determine the prevalence and associated factors of depressive symptoms among young men living in Soweto.

METHODS

A quantitative cross-sectional survey was used, and data was collected among patients attending three primary health care facilities in SOWETO, these being Pimville, Zola and Moroka. SOWETO is a conglomerate of townships in the Gauteng province of South Africa. The study population consisted of young men between the ages of 18 and 35 who were currently living in Soweto and seeking health services in the three selected health facilities. The estimated population size of Soweto is

1 547 000, and using Raosoft sample size calculator, based on a confidence level of 95% and a margin error of 5%, a minimum sample size of 385 was calculated. A two-stage cluster sampling technique was used, and in the first stage, 3 townships, which are Zola, Moroka and Pimville, were randomly selected from the 32 townships in Soweto using the hat method. Similarly, using the same method, one clinic was randomly selected from each township. Finally, using convenience sampling, all young men attending the selected healthcare facilities were approached and requested to participate in the study. A total of 405 participants enrolled to participate in the study. The permission letter granted by the Johannesburg Health District Research Committee and the ethical clearance certificate granted by Sefako Makgatho Health Science University Research Ethics Council (SMUREC) were used to request permission from the operational managers and data was collected between 26 October, 2020 and 10 December, 2020. A self-administered questionnaire which consisted of a demographic section and the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) tool. The PHQ-9 is a globally and locally validated and standardized tool that has been developed and used to identify symptoms of depression (Van Wijk, Martin & Maree, 2021). The questionnaire consists of nine questionnaires, which asks participants whether they have been experiencing depressive symptoms over the past two weeks. Moreover, participants are asked to rate the frequency of their symptoms ranging from “0” (not at all) to “3” (nearly every day). A cut-off points of 5 was utilized in the current study which classified participants as having probable minor depression (Olfiffe et al., 2019). The completed questionnaires were captured and cleaned using Microsoft Excel and subsequently exported to STATA-14 for analysis.

Descriptive statistics were provided from the socio-demographic data and represented as means, proportions and percentages. The PHQ-9 scale was used to determine the prevalence of depressive symptoms and participants with scores above 5 were classified as having probable minor depression. The severity of the symptoms was further classified as mild for those with scores between 5 and 9, whereas scores of 10 to 15 were classified as moderate. Scores between 15-19 were classified as moderately severe and anything from 20 and above as severe. Pearson chi-square test of association was used to determine factors that were significantly associated to depression symptoms ($p \leq 0.05$). Subsequently, a logistic regression model was run and variables with a p value of ≤ 0.05 were considered significant.

Ethical approval of the study was obtained from Sefako Makgatho University Research Ethics Committee (SMUREC/H/340/2019: PG). Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Gauteng Provincial Department of Health, the Johannesburg Health District Research Committee and the operational managers of each of the three clinics. Written informed consent was obtained from each participant, after information about the study was given and the principles of privacy and confidentiality were explained.

RESULTS

Demographic information of participants

The ages of the participants ranged from 18 to 35, with an average 27.67 years. All the participants were African ($n=405$, 100%) and a majority were single ($n=345$, 85.19%), unemployed ($n=259$, 63.95%) and had secondary school ($n=330$, 81.84%) as their highest level of education. Almost all ($n=403$, 99.51%) participants had access to health facilities in their residential areas. (See Table 1)

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics

Variable	Frequency (%)
Age (Min 18; Max 35; Mean 27.67; SD 4.87)	
18-24 years	120 (29.63%)
25-30 years	155 (38.27%)
Above the age of 30	130 (32.10%)
Race	
African	405 (100%)
Marital Status	
Married	59 (14.57%)
Single	345 (85.19%)
Widowed	1 (0.25%)
Employment	
Employed	146 (36.05%)
Unemployed	259 (63.95%)
Highest level of education	
Primary	1 (0.25%)
Secondary	330 (81.48%)
Tertiary	74 (18.27%)
Alcohol use⁴	
Yes	325 (80.25%)
No	80 (19.75%)
Illness⁵	
No	360 (88.89%)
Diabetes	8 (1.98%)
Hypertension	21 (5.19%)
Other	16 (3.95%)
Access to facility⁶	
Yes	403 (99.51%)
No	2 (0.49%)

Prevalence of depression symptoms

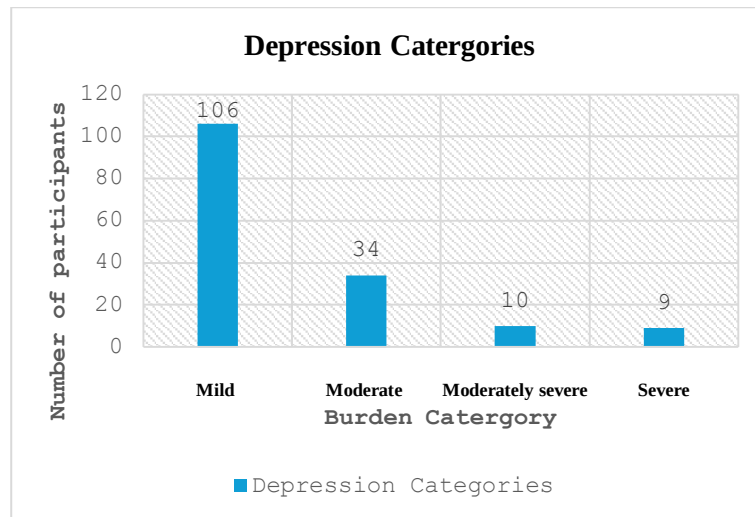
A prevalence of 39.26 % (n=159) of depression symptoms was detected among participants, (8.40 %, n=34). Only a few displayed moderately severe (2.47 %, n=10) and severe (2.22 %, n=9) symptoms. (See figure 1 below).

with a majority displaying mild symptoms (26.17 %, n=106), followed by moderate symptoms

⁴ Alcohol use refers to whether the participant drinks alcohol or not

⁵ Illness refers to whether the participant has been diagnosed with a chronic illness

⁶ Access to health facility refers to whether the participant has access to a health facility within their current place of residence

Figure 1: Depression Categories

Comparison of reported depressive symptoms between participants with probable depression and those without depression

Table 2 below depicts the responses provided by the participants on the depression components as per the PHQ-9. When those classified with probable depression were compared with

those who had no depression, there was a higher frequency of depression symptoms reported among those with probable depression.

Table 2: Comparison of reported depressive symptoms between participants with probable depression and those without depression

Component of depression symptoms	Probable depression (%)	Not depressed (%)
Little Interest or pleasure in doing things	119 (75.32)	39 (24.68)
Feeling down, depressed or hopeless	139 (71.28)	56 (22.76)
Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or sleeping too much	131 (71.89)	51 (28.02)
Feeling tired or having little energy	134 (67.34)	65 (32.66)
Poor appetite or over-eating	68 (72.34)	26 (27.66)
Feeling bad about yourself- or that you're a failure or have let yourself or your family down	124 (76.07)	39 (23.93)
Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching the television	58 (84.06)	11 (15.94)
Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed. Or, the opposite- being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual	31 (86.11)	5 (13.89)

Thought that you would be better off dead or hurting yourself in some way	18 (94.74)	1 (5.36)

Variables associated with depression symptoms

All the socio-demographic variables were analyzed to establish which factors were associated to symptoms of depression. The Pearson

chi-test of association showed that the employment status and alcohol use were significantly associated to depressive symptoms, as depicted in Table 3 below

Table 3: Variables associated with depression symptoms

Variable	Frequency (%)	Probable Depression (%)	Not depressed (%)	Chi ²	p-value
Age				0.9917	0.609
18-24 years	120 (29.63)	47 (29.56)	73 (29.67)		
25-30 years	155 (38.27)	65 (40.88)	90 (36.59)		
Above the age of 30	130 (32.10)	47 (29.56)	83 (33.74)		
Marital Status				3.8683	0.145
Married	59 (14.57)	17 (10.69)	42 (17.07)		
Single	345 (85.19)	142 (89.31)	203 (82.52)		
Widowed	1 (0.25)	0 (0.00)	1 (0.41)		
Employment				59.2429	0.000**
Employed	146 (36.05)	21 (13.21)	125 (50.81)		
Unemployed	259 (63.95)	138 (86.79)	121 (49.19)		
Highest level of education				0.6490	0.723
Primary	1(0.25)	0 (0.00)	1 (0.41)		
Secondary	330 (81.48)	130 (81.79)	200 (81.30)		
Tertiary	74 (18.27)	29 (18.24)	45 (18.29)		
Alcohol use				3.5842	0.058**
Yes	325 (80.25)	135 (84.91)	190 (77.24)		
No	80 (19.75)	24 (15.09)	56 (22.76)		
Illness				4.6536	0.199
No	360 (88.89)	142 (89.31)	9 (5.66)		
Diabetes	8 (1.98)	1 (0.63)	7 (2.85)		
Hypertension	21 (5.19)	7 (4.40)	14 (5.69)		
Other	16 (3.95)	9 (5.66)	7(2.85)		
Access to facility				0.0972	0.755
Yes	403 (99.51)	158 (99.37)	245 (99.59)		
No	2 (0.49)	1 (0.63)	1 (0.41)		

Logistic regression model

At regression model, only employment status remained significantly associated to symptoms of depression. Those who were unemployed

were at a 12% increased risk of depression than those who were employed (See Table 4 below).

Table 4: Logistic regression showing variables associated to depression symptoms

Factors	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	P> z	[95% Conf. Inter- val]
Age	1.237063	.1896014	0.165	.9160735 1.670526
Marital status	1.237071	.4670651	0.573	.5902249 2.592818
Employment status	.1393002	.0387507	0.000 **	.0807539 .2402925
Highest level of educa- tion	1.312612	.3849731	0.354	.7387362 2.332295
Alcohol use	1.411543	.4137153	0.240	.7947158 2.507128
Illness	.9165602	.1594806	0.617	.6517075 1.289048
Access to facility	1.093306	1.57045	0.950	.065472 18.25692

DISCUSSION

This study was aimed at determining the prevalence and associated factors of depression symptoms among young men living in Soweto, whose ages were aligned to those reported in another study conducted in the Gauteng province among young men (Hatcher et al., 2019). All the participants were African, which can be explained by the locality of the research setting. Similar to other studies, (Alenazi et al., 2019), the majority of the participants were single. It is reasoned that most young men within this age group are more likely to be unmarried as compared to their older counterparts (Brown et al., 2020). Furthermore, majority of the participants had secondary school education as their highest level of education and this is synonymous to other studies conducted in low resourced communities (Tomita et al., 2019). Young people from such disadvantaged environments, have limited access to tertiary education based on various factors such as lack of funding, limited opportunities, as well as other socio-economic barriers that hinder access to higher education (Maila & Ross, 2018). Additionally, there was a high rate of unemployment which is consistent with national statistics indicating that 4.9 million young adults in the country are unemployed (Africa, 2023).

Depressive symptoms were prevalent among 39.26 % of the participants, with a majority exhibiting mild-moderate symptoms (n=140, 34.21%). The current prevalence was synonymous with another study conducted among men residing in some parts of Johannesburg

and Durban, which also reported a prevalence of 39.2 % of probable depression (Hatcher et al., 2019B). However, this prevalence was much higher than the national prevalence of 25.7% reported among the South African population, which suggests that this sample may have been at a greater risk for depression than the general population. The current study's prevalence was slightly higher than the 26% and 30 % observed among young men in Johannesburg (Hatcher et al., 2019A) and Western Cape (Bantjies et al., 2019), respectively. However, the current prevalence was lower than the 56% prevalence reported among adolescent males in Saudi Arabia, which may be explained by the different age groups as the Saudi Arabia study included adolescents younger than 18. Literature has shown higher risk of depression among adolescents (Shorey, Ng & Wong, 2022) as the adolescent years are viewed as a highly stressful period in which one undergoes major psychological, physical and emotional changes.

Despite numerous sources linking chronic diseases and heightened risk of depression (Tomita et al., 2019; Farooqi et al., 2022; Karami et al., 2022;) in the present study, illness was not associated to depression symptoms. Marital status was also not significantly associated to symptoms of depression, although it was observed that there were higher rates of depression symptoms among single participants. While these results correspond with other sources that found no association (Adamczyk & Segrin, 2015), an Indonesian study among

young adults displayed more frequent depression symptoms among those who were unmarried (Purborini et al., 2021). Likewise, the same patterns were observed in Spain (Ramon-Arbues et al., 2020), Finland (Grundstrom et al., 2021) and South Africa (Craig et al., 2022), which confirms that a healthy marriage can be a buffer against depression due to its provision of social, emotional and financial support (Grundstrom et al., 2021).

Participants who drank alcohol were 1.4 more likely to exhibit symptoms of depression than those who did not drink any alcohol, although this did not remain significant after multivariate analysis. The use of alcohol (Lee et al., 2018; Rice et al., 2021) and other substances (Gobbi et al., 2019; Han et al., 2021; Purborini et al., 2021) have been linked with greater odds of being depressed. Literature has shown that substance abuse may be an underlying symptom of depression (Rice et al., 2021), even more so for men as they tend to display externalizing symptomology due to societal and gender norms (Oliffe et al., 2019). Substance use among men is more socially acceptable and perceived as more masculine (von Zimmermann et al., 2023), which may also explain why substance abuse is more prevalent in this group (Hunt et al., 2020). Other socio-demographic factors such as age and education level were not associated with depression symptoms in the current research, which is similar to other literature sources (Alenazi et al., 2019; Cameron-Maldonado et al., 2023). However, there were some discrepancies in literature as some reported younger age as a risk factor for depression (Arensman et al., 2020; Ramon-Arbues et al., 2020) though others linked depression with older age (Craig et al., 2022). On the other hand, similar variances were reported for levels of education as some found lower levels of education as a risk factor (Craig et al., 2022), while contrary evidence found higher rates of depression among those with higher levels of education (Nzeabide et al., 2018). It is reasoned that those with higher education levels are more likely to experience academic pressure, which may place them at a higher risk of depression. However, it has also been argued that those with lower education levels, are more likely to

be unemployed which places them at a higher risk of poverty (Van Zon et al., 2017).

Poverty has been found to increase the likelihood of depression (Ridley et al., 2020), as reported by a study in the Western Cape, which found an association between dimensions of poverty and increased risk of suicide among young men in poor communities (Tomita et al., 2019). The current study found that participants who were unemployed had greater odds of exhibiting depressive symptoms than those who were employed. The South African Labor market is faced with high levels of unemployment, with higher rates among young adults, as well as those from disadvantaged environments. For example, the current unemployment rate of 32.9% in the country, is reported to be one of the highest globally (Africa, 2023), which may explain the elevated levels of depression. This is confirmed by a study which reported a 3.25 increased risk of depression among those who were unemployed (McGee & Thompson, 2015). Moreover, the impact of the pandemic resulted in many job losses globally which worsened depression rates among the population due to loss of income. Other studies have also reported lower rates of depression among men who retained their jobs during the pandemic as compared to those who lost their jobs (Posel et al., 2021). The severity of the impact of unemployment on depression can be explained by societal values which depict gender norms that ascribe the obligatory roles of breadwinner and head of the household to males in the home-setting (Yoo et al., 2016) and this is the reality for most men in South Africa. Thus, the inability to provide may lead to psychological distress.

Fatigue, depressed mood and hopelessness as well as sleeping difficulties are some of the most frequent symptoms reported by participants. In all aspects of depression symptoms as per the PHQ-9, participants who had probable depression had a higher frequency of symptoms when compared to those who did not. Additionally, alcohol use was prevalent among 80% of the men, which is quite concerning but not surprisingly. Literature has found similarly high levels of alcohol use among men within the country (Trangenstein et al., 2018). The

current study reported a 4.69% suicidal and self-harm ideation among the participants,

which is a little lower than the 5.97% reported in a similar study (Bantjies et al., 2018).

CONCLUSION

There is a high prevalence of depression symptoms among young men in Soweto, with certain socio-demographic factors that heighten their vulnerability. Unemployment is an issue throughout South Africa and is confirmed to be a significant risk for depression symptoms in this study. It is therefore recommended that more prevalence studies should be done to ascertain the prevalence of depression among young men across the country, which have shown to be a hidden clinical population. Moreover, increased awareness and greater involvement in redressing social ills such as unemployment is required to address contributory factors to mental disorders. The strength of the study lies in its use of a well-validated data collection tool and a large sample size. Moreover,

data was collected from three different health facilities in three townships within Soweto, hence ensuring representation. However, due to the research setting being clinics, and the participants presenting with some health challenges, these results may not be generalizable to the community who do not have health challenges. Secondly, due to the ethical principle of voluntary participation, there was selection bias because only those who were interested participated, and they may be different from those who declined to participate. Additionally, due to the cross-sectional nature of the study, confounding factors may have influenced the results and thus caution should be taken during interpretation.

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EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF VENDA MORAL VALUES ON THE BEHAVIOUR OF YOUTH

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Abstract

The Vhavenda people, an indigenous ethnic group in South Africa, possess a deep-rooted cultural heritage defined by a strong moral code and traditional ethical values. In recent years, however, the influence of modernisation, urbanisation, and global cultural shifts has presented significant challenges to preserving and transmitting these values, particularly among the youth. This article explores the influence of Venda moral values on the behaviour of young people in Nzhelele village, Limpopo Province. Grounded in the Afrocentric Theoretical Framework, which emphasises African indigenous knowledge systems and cultural values, the article adopts an interpretivist research paradigm to understand the social and cultural dynamics at play. A qualitative, ethnographic research design was employed to investigate how traditional Venda morals shape or fail to shape youth behaviour in the selected community. The population consisted of elderly custodians of culture ($n=8$) and youth ($n=40$) residing in Nzhelele village. Participants were selected through a non-probability purposive sampling technique to ensure relevant cultural and generational perspectives were represented. Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to express their experiences and perceptions. Thematic analysis was used to interpret the qualitative data and identify recurring themes related to morality, cultural shifts, and behavioural patterns. This study was geographically delimited to Nzhelele village, which allowed for a focused exploration of context-specific influences on youth behaviour. To ensure trustworthiness, the

article observed credibility through prolonged engagement, dependability through detailed methodological documentation, confirmability via audit trails, and transferability through thick descriptions of the setting and participants. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and cultural sensitivity, were rigorously followed. The study found that Venda moral values still significantly influence youth behaviour, especially within families that actively practice cultural traditions and modern influences, particularly media and peer pressure, contribute to gradually erasing these traditional values among youth. The article recommended that community elders and cultural institutions be actively engaged in youth development programs to reinforce traditional moral education, and schools and local leaders should collaborate in integrating indigenous moral teachings into formal and informal learning spaces. While Venda moral values play an essential role in shaping youth behaviour, there is an urgent need for deliberate, culturally informed strategies to preserve these values in the face of evolving societal dynamics.

Keywords: *Cultural transmission, Indigenous knowledge system, Venda moral values, Youth behaviour*

INTRODUCTION

The study of youth behaviour in South Africa is a vital area of research, particularly considering the country's complex social, economic, and cultural landscape. South African youth face multiple influences, including poverty, unemployment, peer pressure, global media, and evolving cultural norms (Maringe & Moletsane, 2020). Within this broader context, exploring the influence of indigenous value systems, such as Venda moral principles, on youth behaviour is both timely and significant. The Vhavenda people, primarily located in the Limpopo Province, possess a well-preserved cultural identity rooted in Ubuntu, communal living, and a deep reverence for elders and tradition (Mavhungu, 2021).

Venda morals emphasise respect for elders, community responsibility, obedience, humility, and spiritual consciousness. These traditional values are often passed down through storytelling, initiation schools, and intergenerational communication. However, with the increased exposure to modern influences such as social media, urbanization, and globalization, there is growing concern that these moral teachings are becoming less influential among the youth (Netshandama & Nemakhavhani, 2023). This raises important questions about how these traditional norms continue to shape—or fail to shape—the behaviour

and decision-making of young people in contemporary Venda communities.

Youth behaviour is often a reflection of the value systems they are exposed to during formative years. In indigenous African communities like Nzhelele village, the erosion of moral values has been linked to rising levels of delinquency, substance abuse, and intergenerational conflict (Khoza & Mukhola, 2022). Understanding the persistence or decline of traditional Venda moral values among youth offers insight into cultural sustainability, identity formation, and social cohesion.

Therefore, this article investigates the influence of Venda moral values on the behaviour of youth in Nzhelele village. The research contributes to the broader discourse on indigenous knowledge systems, youth development, and cultural preservation. It also offers practical implications for community leaders, educators, and policymakers seeking to reinforce ethical frameworks in youth upbringing within culturally specific contexts.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Traditional African societies, including the Vhavenda of South Africa, have long depended on indigenous moral systems to guide behaviour and maintain social order. These systems are

deeply embedded in cultural rituals, oral traditions, and communal life. Among the Vhavenda, moral instruction is not only a family responsibility but also a communal one, often reinforced through traditional ceremonies, storytelling, and initiation schools (Mavhungu, 2021). Venda moral values emphasise respect for elders, communal responsibility, honesty, and reverence for spiritual and ancestral authority. These values have historically shaped youth behaviour and identity within the community.

South Africa's rapidly changing socio-cultural environment has introduced new challenges to the transmission of traditional values. Globalization, urbanization, and digital media have increasingly influenced youth perspectives, often clashing with indigenous moral teachings (Netshandama & Nemakhavhani, 2023). The widespread use of technology and exposure to external cultural norms have contributed to the erosion of traditional moral structures, leading to shifts in behaviour, identity, and interpersonal relationships among youth (Maringe & Moletsane, 2020).

In the context of the Nzhelele village in Limpopo Province, these dynamics are particularly visible. While elders continue to serve as custodians of culture and moral guidance, many young people are distancing themselves from traditional practices, citing irrelevance or peer influence (Mas-hau & Nevhutanda, 2022). The growing gap between generations has led to concerns about moral decline, including increased substance abuse, disrespect for authority, and loss of communal values (Khoza & Mukhola, 2022). These behavioural changes reflect not just a rejection of traditional norms but a struggle to reconcile inherited moral systems with modern-day realities.

This article, therefore, seeks to explore the influence of Venda moral values on youth behaviour in Nzhelele village. Understanding this dynamic is crucial for promoting cultural continuity, community development, and youth empowerment.

The research seeks to provide insights for policy-makers, educators, and community leaders on how to incorporate traditional moral education into youth development initiatives relevant to contemporary society.

1. Problem Statement

The rapid shift towards modern lifestyles and global cultural influences has gradually eroded traditional moral systems among many indigenous communities in South Africa. In the Venda culture, where morals such as respect for elders, communal responsibility, and humility were once foundational in shaping youth behaviour, these values are increasingly being challenged. Youth in Nzhelele village, like in many rural settings, are caught between adhering to traditional values and embracing modern influences. This has resulted in behavioural changes that concern elders and community leaders, including a rise in disrespect, delinquency, and moral confusion. Despite the known value of indigenous knowledge systems in community development, limited scholarly attention has been given to the role of Venda moral teachings in shaping youth behaviour in rural settings. This article, therefore, seeks to fill that gap by exploring how Venda moral values continue to influence—or fail to influence—the behaviour of youth in Nzhelele village.

AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this article is to explore the influence of Venda moral values on the behaviour of youth in Nzhelele village, Limpopo Province. The following research questions guided this article:

- What core Venda moral values are traditionally taught to the youth in Nzhelele village?

- How are these moral values transmitted to younger generations within the community?
- How do youth in Nzhelele perceive and respond to traditional Venda moral teachings?
- What factors contribute to the continuity or erosion of these values among the youth?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This article is guided by Afrocentric Theory and Feminist Theory. These frameworks provide culturally and socially responsive perspectives for understanding how Venda moral values influence youth behaviour in Nzhelele village.

Afrocentric Theory, as developed by Asante (2019), emphasizes the importance of placing African people at the centre of their own history, culture, and social experiences. It challenges dominant Eurocentric narratives and promotes indigenous knowledge systems as valid and essential. This theory is relevant to the study because it recognises Venda moral values such as respect for elders, communal responsibility, and spiritual awareness as dynamic cultural systems that continue to shape youth behaviour. Afrocentricity also draws attention to the ways colonialism and globalisation have disrupted traditional value systems, leading to moral decline and identity confusion among the youth (Mazama, 2020; Ndlovu, 2021). Therefore, Afrocentric Theory offers a culturally rooted way to understand how indigenous ethics can be revived to support youth development and strengthen community ties.

Feminist Theory, with a focus on African Feminist perspectives, is also used in this study to explore how gender influences the teaching and experience of moral values in Venda society. This theory examines how power relations and gender roles are embedded in cultural practices. In Venda culture, moral values such as respect and obedience are often taught differently to boys and girls. For example, initiation rituals and

moral instructions may reinforce traditional gender roles that limit young women's opportunities or maintain patriarchal norms (Mama, 2020). Feminist Theory provides tools to critically analyse these practices, aiming to preserve cultural values while promoting gender equality.

By using Feminist Theory, the study can examine how young men and women experience moral teachings differently, and how these gendered experiences shape their behaviour and moral development. This approach helps ensure that the revival of traditional values contributes to both cultural preservation and social justice.

Together, Afrocentric and Feminist theories offer a comprehensive framework for examining youth behaviour in Nzhelele village. They support the view that moral education rooted in culture, but also mindful of gender equality, can help build ethical, resilient, and socially responsible young people.

CONCEPTUALISATION OF VENDA MORAL VALUES

Venda moral values refer to the set of deeply rooted traditional beliefs, cultural practices, and ethical standards that govern acceptable behaviour and social conduct within the Vhavenda community. These values are intergenerationally transmitted and play a critical role in shaping identity, community cohesion, and behavioural norms. Venda's moral philosophy includes respect for elders, obedience, communal living, spiritual consciousness, and integrity (Rambau & Phaswana, 2020). These values are not merely abstract ideals but actively practised and embodied through social rituals, oral traditions, and communal responsibilities.

In the context of this article, Venda moral values are conceptualised as cultural tools that influence youth behaviour in both direct and subtle ways. For instance, obedience and respect for elders are expected forms of social engagement that foster

discipline and self-control in young people. Similarly, communal living and spiritual awareness encourage a sense of belonging and accountability, deterring individualistic and antisocial behaviour (Ndlovu, 2022). These values collectively provide a moral compass that guides youth in making decisions, resolving conflicts, and interacting within their communities.

However, the transmission of these values is challenged by modern influences such as globalisation, digital media, and urbanisation, which often introduce conflicting ideologies and behavioural norms (Mudzielwana & Mulaudzi, 2021). Consequently, many youths in areas like Nzhelele village face a moral crossroads—torn between traditional expectations and modern lifestyles. This article views Venda moral values not just as heritage, but as living, adaptable frameworks that can still offer solutions to contemporary behavioural challenges among the youth.

By understanding how these values are preserved, challenged, or reinterpreted by today's youth, the article aims to reveal the dynamic nature of culture and the potential of indigenous moral systems to shape youth behaviour in sustainable and socially positive ways.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review explores the multifaceted relationship between indigenous moral values and the behaviour of youth, with a specific focus on Venda cultural practices. By examining historical, cultural, and contemporary influences, the review aims to contextualize youth development within the broader framework of African moral systems.

Indigenous Moral Systems in African Communities

Indigenous moral systems in African societies have historically played a foundational role in guiding behaviour, maintaining social cohesion, and ensuring intergenerational continuity of ethical norms. These systems are often rooted in oral traditions, communal enforcement, rituals, and the lived experiences of elders. Within many African communities, including the Vhavenda of South Africa, moral education begins early in life and is reinforced through social practices such as *initiation schools*, *family storytelling*, and *ritual performances* that emphasise virtues like respect, honesty, hard work, and collective responsibility (Letsoalo & Ngobeni, 2021).

Storytelling, in particular, serves as a vehicle for moral instruction, often embedding lessons in folklore that communicate the consequences of immoral behaviour and the rewards of ethical conduct. These stories are not merely entertainment; they function as informal but effective systems of social regulation (Mabovula, 2020). Elders and community leaders act as custodians of these moral teachings, ensuring that cultural knowledge and ethical standards are preserved and transmitted across generations.

Indigenous moral systems are deeply intertwined with spiritual beliefs. Moral behaviour is often linked to ancestral approval, and transgressions are believed to bring misfortune not only to individuals but to the broader community (Ngulube, 2019). This communal accountability fosters a sense of moral responsibility that goes beyond the self, reinforcing values such as solidarity, empathy, and mutual care.

Recent studies show that in rural communities like Nzhelele, where traditional life persists alongside modern influences, indigenous moral systems still hold significant sway in shaping youth behaviour (Mulaudzi & Makatu, 2022). However, these systems are under pressure from contemporary challenges such as urban migration, exposure to digital media, and weakening traditional structures, which can result in moral

disorientation among the youth.

Therefore, understanding the resilience and relevance of indigenous moral systems is crucial for culturally grounded strategies that address behavioural issues among African youth. This review lays the foundation for exploring how Venda moral values specifically influence youth conduct in today's complex social context.

The Role of Culture in Youth Development

Culture plays a pivotal role in shaping the psychological, emotional, and social development of young people. In African societies, cultural identity is not merely a background influence but a core element of youth formation, guiding behaviour, beliefs, and a sense of belonging. Cultural values, norms, and moral systems create a framework within which youth learn to navigate life's challenges, define their roles in society, and build relationships (Mkhize & Mji, 2020). In the Vhavenda context, moral values embedded in culture—such as respect for elders, communal responsibility, and spiritual awareness—are critical in shaping youth attitudes and behaviours.

Studies have shown that when youth are grounded in their cultural identity, they are more likely to exhibit positive behaviour patterns, such as increased empathy, discipline, and resilience (Kagiso & Mofokeng, 2021). Cultural traditions provide not only a moral compass but also a sense of purpose, which can protect youth from engaging in risky or antisocial behaviour. These protective cultural factors serve as informal education systems, particularly in rural communities like Nzhelele, where formal youth development structures may be limited.

Cultural engagement has been linked to improved self-esteem and social integration among youth. When young people are encouraged to participate in traditional practices, festivals, and storytelling sessions, they develop a stronger

connection to their heritage and a clearer understanding of community values (Molefe & Thwala, 2023). This connection often translates into socially responsible behaviour and a desire to uphold community norms.

Modern influences such as urbanisation, technology, and exposure to Western media often dilute these cultural frameworks, leading to confusion and identity struggles among youth (Ndlovu, 2022). The erosion of cultural values can result in behavioural challenges, including disrespect for authority, lack of discipline, and increased social alienation. Therefore, integrating culture into youth development programs is essential for sustaining ethical conduct and reinforcing identity in rapidly changing societies.

By examining the relationship between Venda cultural values and youth behaviour, this article contributes to broader discussions on how indigenous cultural systems can be harnessed to support youth development in contemporary African contexts.

Transmission of Moral Values in Venda Society

In Venda society, the transmission of moral values is deeply embedded in traditional institutions and social practices that ensure continuity of cultural identity and community cohesion. Mechanisms such as initiation schools (*musevhetho* for boys and *vhutukuni* for girls), family guidance, and community rituals play central roles in the moral education of the youth. These structures are not only sites of cultural learning but also function as frameworks for instilling discipline, respect, and a sense of responsibility (Ramaliba & Baloyi, 2020).

Initiation schools serve as rites of passage that mark the transition from childhood to adulthood. These culturally sanctioned spaces teach moral codes, social expectations, and cultural responsi-

bilities, including respect for elders, proper gender roles, and obedience to communal norms (Mudau & Mudzielwana, 2021). During these periods, elders, as custodians of cultural knowledge, impart wisdom that is meant to guide behaviour and decision-making long after the initiation process is complete.

The family unit is also a foundational site for value transmission in Venda communities. Parents and grandparents use oral traditions, storytelling, and proverbs to instil moral values in children from an early age. Through frequent interaction and participation in communal activities, children learn by observing and mimicking the behaviour of adults, reinforcing internalization of community-approved ethics (Netshifhefhe & Mashige, 2019).

Rituals and ceremonies, including ancestral worship and cultural festivals, further reinforce Venda moral systems. These events emphasise the interconnectedness of the living and the spiritual realm, promoting behaviours aligned with cultural integrity and collective well-being. Youth are actively involved in these rituals, where they learn that adherence to moral values is not only a social obligation but also a spiritual one (Tshivhase & Nekhwevha, 2022).

Despite the effectiveness of these mechanisms, challenges such as modernization, urban migration, and formal education systems that sideline indigenous knowledge have weakened these traditional practices. As a result, there is a growing disconnect between youth and traditional moral instruction, highlighting the need to revalorize indigenous value systems in modern contexts.

Impact of Modernization on Indigenous Values

Modernization, characterized by rapid techno-

logical advancement, urbanization, and globalization, has significantly transformed African societies, particularly in the way cultural values are perceived and practiced. Among youth, the influx of global ideologies and digital media has introduced new belief systems that often conflict with traditional norms. In Venda communities, this dynamic has led to an observable tension between upholding indigenous moral values and adapting to modern lifestyles (Ramovha & Tshivhase, 2020).

As youth increasingly access global platforms through smartphones and social media, they are exposed to diverse cultural values that challenge traditional practices. This exposure often fosters individualism, materialism, and alternative moral orientations that contrast with the communal, respectful, and spiritual ethics central to Venda culture (Sibanda & Mabasa, 2021). For instance, respect for elders—a key Venda value—is sometimes perceived by modern youth as outdated, leading to intergenerational misunderstandings and value erosion.

Urban migration also plays a role in the decline of traditional values. Young people moving to cities for education or employment often find themselves in environments where indigenous customs are not practiced or are viewed as irrelevant. This dislocation weakens their connection to their cultural roots and undermines the continuity of traditional moral instruction (Matshidze, 2019).

Formal education systems often prioritise Western knowledge systems while marginalizing indigenous knowledge. As a result, moral teachings rooted in African traditions are excluded from the curriculum, further distancing the youth from their heritage. Scholars argue for a more inclusive approach to education that integrates African values to preserve cultural identity and strengthen moral development (Khosa & Baloyi, 2023).

Despite these challenges, some studies highlight emerging strategies to preserve indigenous values in modern contexts, such as cultural festivals, language preservation programs, and digital storytelling initiatives (Muthivhi, 2024). These efforts aim to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity by presenting cultural values in ways that resonate with today's youth.

Youth behavioural trends in rural South Africa

Youth behaviour in rural South African communities has become a growing concern among scholars, educators, and policymakers. Rural youth face a unique blend of socio-economic challenges, including poverty, limited access to education, inadequate recreational facilities, and exposure to social vices such as substance abuse, early pregnancy, and crime (Molefe & Tshirela, 2020). These conditions, coupled with the erosion of traditional value systems, have contributed to shifts in behavioural patterns that often deviate from culturally acceptable norms.

A study by Moyo and Nkuna (2021) found that youth in rural areas exhibit increasing levels of disengagement from communal activities and moral expectations. This shift is partially attributed to the breakdown of extended family structures and reduced community-based mentorship, which traditionally played a role in shaping behaviour. High unemployment rates and lack of future prospects contribute to frustration and risky behaviours such as alcohol and drug abuse, especially among males (Dlamini & Makhubela, 2022).

Some rural youths have become active agents of change, forming peer-led support groups, participating in cultural revival initiatives, and engaging in agricultural and entrepreneurial activities that foster resilience and positive development (Ndlovu & Khuzwayo, 2023). Cultural institutions, such as initiation schools and traditional councils, are also being re-evaluated and adapted

to meet contemporary needs while preserving their moral functions (Raphalalani & Mudau, 2024).

Despite these promising efforts, a gap remains in the integration of traditional moral values with youth development strategies. This necessitates further exploration of how indigenous values, such as those found in Venda culture, can be leveraged to address behavioural challenges and strengthen identity, especially in isolated rural settings like Nzhelele village.

The reviewed literature highlights the enduring significance of Venda moral values, even as they face challenges from modernization and shifting cultural landscapes. A deeper understanding of these dynamics can inform culturally responsive strategies to support ethical youth development in rural South African contexts.

METHODOLOGY

This article adopts a qualitative research approach underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm, which emphasises understanding human experiences from the perspectives of those who live them (Thanh & Thanh, 2020). This paradigm is particularly suited for exploring the influence of Venda moral values on youth behaviour, as it allows for deep engagement with participants' cultural and social realities.

The qualitative research design uses an ethnographic approach to capture the nuanced practices, beliefs, and lived experiences embedded within the Venda cultural context. Ethnography is appropriate for this article as it provides an immersive way to understand how traditional moral values are transmitted and perceived (Maree, 2020).

Data collection involves in-depth semi-structured interviews with two distinct participant groups: four elderly Venda knowledge holders and four youth residents of Nzhelele village.

These interviews provide rich, detailed accounts of Venda morals' transmission and reception.

The population includes elderly community members recognised for their traditional knowledge and local youth aged 18–25. Purposive sampling ensured that participants were well-positioned to provide relevant cultural and behavioural insights (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

The sample size comprises eight elders and forty youths, including twenty male youths and twenty female youths, selected for their experiential knowledge and lived realities within the community. Thematic analysis was applied to the interview data to identify recurring patterns, beliefs, and behavioural interpretations aligned with Venda morals.

This article is delimited to Nzhelele village in Limpopo Province, ensuring a focused exploration of the cultural dynamics within a defined geographical area. To ensure trustworthiness, the article applied four strategies: *credibility* through member checking, *transferability* through thick descriptions, *dependability* via an audit trail, and *confirmability* through participant validation.

Ethical considerations included securing ethical clearance from the relevant institutional review board. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, voluntary involvement, the right to withdraw, and measures to protect their identity and confidentiality.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and interprets findings on the influence of Venda moral values on youth behaviour in Nzhelele village, organized around four central themes. It explores how traditional beliefs intersect with modern influences, revealing the complexities of cultural continuity and change among the youth.

Theme 1: Enduring significance of core Venda values

The findings from the interviews indicate that despite the pressures of modernization, certain core Venda moral values, particularly respect, obedience, and communal loyalty, continue to hold significance among both elders and youth in Nzhelele village. This theme highlights the resilience of traditional moral structures within the changing social environment.

Elders emphasised that respect for elders, obedience to authority, and communal living remain central to how young people are expected to behave. As one elder participant expressed:

“A child who does not greet properly or listen when spoken to is seen as poorly raised. In our tradition, respect is the first sign of a good home.” (Participant 1, elder)

Another elder reinforced the communal aspect:

“No one belongs only to their family. We say a child is raised by the village. Communal discipline and support were always there.” (Participant 3, elder)

These narratives align closely with the Afrocentric theoretical framework, which places indigenous African values and knowledge systems at the center of identity formation and community development (Asante, 2019). The continued relevance of these values supports the Afrocentric belief that traditional cultural systems are not outdated relics but active moral and social frameworks that shape behaviour and identity (Chawane, 2020).

From a **Feminist Theory** perspective, particularly African Feminism, the way these values are taught and enforced also reflects gendered expectations. In Venda culture, values like respect and obedience may be experienced differently by

young men and young women. For example, girls are often expected to show deference and humility more strongly than boys, especially in family and communal settings. This highlights how moral values, while communal in intent, can carry unequal expectations based on gender roles.

Interestingly, several youth participants acknowledged these traditional expectations, although their commitment to them varied. One remarked:

“My grandmother always reminds me to show respect to elders. I try to follow what she says because it’s part of who we are, even if not everyone does it now.” (Participant 6, youth)

Another noted:

“We hear these values at home, especially during family meetings. Sometimes it feels old-fashioned, but I know they matter.” (Participant 8, youth)

This mixture of adherence and ambivalence suggests that while modernization may challenge traditional practices, core values like respect and obedience have not been entirely displaced. Rather, they continue to serve as moral anchors for many, even as youth navigate newer cultural influences.

Thus, combining Afrocentric and Feminist perspectives provides a fuller understanding of the significance of Venda moral values. Afrocentric Theory highlights the cultural resilience and ethical strength of these values, while Feminist Theory critiques how these norms may reproduce gender inequalities. Together, they allow for a culturally grounded but socially critical analysis that honours traditional ethics while promoting fairness and inclusivity in how they are applied.

This theme ultimately shows that core moral values remain influential but must be continually re-

examined to ensure they support both cultural identity and gender equality in youth development.

Theme 2: Youth perceptions of Venda morals

This theme explores how Venda youth view and engages with traditional moral values. Some youth value these traditions, while others feel that they are outdated and less relevant in today's modern world. These differing views reflect a generational gap and highlight the changing cultural dynamics in rural South Africa.

Several youth participants expressed respect for the values passed down by elders, particularly those emphasizing respect, humility, and community. One participant stated:

“I believe Venda morals are good. They teach us to respect people and not act anyhow in public. I feel they guide me to be a better person.” (Participant 5, Male Youth)

However, other participants were more critical, questioning the relevance of these values in the present day:

“Sometimes these rules are too strict. We live in a different time now. Things have changed, and not everything from the past works today.” (Participant 7, youth)

These mixed responses show the ongoing negotiation between traditional customs and modern influences. According to Afrocentric Theory, indigenous knowledge systems shape identity and development (Asante, 2019), and while youth may struggle with these traditional values, the ambivalence seen here points to a shift influenced by modernization, digital media, and urbanization (Mhlongo, 2020).

From an Afrocentric perspective, these changes do not erase traditional values but call for their re-interpretation in ways that connect with the

current experiences of youth (Chawane, 2021). This highlights the importance of youth programs that preserve traditional values while also making them relevant in today's context.

In addition, Feminist Theory sheds light on how gender affects the way Venda values are understood. While both boys and girls navigate these traditional values, gender expectations often create different experiences. For example, young women are expected to display qualities like humility and respect in ways that reinforce traditional gender roles. These roles often require women to be quieter and less assertive than men, leading to frustration among some female youth, who may feel constrained by these norms.

One female participant expressed this frustration:

"I agree with the values, but sometimes it feels like they are only meant for girls. We are always told to be quiet and respectful, while the boys get more freedom." (Participant 4, Female Youth)

This highlights the gendered nature of traditional values, as Feminist Theory critiques how such norms can create inequality, limiting young women's freedom to express themselves compared to their male counterparts.

An elder's comment supports the need for a balanced approach:

"These values are not old but they are foundations. What changes is how we explain them to the young, how we make them see their worth in today's world." (Participant 6, Elder)

This aligns with the Afrocentric view of traditions as evolving knowledge systems that are central to identity and moral reasoning (Ndlovu, 2023). To bridge the generational divide, it is essential to educate youth in ways that preserve traditional values while also addressing the gendered nature of these values, ensuring that both

young women and men have equal opportunities to embrace their cultural heritage.

By integrating Afrocentric Theory and Feminist Theory, we can more deeply understand how Venda moral values are perceived by youth. This dual approach critiques traditional values not only from a cultural perspective but also with attention to how gender shapes the youth experience. Together, these frameworks help us understand how to adapt Venda moral teachings in a way that both honours tradition and promotes gender equality.

Theme 3: Influence of Modernization and Social Media

The findings under this theme illustrate how modernization, particularly through social media and globalized peer influences, is reshaping youth behaviour in rural Venda communities. While traditional values emphasize communal identity, obedience, and respect for elders, many participants observed that youth today are increasingly influenced by digital platforms and modern lifestyles, sometimes to the detriment of Venda moral values.

Youth participants acknowledged the role of social media in shaping their thinking, communication patterns, and social behaviours. One participant shared:

"Instagram and TikTok show you a different world. There you see people living freely, dressing how they want, talking back, and doing things that our culture calls disrespectful. But it's normal to us now." (Participant 16, Male Youth)

This statement highlights a broader shift in value systems, where individual expression is prioritized over collective responsibility. This shift often leads to a conflict between traditional expectations and modern norms. The elders interviewed expressed concern over the loss of traditional behavioral standards among youth. As one

elder noted:

"We used to teach our children by showing them how to behave, but now they learn from phones. They ignore us and say our ways are old-fashioned." (Participant 8, Elder)

From an Afrocentric perspective, this tension underscores the need to preserve and adapt African moral systems in a way that remains meaningful in contemporary contexts (Asante, 2019). Afrocentric Theory calls for centering African worldviews, cultural systems, and knowledge in analysing social behaviour. When youth shift their primary reference point from elders and community values to digital influencers and global media, they risk becoming disconnected from the indigenous frameworks that traditionally shaped their identity and moral reasoning (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021).

However, the influence of modernization is not entirely negative. Some youth participants recognized the importance of balancing tradition and modern life. One youth participant expressed:

"Yes, we use social media, but it doesn't mean we forget who we are. I still greet elders the right way and respect home rules. But I also believe in making my own choices." (Participant 8, Female Youth)

This duality presents an opportunity for culturally grounded interventions that merge traditional Venda values with modern youth realities. As highlighted in the Afrocentric approach, this integration does not dilute indigenous knowledge but positions it as a living, evolving system capable of engaging meaningfully with change (Chawane, 2021). The idea of "moral hybridization," where youth navigate between cultural fidelity and modern influences, reflects this negotiation process (Motsieloa & Makgahlela, 2023). While some youth detach from indigenous values, others reinterpret them to fit new environments—indicating that cultural adaptation is a dynamic

process rather than an outright abandonment.

From a Feminist Theory perspective, social media's influence on youth behavior also sheds light on how gender dynamics are reshaped in modern contexts. Social media platforms often promote ideals of individualism and personal freedom, which may challenge traditional gender roles in Venda society. The visibility of women in these spaces asserting their voices, presenting themselves freely, and engaging in behaviours that contradict local expectations can encourage a re-evaluation of gender norms.

For instance, some young women may begin to see social media as a space where they can express themselves in ways that defy traditional gender expectations of quietness and deference. In contrast, young men may feel empowered by these modern ideals of autonomy and self-expression, reinforcing the gendered nature of modernity and social media.

Feminist Theory critiques the gendered power structures that often persist within traditional value systems, particularly how these norms can limit the agency of women and girls. Social media platforms, in this context, become spaces of potential empowerment, where young women can challenge traditional gender roles and assert their identities in more liberated forms, which may create further tensions with elders who hold onto more patriarchal interpretations of Venda values.

This intersection of modernization, social media, and gender dynamics demonstrates the need for an inclusive approach to teaching values that not only engages with contemporary youth experiences but also fosters gender equality. As Feminist Theory suggests, this includes recognizing the voices of young women and addressing the constraints placed on them by traditional gender expectations. Thus, the theme underscores how modernization and social media serve as forces

of cultural change that also offer spaces for re-thinking traditional values, including those tied to gender roles.

Therefore, this article reinforces the Afrocentric argument for reclaiming indigenous value systems through contextual, intergenerational dialogue and youth-centred cultural education (Mugambi, 2022). Elders and educators in Nzhelele village, and similar communities, should be supported in designing spaces where Venda values can be taught in ways that resonate with the digitally connected generation. This approach would help balance the preservation of traditional knowledge while encouraging gender equality and modern adaptability, ensuring that both cultural and gender norms evolve in ways that empower all youth.

Theme 4: Challenges in Intergenerational Communication

A key theme that emerged from the data is the growing difficulty in communication between elders and the younger generation, which is impeding the transmission of Venda moral values. Both elders and youth acknowledged that conversations about tradition, discipline, and values are increasingly strained or avoided altogether. This intergenerational disconnect poses a threat to the continuity of indigenous knowledge systems, which have historically been passed down orally and through lived communal experience.

An elder participant shared:

"Children don't sit with us anymore. They stay in their rooms on their phones. Even when we try to talk, they say we are judging them or forcing old things on them." (Participant 2, Elder)

This quotation captures the frustration felt by many older community members who regard the transfer of cultural knowledge as a duty. In the Venda tradition, elders serve as moral custodians and are entrusted with guiding the youth through

stories, rituals, and shared experiences (Ndlovu, 2020). However, youth participants revealed that they often perceive elders' guidance as rigid or irrelevant to their lived realities. One youth explained:

"Sometimes the elders talk to us like we are still living in the 1960s. They don't understand the things we go through today. That's why we just avoid the conversation." (Participant 7, Male Youth)

This communication breakdown is symptomatic of a broader cultural shift, where modern life has altered not just values, but the very means through which knowledge is transferred. As articulated by Asante (2019), the Afrocentric framework stresses that African people's lived experiences and cultural systems must remain central to their development. When channels for sharing these systems erode, so does future generations' cultural grounding.

Afrocentricity advocates for reclaiming African modes of engagement, such as communal dialogue, storytelling, and elder-youth mentorship, as legitimate and vital ways of knowing (Chawane, 2021). The current disconnect, therefore, represents more than a generational issue; it is a disruption of an epistemological lineage that has long defined identity and morality in Venda society. This disconnect can also be analysed through a Feminist Theory lens, particularly in relation to the gendered dimensions of communication.

Traditionally, intergenerational exchanges in Venda communities are guided by elders who hold considerable authority, a structure often shaped by patriarchal norms that influence the way wisdom and moral guidance are transmitted. Elders, particularly male elders, are often seen as the gatekeepers of cultural knowledge, reinforcing established gender roles within the community. This creates a power dynamic where youth, especially young women, may feel marginalized

or excluded from the discourse, despite their desire to contribute their perspectives on evolving societal norms.

Youth participants noted that while they respect elders, they wish for conversations that are mutual rather than instructional:

"I don't mind learning, but I want to also share my side. It must be a two-way talk, not just them telling us how wrong we are." (Participant 10, Female Youth)

This sentiment reveals the desire for equitable communication, a foundational principle in Feminist Theory, where all voices, particularly those of marginalized groups like young women, should be valued equally. In the context of intergenerational dialogue, feminist theorists advocate for spaces where youth, especially women, can share their lived experiences and challenge traditional gender norms without fear of retribution or dismissal.

In a Feminist context, it's critical to reframe intergenerational dialogue not as a hierarchical transmission of knowledge but as a collaborative learning process that empowers all participants to engage as equals. This approach aligns with feminist values of reciprocity and inclusivity, ensuring that youth, especially young women, have agency in conversations about tradition, discipline, and values.

The call for "a two-way talk" reflects a more feminist view of education, where knowledge is not just passed down from an authority figure but is instead co-constructed through dialogue, allowing for more inclusive and nuanced understandings of tradition and identity. As Afrocentric education models increasingly emphasize this reciprocity, they also promote cultural knowledge as adaptive and responsive to new contexts, including the changing role of women and youth in society (Mugambi, 2022).

To bridge the intergenerational divide, the article suggests interventions such as youth-led cultural workshops, community dialogue forums, and intergenerational storytelling programs. These Afrocentrically grounded spaces can re-establish trust, promote mutual understanding, and renew commitment to preserving and evolving Venda moral values in meaningful ways. In the feminist framework, these interventions can also provide opportunities for young women to challenge patriarchal structures that limit their participation in cultural discourse, thus transforming intergenerational communication into a space for empowerment and gender equity.

The findings reveal a tension between traditional Venda moral teachings and contemporary youth experiences shaped by modernization and digital culture. Addressing this generational gap requires intentional cultural revitalization and dialogue to ensure the transmission and adaptation of moral values. By embracing feminist principles of inclusivity and mutual respect, these intergenerational dialogues can become spaces where youth, regardless of gender, feel heard and valued, ensuring the continuity of Venda cultural knowledge in an evolving world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Integrating indigenous moral education into school curricula presents a meaningful avenue for restoring cultural identity among youth. By embedding traditional teachings such as *mutupo* (clan identity), *vhutshilo ha vhukuma* (righteous living), and *lufuno* (respect) into subjects like Life Orientation, learners can better connect to their heritage while developing a culturally grounded ethical framework. This approach supports the Afrocentric educational model, which emphasises the importance of centering African values and experiences in pedagogical practices (Makuvaza & Gora, 2023). In doing so, education becomes not only a tool for academic advancement but also a vehicle for cultural preservation and moral development (Maphosa, 2021).

Beyond the classroom, the role of community-led youth initiatives cannot be overstated. Traditional leaders and elders can collaborate with youth groups to create mentorship structures grounded in indigenous knowledge systems. These platforms provide opportunities for mutual learning, where ethical conduct, identity, and community responsibility are reinforced in culturally resonant ways. Youth responses from the study indicated that they were more receptive to moral teachings when the process was participatory rather than didactic. This affirms the value of intergenerational mentorship in promoting moral agency and resilience, as highlighted by Ngomane and Gumede (2022), who argue that such mentorship fosters meaningful social bonds and grounded ethical behaviour.

Media campaigns also play a vital role in supporting these efforts. Local radio, community drama, and storytelling offer accessible and engaging platforms to disseminate Venda moral teachings. Traditional tales (*ngano*), dramatized for modern audiences, can serve as cultural mirrors that reflect the consequences of ethical and unethical choices, while reinforcing moral lessons in an entertaining format. Mugambi (2022) notes that culturally tailored media can positively influence youth attitudes and behaviors, particularly when the messaging resonates with their everyday experiences. The integration of these messages into both traditional and digital media platforms can broaden their reach and appeal, especially in communities where digital access is growing.

Equally important are structured intergenerational dialogue forums. These provide safe spaces for youth and elders to discuss values, expectations, and the challenges posed by modernity. Such conversations allow for a balanced transmission of knowledge, where both groups learn from each other—upholding the Afrocentric principle that cultural continuity is achieved through relational, communal exchange (Asante, 2019). Participants in the study noted that when

given the chance to voice their views respectfully, they felt more connected to their heritage and better understood the intentions behind traditional moral expectations. Institutionalizing these forums in schools, community centres, or cultural events could help bridge the growing communication gap, restore intergenerational respect, and foster ethical development anchored in indigenous values.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this article affirms that while Venda moral values remain culturally significant, their influence on the moral compass and behaviour of youth is weakening under the pressures of modernization, globalisation, and digital influence. This tension reflects a broader struggle within many African communities, where youth find themselves at a crossroads between ancestral wisdom and contemporary lifestyles. As revealed in the voices of participants from Nzhelele village, traditional values are often perceived as important but less applicable in today's fast-evolving social environment.

From an Afrocentric perspective, this dissonance can be understood as a result of dislocation from indigenous epistemologies (Asante, 2019). Afrocentricity insists on positioning African people at the centre of their own narratives and cultural experiences. Thus, the erosion of moral influence is not merely a matter of generational change but of systemic marginalization of African knowledge systems. The youth's partial disengagement from Venda values signals a need to reintegrate those values into their lived realities in ways that acknowledge contemporary challenges and aspirations.

This article also highlights the importance of cultural revitalization not as a nostalgic return to the past, but as a strategic and dynamic process. When indigenous moral teachings are modernised and communicated through relatable platforms, such as formal education, mentorship programs, and media, they can empower youth to construct ethical identities rooted in African values. This aligns with Makuvaza and Gora's

(2023) assertion that the indigenization of education and social programming is essential for decolonizing African minds and advancing context-relevant moral development.

The findings point to a critical policy implication: preserving moral values should be supported at the community level and within national cultural and educational strategies. Policies that promote intergenerational dialogue, support culturally grounded curricula, and encourage youth participation in cultural affairs can strengthen the resilience of African communities (Maphosa, 2021). When youth actively shape and sustain moral systems, they are more likely

to embrace them as relevant and empowering rather than outdated or imposed.

This research contributes to the discourse on ethical youth development in Africa by reaffirming the value of indigenous moral systems in shaping responsible citizenship, cultural identity, and communal harmony. It calls for a conscious and collective effort to safeguard and adapt these systems in response to the changing social landscape. By doing so, communities like Nzhelele can cultivate resilient, morally grounded youth who navigate the future with wisdom rooted in the past.

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.31>**EXPLORING THE ROLE OF HEALTHCARE MANAGEMENT IN IMPROVING PATIENT ADHERENCE TO END-STAGE RENAL DISEASE TREATMENT - THE CASE OF PIETERSBURG RENAL DIALYSIS UNIT****Momotho Georgina Thema**

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Abstract

End-Stage Kidney Disease (ESKD) is a global health and healthcare burden that is rapidly increasing. The growing number of ESRD patients necessitates dialysis management for better outcomes and well-being; thus, adherence to prescribed treatment is critical. Adherence is a major issue in chronic kidney disease patients. Patients may be disobedient to various aspects of their treatment regimen, such as medications, dialysis, dietary and fluid restrictions. As a result, healthcare management intervention is required to increase patient adherence to the ESRD treatment regimen.

The purpose of this study was to explore how healthcare management can play a role in improving adherence to ESRD treatment regimens among patients in Pietersburg Hospital, in Limpopo Province. A qualitative method approach was used. An exploratory case study design was used where qualitative data was collected in the form of questionnaires and semi-structured interview schedules. The data collected was to explore the perceptions of healthcare management regarding their role in managing patient adherence and the effectiveness of the existing programmes in ensuring patient adherence. Non-probability-Purposive sampling was used in selecting participants for the questionnaire and interviews. For the questionnaires, a total sample of 15 participants was selected and for the semi-structured interview schedule, a total sample of 15 participants was selected. Descriptive analysis using "measures of frequency" to develop a percentage was used to analyse the data collected through questionnaires. A thematic framework approach and Atlas.ti version 9.0 was used to analyse data collected through interviews. The institutional management theories such as Systems theory, Contingency theory, and Resource theory were used to guide the study.

The study's participants' ages ranged between 32-60+. The following key challenges faced by renal patients in attending their dialysis treatment were identified, transport, distance, financial problem, time -Allocated slots, and lack of support from families. The following 5 themes with their subthemes were discovered from the analysis of the transcripts, challenges of nonadherence, perceptions of healthcare management regarding their role, governance role of public health management, organisational factors, strategies, and recommendations.

Adherence to treatment regimens by renal patients is important, and healthcare management can play a role in improving the adherence of ESRD patients to treatment regimens by implementing the suggested recommendations. More studies are needed to explore the unit costs of hospitalisation of renal patients due to non-adherence to treatment and the benefits of decentralisation of nephrology treatment.

Keywords: Dialysis, End-stage Kidney Disease, End-stage Renal Disease, Gastrointestinal, Hemodialysis, Peritoneal.

Introduction

End-stage kidney disease (ESKD) is a global health and healthcare burden that is rapidly increasing (Thurlow, Joshi, Yan, Norris, Agodoa, Yuan & Nee, 2021). It is caused by irreversible progressive chronic kidney illness and results in permanent loss of kidney function, resulting in extremely high mortality rates in this population (Ramspek, Nacak, Van Diepen et al., 2017). The increasing number of patients suffering from End-stage renal disease (ESRD) requires dialysis management for enhanced results and well-being; thus, adhering to the recommended treatment is essential (Mukarakangwa, Chironda, Bhengu & Katende, 2018).

Adherence is a major issue in chronic kidney disease patients (Mechta Nielsen et al., 2017). Patients may refuse medications, dialysis, dietary and fluid restrictions, and other facets of their treatment regimen. As a result, healthcare management intervention is required to increase patient adherence to the ESRD treatment regimen. "Healthcare management is responsible for improving patients' health by preventing illness and disease, promoting healthy lifestyles, and consistently improving the healthcare delivery system by focusing on access, equity, efficiency, quality, and sustainability" as indicated in the mission statement of the Department of Health (National Department of Health, 2016/17).

Effective intervention might be through programmes that are aimed at increasing adherence such as support groups for ESRD patients. Introducing reward incentives to encourage conformity with the treatment schedule and also the formation of a multidisciplinary team to assist in improving the care of ESRD patients (Collister et al., 2019).

To ensure that the research is founded on the correct context, it is essential to understand the important concepts, namely adherence and compliance and what they intended. It was noticed that in practice and reality, the terms "adherence" and "compliance" are used together and synonymously as if they mean the same thing, but the definitions make it quite clear that they are distinctly separate activities (Mir, 2023).

Compliance is defined as the degree to which

an individual's actual regimen corresponds to that prescribed by a medical professional (McDonough, 2015; Fraser, 2010). The extent to which a person's conduct, such as taking medications, following a diet, and/or making lifestyle changes, equates with stipulated suggestions from a medical professional is termed "adherence" (Chakrabarti, 2014; WHO, 2003). As a result, the concept of adherence was used in this study because it assesses how well an individual's behavior aligns with healthcare recommendations, which includes actions as well as an indicator. (Mengden, Vetter, Tousse, & Sakir, 2006:95-96).

Background of the study

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is a universal medical impose including an immense economic problem in a healthcare organisation, as it is a risk contributor to cardiovascular disease (CVD) (Hill, Fatoba, Oke, Hirst, O'Callaghan, Lasserson & Hobbs, 2016). CKD is characterised as the development of a deviation in the functioning of the kidneys that persists for a period exceeding three months (Chen, Knicely & Grams, 2019). 1 or several of the following is involved in the following: "(1) GFR less than 60 mL/min/1.73 m²; (2) albuminuria (i.e., urine albumin 30 mg per 24 hours or urine albumin-to-creatinine ratio (ACR) 30 mg/g); (3) anomalies in urine sediment, histology, or imaging indicative of kidney damage; (4) renal tubular disorders; or (5) history of kidney transplantation.". Chronic kidney disease impacts 8% to 16% of the global population and is a leading cause of death (Chen, Knicely & Grams, 2019).

According to the American Kidney fund (2021), diabetes and hypertension create destruction on the kidney's sorting system, ultimately resulting in CKD. CKD is a rapidly evolving worldwide health challenge, with significant physiological, psychological, and socioeconomic implications for individuals, their families, and their communities (Chironda & Bengu, 2016). The guidelines from "Kidney Disease Improving Global Outcome (KDIGO)" described the various stages of CKD that progress to renal failure as follows: "... stage 1 there is a normal or high glomerular filtration rate (GFR) that is greater or equal to 90 (mL/min/1.73 m²), in stage 2, the GFR is mildly decreased between 60-89 (mL/min/1.73

m2), in stage 3a, the GFR is said to be mildly to moderately decrease and is equal to 45-59(ml/min/1.73 m2), the stage 3b is characterised by a moderately to severely decreased GFR 30-44(ml/min/1.73 m2), in stage 4, the GFR is severely decreased 15-29(ml/min/1.73 m2), and in stage 5 i.e. renal failure the GFR is less than 15(ml/min/1.73 m2)". All stages of CKD are associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular complications, premature mortality, and/or decreased quality of life (Hill et al., 2016).

South Africa faces a significant number of transmissible illnesses, and non-communicable illnesses (Mayosi, Flisher, Lalloo, Sitas, Tollman, & Bradshaw, 2009). Previous research has estimated that the South African population has an elevated rate of CKD. (Jardine & Davids, 2020).

Adeniyi et al. (2017) found CKD in 6% of teachers in schools, and Matsha, Yako, Ransburg, Hassan, Kengne, and Erasmus (2013) discovered it in 17% of a geographical group in Cape Town. The South African government's 2030 National Development Plan emphasises disease prevention, but to some extent, CKD is the outcome of a much larger health challenge that South Africa is facing (Moosa, Meyers, Gottlich & Naicker, 2016).

To enhance access to healthcare, the Health Department hosted a conference in 2015 to discuss the issues raised by CKD in South Africa and proposed solutions (Malatji, Wamukuo & Hyera, 2019). The meeting proposed increasing the kidney dialysis rate from 164 to 250 per million people (PMP) by 2025 (Malatji et al., 2019). In addition to the strategies that were suggested to reach the desired number was "the use of Private-Public Partnerships" (PPPs) (Malatji et al., 2019). This partnership was to assist in achieving healthcare quality and increasing access to healthcare. Donabedian (1980) refers to the quality of healthcare as care that is anticipated to maximise the well-being of patients after accounting for a proportion of anticipated benefits and costs associated with the healthcare process in all of its components. One of the Department of Health's strategic goals is to provide quality healthcare services, which will be possible with an adequate supply of financial, material, and human resources.

In a study conducted by Pedrini, Winter, Cerino, Zawada, Garbelli, Feuersenger, Feliciani, Ruggiero, Civardi, Amato, Canaud, Stuard, Karch & Gauly (2019), they cited that the "public-private dialysis" medical care model (PPP) could offer excellent care, which is especially important given the growing financial burden on public healthcare systems. Patients receiving hemodialysis under a PPP-care model framework got proper care that met the suggested goals for treatment and might benefit when it comes to hospitalisation and mortality results (Pedrini et al., 2019). Limpopo Province takes its name from the Limpopo River. Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Botswana are its neighbours. It also shares borders with Mpumalanga, Gauteng, and the Northwest provinces (www.sahistory.org.za, n.d.). It is home to a population of 5 951 999. Limpopo has five districts which are Capricorn, Mopani, Sekhukhune, Vhembe, and Waterberg (municipalities.co.za, n.d.).

In Limpopo Province, there was a need for a renal dialysis unit that would be able to cater for the people of Limpopo Province as a whole. Pietersburg Hospital is one of the Capricorn District's major hospitals which started with two beds and eventually had 12 beds to render renal dialysis services. Due to the increasing number of dialysis patients in the province, a structure capable of accommodating the ever-growing numbers was required. Financial limitations and a lack of infrastructure, the Provincial Department of Health collaborated with the private organisation Fresenius Medical Care to provide renal dialysis services in the province. All districts and regional hospitals transfer their patients using the Emergency Medical Services transport to Pietersburg Hospital for renal services.

The Department of Health signed a contract of 10 years with the private party to render renal services in Limpopo Province, Pietersburg Hospital. The contract which was signed for 10 years enabled the Department to render uninterrupted dialysis services to the population of Limpopo at a low cost. The handover of the project back to the public partner in October 2016 became the main issue as the Department of Health was not ready for the takeover. The contract was extended again for three years and eventually, the takeover took place in 2019.

The PPP in Limpopo Pietersburg Hospital contributed immensely to the quality of healthcare as patients received the best care possible through skilled and highly trained nurses. The Department's takeover of the renal dialysis unit brought with it challenges such as staff shortages, pharmaceutical issues, and environmental cleanliness issues that were not present during the partnership. These are healthcare management (organisational) related problems. Healthcare management must assist and oversee all services offered within the organisation that provides healthcare (Thompson, Buchbinder & Shanks, 2016). Healthcare management has the responsibility to provide leadership, review staffing plans of the renal unit and ensure proper procurement processes.

The researcher has been working in a tertiary hospital and supervising the renal dialysis unit for three years which has 20 beds with four sessions in 24 hours and a total of 139 patients on hemodialysis together with 90 patients on peritoneal dialysis. Patients are expected to attend hemodialysis treatment three times a week without fail. The researcher has noted with concern that patients are missing their dialysis sessions, which was 23% in 2019 with (PPP) and now 32% in 2020 with a public programme. Sometimes, patients arrive late for their dialysis and their dialysis sessions are shortened and they don't collect their treatments from the pharmacy as prescribed. These also include non-adherence to fluids and diet recommendations from the healthcare practitioners.

Some of these patients, including peritoneal dialysis patients, are admitted to the hospital with infections and stay longer, affecting hospital performance indicators such as average length of stay and average cost per day and rising hospitalisation costs (Wu et al., 2020). Therefore, effective preventative care can result in less hospitalisation of renal patients and a reduction of costs.

Problem statement

In Limpopo Province's Tertiary Hospital, not much is known about the role of healthcare management in improving patients' adherence to ESRD treatment. The majority of the studies were on healthcare management but not specifically on ESRD patients, such as the study on "measuring patients' satisfaction of service

quality in Swedish dental clinics" conducted by Namana and AI Dori (2018) and a qualitative study on "Knowledge implementation in healthcare management" by Roohi, Mahmoodi and Khoddam (2020), to name a few. In light of this, the researcher was inspired to conduct a study on the function of healthcare management in improving patient adherence to End-Stage Renal Disease.

Research Question

The present study intends to tackle the following research question: "What role can healthcare management play in improving adherence to end-stage renal disease treatment?"

Research Objectives

The following objectives serve as a starting point for this study to achieve the above study goal and to address the study's question:

1. To understand and describe the literature on adherence management and explore management-related interventions that can enhance patient adherence.
2. To understand the governance role of public health management in terms of the legislative framework that informs public health in South Africa.
3. To contextualise, describe and explain the challenge of non-adherence to the treatment regimen of ESRD patients at Pietersburg Hospital.
4. To explore the perceptions of healthcare management regarding their role in managing patient adherence and the effectiveness of the existing programmes in ensuring patient adherence.
6. To recommend possible ways in which healthcare management and healthcare providers can improve adherence to treatment regimens for ESRD patients at Pietersburg Hospital.

Rationale for the study

This study aimed to explore how healthcare management can play a role in improving adherence to ESRD treatment regimens among patients in Pietersburg Hospital, in Limpopo Province. These insights can then assist healthcare management in designing interventions to improve patient treatment programmes to improve adherence. This research aim will seek to benefit healthcare management in reducing healthcare costs and enhancing the standard of life of individuals with advanced renal failure.

Significance of the study

This research's significance stems from the fact that fewer studies have been conducted on the role of healthcare management in improving patient treatment adherence in ESRD patients. As a result, this study attempts to fill some of that gap. The study may also aid healthcare managers in developing context-specific and relevant interventions to improve adherence among ESRD patients. The research outcomes may add to the existing body of knowledge about non-adherence as a behavioural phenomenon.

Research Design and Methodology

According to Ranganathan and Aggarwal (2018:184), "research study design" refers to a structure, or a collection of techniques and processes utilized to gather and evaluate information regarding factors outlined in a particular investigation's issue. According to Babbie, Mouton, Voster, and Prozesky (2019:74), "It is a plan or blueprint of how you intend to conduct the research". Research methodology is characterised as an approach for methodically addressing the issue being studied; thus, it can be viewed as a method of learning how research is carried out to resolve a specific problem (Kothari, 2004:8). This study used exploratory case study design.

Exploratory research is significant as it can produce new understandings of a topic for research (Babbie et al., 2019:80) but the shortcoming of the exploratory study is that it rarely provides satisfactory answers to research questions that have to do with representativeness (Babbie et al., 2019). The researcher used an exploratory case study to discern new developments and ideas to recommend new ways that can be implemented to increase adherence.

Data collection methods

Primary empirical data is data that is collected for the first time by the researcher using questionnaires, observations, surveys, and interviews (Ajayi, 2017). Non-empirical methods are classified into two types, according to Viorela (2017). On the one hand, there are methods for reviewing research progress in a specific field (e.g., systematic literature review, meta-analysis) (Viorela, 2017). Personal observations, reflection on current events, and/or the

author's authority or experience, on the other hand, are used in non-empirical methods (e.g., critical studies, editor's introduction) (Viorela, 2017).

This study's primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews with selected healthcare managers and healthcare practitioners (doctors and nurses). Healthcare managers and practitioners were approached individually for the interview after hours to ensure that services were not disrupted. Secondary data is the data already collected or produced by others (Ajayi, 2017). In any research, the review of literature is based on secondary data. Other secondary data sources include published text and statistics (Kabir, 2016).

Pilot study

In social science research, the term "pilot study" is used in two different contexts (Van Teijlingen, Edwin & Hundley, Vanora, 2002). According to Polit, Beck and Hungler (2001), "pilot study" may refer to feasibility studies, which are "small-scale version(s) or trial run(s) done to prepare for the major study" (Van Teijlingen et al., 2002). Baker (1994: 182-3, as cited by Van Teijlingen et al., 2002), expands on this definition by stating that a pilot study can also be defined as the pre-testing or "trying out" of a specific research instrument.

Existing literature suggests that a pilot study sample should be 10% of the sample projected for the larger parent study, according to Connelly (2008). Hertzog (2008), on the other hand, cautions that this is not a simple or forthright issue to address since these kinds of studies are influenced by a variety of factors. Nonetheless, Isaac and Michael (1995) recommended 10 to 30 partakers for survey research pilots; Hill (1998) recommended 10 to 30 partakers for survey research pilots; Julious (2005) and van Belle (2002) recommended 12; and Treece and Treece (1982) recommended 10% of the project sample size.

The "parent" study had a sample size of 35, and the researcher used 10% of the sample size, which is four. The researcher opted for a sample size of five in case one withdraws from participating in the pilot study. The pilot phase of this study was conducted at Pietersburg Hospital. A total of three professional nurses, one

healthcare manager and one doctor were interviewed to test the interview tools. The researcher approached potential pilot study subjects separately and in person. Before obtaining permission from the study respondents, the researcher explained the study objectives and clarified any issues that arose during the study. Following the pilot study of the interview tools, the identified problems were discussed with the supervisor, and appropriate corrections were made.

Study Population

According to Polit and Hungler (1999:37), a “population” is defined as the shared or whole of all the objects, subjects, or participants who adhere to an array of conditions. It is also defined as the set of components that are used when the sample is drawn (Babbie et al., 2019:174). The following population was chosen based on the researcher's knowledge that they have relevant knowledge, skills, and experience in one form or another on the topic:

- a) In this current research, population A was the Healthcare Managers of Limpopo Province's tertiary hospitals for the 2019-2020 year of study, who were selected as the study's population. The researcher compiled a list of (15) healthcare managers who are responsible for planning and managing adherence programmes, have information on the budget of the hospital and are knowledgeable about the information system in the hospital.
- b) Study population B was (15) professional nurses who were experienced in rendering renal care services and interacted with renal patients daily; and
- c) Study population C was (5) doctors who were responsible for the care of renal patients and interacted with them daily.

Sampling Frame and Technique

A sampling frame is a collection of real cases wherein a sample is going to be drawn which must be population representative (Arani et al., 2015). A list of all Healthcare Managers and

Healthcare Professionals (Doctors and Nurses) employed at Pietersburg Hospital during the fiscal year 2019 to 2020 was sought for this study. The Non-probability - Purposive sampling technique was employed to select the sample of study participants. To be precise, the research samples were selected using this technique:

- 1) Sample selection for study populations A, B and C: Non-probability - Purposive sampling was used in selecting participants for interviews where the researcher purposely chose the participants based on their capability to provide the required data. Purposive or judgmental sampling, according to Maxwell (1996, as cited by Taherdoost 2016), is a method through which specific events are chosen on purpose to offer important data that cannot be gathered from other options. The advantage of this method is that it is affordable, suitable, not time-consuming, and perfect for exploratory research design (Taherdoost, 2016). The disadvantage of the method is that it does not allow generalisation (Taherdoost, 2016). There is also the possibility of subjectivity and bias, which is a disadvantage of the technique.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis and Atlas.ti were employed to analyse the primary data from the semi-structured interviews. This approach was employed to methodically discover, organise, and provide an understanding of significant trends in sets of data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This section is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Discussion of results

End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) is a major public health issue that has been linked to an increasing burden on healthcare systems and the global economy (Sanyaolu et al., 2018). De Geest and Sabate (2003) defined “adherence” as “the extent to which a person’s attitude matches with the agreed recommendations of a healthcare giver in terms of taking medications, following a recommended diet regimen and/or carrying out lifestyle changes.” Hence, healthcare professionals and management need to implement interventions that increase adherence of patients to ESRD treatment. The discussions below are based on the identified

themes of this study.

Theme 1: Challenges of Non-Adherence

Reliable transport to the dialysis center is important as it determines the time of arrival and attendance of the sessions by renal patients. Late coming results in shortened dialysis sessions for renal patients and impacts the effectiveness of the dialysis treatment. This study has shown that transport is one of the key challenges of patients in attending dialysis sessions. According to Varghese (2020), transportation is one of the challenges that may cause dialysis patients to fail to attend or shorten their dialysis sessions, impacting their health, and resulting in a rise in hospitalisation and mortality rates. Research teaches us that providing in-center hemodialysis is dependent on adequate, dependable transportation (Iacono, n.d).

Distance to the dialysis center emerged as one of the key challenges experienced by renal patients in this study because renal services are centralised, and patients travel from different districts to access them. According to Chironda and Bengu (2016), the availability and accessibility of dialysis centers affect chronic kidney disease (CKD) patients' adherence to prescribed treatment regimens. In another study, patients' quality of life (QOL) was compromised physically, psychologically, socially, and most importantly economically due to the time it took to access health services (Mbeje & Mtshali, 2021). This study also discovered that, due to transportation issues, some patients sleep overnight on benches at their nearest hospitals to be transported the next day, causing fatigue and sleep problems for renal patients.

One of the respondents said:

“And then the other issue that can help was, while in the process of decentralizing is to increase transportation because we really need to lessen the burden on our patients so that they have time with their families” (respondent CN 31).

According to research on fatigue in ESRD patients, fatigue is a serious issue that must be addressed to enhance life quality and poor health

outcomes (Davey et al., 2019). Sleep deprivation has a negative impact on psychological as well as physical health (Milrad et al., 2017; Saad et al., 2015).

Theme 2: Perceptions of healthcare management regarding their role

In this study health education, support groups and home visits emerged as the important programmes that are available to increase adherence to treatment regimens by renal patients.

The majority of participants said:

“Health education is increasing adherence because we tell the patients the true picture of what complications they will have when they don't comply.” (respondent CN 25).

Echoing similar sentiments, one participant added that:

“My role as a manager is to give the patients or the customers health education regarding treatment compliance. They must know about the treatment that they are taking, know about the side effects and they must also know about the dangers of not taking their medications as prescribed. Family involvement and patient involvement in health education, promotion of health education, I think it's the core” (respondent CN 30).

The low percentage indicated poor knowledge of healthcare practitioners on programmes that are implemented to increase adherence. Training and skills development of healthcare practitioners through continuous and professional tools such as workshops and information sessions can improve the knowledge, quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of the implementation of the available renal disease programmes.

Educational programmes intended for individual patients to increase adherence are important because they promote positive habits. A recent study by James, Roy, Antony, and George (2021) discovered substantial improvements in dialysis, medication, diet, and fluid adherence following educational intervention. The previous meta-analyses' findings indicated that educational programmes improved treatment adherence (Cho & Kang, 2021; Yangoz, Ozer, & Boz, 2021).

One of the participants said:

“Dietitians are there to ensure that they give advice because our patients are expected to maintain certain dietary lifestyle” (respondent CN 31).

Support groups play a very important role in ESRD patients' lives according to the respondents because they can discuss their problems and share with other patients their experiences on how they can handle their condition.

One of the participants indicated that:

“I think as managers, we should try by all means to continue with their support group programme as much as we can because like I said joining support group, that's where they share their challenges. It helps a lot” (respondent CN 24).

According to research, group participation and the support that these patients can offer to one another minimises stress and enhances life expectancy, which in turn enhances the quality of life (Lii, Tsay, & Wang, 2007; Moattari et al., 2012; Ramirez, et al., 2012; Rodrigues et al., 2011). This result is also coherent with the findings of Mansouri et al. (2020), where educational and group support interventions improved the quality of life.

Renal professional nurses and social workers conducting continuous home visits are enabled to assess if home conditions and the environment are conducive for the renal patient and also allow them to observe if the family can support the end-stage renal disease patients. Constant home nursing visits are a type of nursing service with the goal to sustain and enhance the patient's health (Irani, Hirschman, Cacchione, & Bowles, 2018).

The effectiveness of the programmes that are implemented to increase adherence emerged in this study as participants agreed that the programmes are effective. This study has shown that healthcare management does support the implementation of the available programmes. A relatively small number of participants stated that they were ineffective, and some did not respond to the question maybe because they did

not understand the question.

This research highlighted the need for management to be visible, strengthen management by walking around and visiting the renal dialysis unit more often and support the implemented programmes. The support of implemented programmes will also assist healthcare management in building a good rapport with healthcare professionals and renal patients.

Theme 3: Governance role of public health management

Guidelines serves a crucial part in enhancing medical treatment as well as patient results in assisting doctors in making the most appropriate decisions based on research for those they treat in the shortest amount of time (Farfan et al., 2023). Governance and leadership in kidney care are critical for driving strategies and providing guidelines to improve quality care (Lunny et al., 2018).

According to the findings of this study, most of the respondents were not knowledgeable about the guidelines implemented to increase treatment adherence. Knowledge facilitates the use and adherence to clinical practice guidelines (Makhado et al., 2020). According to the National Kidney Foundation, renal guidelines are an important step in the process of improving dialysis practice quality and ESRD patient outcomes. Therefore, nurses and doctors must be knowledgeable and function according to the set renal guidelines to enhance the medical condition of renal patients.

According to the study's findings, all healthcare practitioners have shortened dialysis because of a lack of water, which is a critical resource that an organisation must have to continue to exist and function. These findings are also in accordance with the resource dependency theory, which states that an organization will respond to and grow reliant on those organizations in its surroundings that have authority over resources that are both essential to its activities and over which it has little authority, according to Johnson (1995), which in this case it is the Polokwane Municipality which is responsible for supplying water to the hospital.

Haemodialysis treatment necessitates large quantities of purified water, 500ml for a four-

hour dialysis session. A lack of water can have an adverse effect on patient care and treatment. According to the resource contingency theory, the organization must take preventive steps to deal with such situations. Having a reserve tank based on the size of the dialysis unit that supplies the renal unit in the event of an emergency, as well as contacting the municipality in the event of an emergency to supply the unit with water via water tankers. Most importantly, the technician must keep track of tank levels and alarms that alert him to low water levels so that he can act quickly.

In a nutshell resource contingency theory serves as a framework to deal with a shortage of water in a renal unit, emphasizing planning, replacement, modification, preservation, and redirection of resources to make sure that patients are given the appropriate treatment, even in difficult situations.

The other reason for shortening dialysis sessions was due to technical problems that required the attention of the technician. This is also coherent with the results of Mukaranga, Chironda, Bhengu, and Katende (2018) who observed a shortening of dialysis sessions, which could be related to technical issues with dialysis machines because they require ongoing servicing.

According to the National Kidney Foundation, missing dialysis treatments puts a patient at risk of accumulating high levels of the two following minerals: (1) Hyperkalaemia, which can cause heart problems such as arrhythmia, heart attack, and death, and (2) High phosphorus levels, which can weaken the bones and raise the likelihood of cardiovascular disease over time. This study also discovered that young patients miss their dialysis sessions. These findings resonate with the previous study which found that younger individuals believe they are healthier physically than older people, allowing them to “get away with” missing treatments (Salmi et al., 2018).

Patients require dialysis four hours a day, three times a week to survive. Scheduling sessions has emerged as one of the most significant obstacles encountered by renal patients, contributing to unemployment. According to research, one of the challenges to staying or joining the workforce is a scheduling conflict with dialysis

and some employers' presumption that dialysis patients are too sick or unreliable to work (Hallab & Wish, 2018). The results are in line with the results of Mbeje and Mtshali's study (2021) on dialysis schedules which hinder patients on dialysis from working, leading to financial dependence on their families and a harmful effect on patients' quality of life (QOL).

This study revealed that all the respondents failed to engage patients daily in discussing the importance of adhering to diet and fluids which might be due to the attitudes of the nurses and doctors, as indicated by one respondent and poor interaction between patients and healthcare practitioners. Diet and fluids are essential in the management of ESRD patients. As a result, doctors and nurses must educate patients on the importance of following the recommended diet and fluids daily. According to Sabate (2003, as cited by Murali and Lonergan, 2020), bridging gaps in delivery of care and improving interaction among healthcare professionals and patients are key components of health-system-related initiatives that can improve patient adherence.

Adherence to the treatment regimen is the primary determinant of treatment success, and failure to follow the suggested therapy schedule is harmful, affecting both the patient's quality of life and the system of healthcare (Kefale, Tadesse, Alebachew, & Engidawork, 2018). Dietary education and patient counselling provided by a registered dietitian (RD) is essential for preventing and managing CKD, according to Naber and Purohit (2021). Furthermore, cautious, and comprehensive dietary scheduling, regular evaluation of health status, and nutritional monitoring adherence are essential to achieve effective management of dietary requirements. (Naber & Purohit, 2021).

The Congressional Budget Office Report (2012) revealed that medications are a cost-effective treatment modality but with projections of 50% non-adherence to long-term therapy for chronic illnesses (WHO, 2003), intentional and unintentional medication non-adherence is a prevalent and tenacious healthcare problem (Cutler et al., 2018).

This study revealed that there are ongoing dis-

cussions with patients concerning their medications. These continuous discussions will assist doctors and nurses in identifying problems with medication adherence and prompt intervention where necessary to prevent costs of hospitalisation due to non-adherence to medications. Enhancing adherence to medications offers the potential for significant cost savings to healthcare organizations (Cutler et al., 2018).

Renal patients must follow a number of intricate treatment regimens and way of life limitations. (Lunka & Luukanen, 2017). Lack of knowledge of the condition or level of education, lack of family support and poor acceptance of the condition emerged in this study as contributory factors of non-adherence. According to (Alikari et al., 2019 & Tzavel, 2018) knowledge is the primary enabler of positive treatment adherence. They further said that low adherence has been linked to a lack of patient education due to a poor correlation between disease and treatment knowledge (Alikari et al., 2019).

According to Wiwoot, Lorga, Sangjan, and Santhuankeaw (2017), Having a family can provide valuable assistance to patients and reduce depressive disorders in CKD patients. Therefore, patients must be educated about their condition to increase their knowledge and compliance to treatment regimens. Renal patients who are empowered with information are able to embrace and cope constructively with their end-stage renal disease condition.

Majority of the respondents indicated that non-adherence to treatment regimens will result in fluid overload and pulmonary oedema and some of the respondents indicated that death could occur if patients are not adhering to their dialysis treatment. This result is coherent with the findings of Denhaerynck, Manhaeve, Dobbels, Garzoni, Nolte, and De Geest (2007), who found that non-adherence to dialysis treatment causes bone demineralisation, pulmonary oedema, metabolic disorders, the development of cardiovascular disorders, and, eventually, death. This result is also coherent with the studies of Burnier et al., 2015; Ellis, & Welch, 2016), who indicated that in CKD, adherence to medication is an essential aspect of disease management success. Therefore, ESRD patients must adhere to their prescribed treatment.

Theme 4: Organisational Factors

In this study, respondents identified psychological problems as one of the factors contributing to ESRD patients' non-adherence to treatment regimens. This is also consistent with previous findings by Sein et al. (2020) that showed that distress and emotional difficulties are commonly experienced by patients with ESKD, especially concerning the rigours of dialysis treatment and the limitations that this imposes on their everyday activities. Doctors and nurses must assess and refer patients who are having psychological problems to a psychologist to enhance their quality of life and increase compliance to treatment regimens.

Training of professional nurses working with renal patients on adherence to treatment is important as it might have a beneficial effect on the adherence of renal patients to their prescribed treatment. The majority of the participants stated that they had no treatment adherence training. This finding suggests a lack of systematic adherence training and skills associated with supporting renal treatment adherence. It also suggests that renal patients are not given complete information while undergoing dialysis, implying a lack of renal patients' health education.

These results further indicate an absence of mentorship of healthcare professionals in the renal unit. Having a mentor in the renal unit will benefit both the patients and the staff. According to research, mentors offer assistance, direction, and motivation to student nurses, recent graduates, and nurses transitioning into a speciality or practice (Venant, 2018). Therefore, having a mentor in the renal unit will assist with the continuous professional development of the staff and increase their knowledge and skills in increasing adherence of ESRD patients to treatment.

The role of healthcare providers and management is to enforce the notion of a multidisciplinary approach to provide a holistic intervention. A multidisciplinary approach to health interventions involves bringing together experts from various disciplines to collaborate and address a health issue. The findings of this study show that doctors and nurses do refer to the multidisciplinary team, despite the fact that the

low percentages indicate that they need to improve and strengthen their referral of renal patients to the multidisciplinary team.

According to systems theory, renal function is affected by a variety of variables such as cardiac activity, medicines, infection, and previous medical history. As a result, a renal patient must be evaluated comprehensively. It recognizes that every aspect of a dialysis center or the life of a patient are interrelated and interdependent, resulting in a dynamic system. Nurses and doctors should refer patients to a multidisciplinary team for early disease detection and management. A systems approach can help organisations and medical professionals better coordinate their care, resulting in better results for patients.

Some of the respondents indicated that they have never referred to the multidisciplinary team which suggests a lack of assessment and communication with renal patients. The multidisciplinary team is important in a renal unit to enhance the standard of treatment and also allows patients with renal disease to be treated holistically.

Some respondents echoed the same views:

“Patients to be treated holistically when coming for the treatment. I would also like to see more staffing in our Allied professionals, that is our dieticians, our social workers, and psychologists, because I would prefer to have those professionals, some of those professionals dedicated to the renal unit. So, they will then get to know the patients in detail, they will get to know each patient's unique home circumstances and unique psychological makeup, and therefore be able to intervene much better in patients’ lives, so that they promote good adherence, good compliance, and overall wellbeing of our patients” (respondents CN 24 & 26).

According to Kang et al. (2017), the Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) care system is complex because it is made up of many different components, including patients, care providers, organisational structure, and policy. Hence, members of the interdisciplinary team must first come together as a group and identify a general medical objective for the individual they are treating (Cordon, 2013). He further submitted that compartments among different

healthcare providers can be handled using systems theory, and this might help in determining a common objective to enhance the treatment of patients (Cordon, 2013). This emphasises the importance of the multidisciplinary approach in increasing adherence to treatment by ESRD patients.

One of the respondents said:

“Patient to be treated holistically when coming for the treatment. I would also like to see more staffing in our Allied professionals, that is our dieticians, our social workers, and psychologists, because I would prefer to have those professionals, some of those professionals dedicated to the renal unit. So, they will then get to know the patients in detail, they will get to know each patient's unique home circumstances and unique psychological makeup, and therefore be able to intervene much better in patients’ lives, so that they promote good adherence, good compliance, and overall wellbeing of our patients” (respondents CN 24 & 26).

Theme 5: Strategies and recommendations

Muthimi and Kilika (2018) suggest that the strategy is based on an in-depth review of the present circumstances as well as an informed assessment of the company’s potential efficiency. Gaps identified by this study necessitate healthcare managers adapting to the situation that arises, as mentioned by Fiedler and Chemers (1974), and applying the contingency theory of management, also known as the “Leaders- Managerial-Adaptation theory”, to create the desired future state, which is increasing patients’ adherence to the treatment regimen of end-stage renal disease treatment. The respondents identified the following effective strategies that can be implemented;

Good attitudes are to be displayed by nurses, doctors, and ambulance drivers, which will motivate patients to attend dialysis. Respondents also stated that healthcare management of the organisation should engage with Emergency Medical Services (EMS) management about the importance of patients arriving on time for their dialysis treatment, as late arrival was identified as a key factor in healthcare professionals shortening patients' dialysis sessions. Participation in the multidisciplinary team was also recommended by the respondents as a strategy to

increase adherence. Decentralisation of dialysis services to different districts was also suggested by the respondents as one of the strategies that can be implemented to increase adherence because services will be delivered to people rather than centrally where transportation is a major issue. The respondents also recommended awareness campaigns to be conducted in different district hospitals and to activate support groups for the patients and their families. Continuous health education of the patients. Avoiding nursing staff rotation to other units especially those that are experienced in renal services. Having a compliance team that will be able to monitor treatment adherence.

Summary of the findings

The analysis and interpretation of the results revealed that there is a potential for improvement based on the exploration of the perceptions of healthcare management and healthcare providers through questionnaires and interviews. A few of the outcomes are as follows;

1. Programmes for increasing adherence are available but not known to all staff members as some did not respond to the question.
2. A lack of discussion exists with patients on the importance of not missing their dialysis sessions as indicated by low percentages of the respondents.
3. Dialysis sessions are shortened by all healthcare providers due to a shortage of water from the municipality, late coming of patients due to transport issues, sudden changes in patients' conditions e.g., hypotension, muscle cramps, etc. and technical problems of the machines.
4. There was no discussion with patients on the importance of following the recommended diet and fluids as indicated by all participants.

5. According to some of the respondents, there was also an absence of treatment adherence training.
6. There was a lack of knowledge of guidelines used to manage patients' adherence to treatment as indicated by low percentages of the respondents.
7. There was a lack of referral to the multi-disciplinary team as indicated by few of the participants who indicated that they have never referred ESRD patients to the MDT.

Recommendations for healthcare management

It is critical for ESRD patients to adhere to treatment regimens to improve their Quality of life (QOL). Healthcare management and practitioners play an important role by ensuring that the available programmes for increasing adherence such as health education, group support and home visits are implemented regularly, and families of the patients are also involved in support. Patients can benefit from these programmes and support groups particularly can assist them in coping with the struggles of their condition.

Transport of patients to the treatment center has been emphasised by the participants as being problematic in adherence to treatment regimens by end-stage renal patients. Arriving on time for dialysis sessions by patients will assist them in completing the four-hour sessions of treatment as prescribed. Healthcare management is to have quarterly meetings with Emergency Medical Services (EMS) management where they will be able to identify gaps, plan, implement and evaluate the implemented strategies to improve transport problems for renal patients.

It is further recommended that daily interaction among doctors and patients on the importance of following the recommended diet, fluids and

medications be strengthened to improve adherence to treatment regimens for ESRD patients. A compliance team is necessary to monitor treatment adherence. It is also recommended that procedures and guidelines for the management of ESRD patients should be communicated and then implemented by healthcare practitioners. Health education of patients and mentorship of healthcare professionals need to

be strengthened.

Monitoring and evaluation of the healthcare system need to be active and involved in the delivery of renal services. Nurses, doctors, and ambulance drivers need to be debriefed regularly to improve communication and attitudes towards renal patients.

Recommendations for further research

This investigation added to the wealth of information on increasing adherence to treatment regimens by ESRD patients. More research is needed to investigate the unit costs of hospitalization for renal patients caused by failure to

adhere to treatment, perceptions of patients on non-adherence to renal treatment as well as the benefits of decentralizing nephrology therapy into district hospitals throughout the Limpopo province.

Limitations of the study

Delay in obtaining permission from the two ethical committees, Polokwane/Mankweng and the Department of Health, caused the researcher to work in a rush to collect data to meet the deadline of the given period of data

collection. A person-to-person gathering of information may have introduced bias for the researcher as the respondents were familiar to the investigator. The study's use of the purposive sampling method was also a limitation as it has been linked with a high risk of bias during selection. It is suggested that subsequent investigations use different methods of sampling.

Conclusion

Considering all the information above, the objectives of the thesis have been met. An exploration of how healthcare management can improve adherence to ESRD treatment regimens among renal patients at Pietersburg Hospital has been done. Perceptions of healthcare management and healthcare providers were explored, and key challenges experienced by

ESRD patients and the contributory factors concerning non-adherence to treatment regimens were identified. Strategies to improve adherence to ESRD treatment regimens among patients were recommended for implementation. It is assumed that if healthcare management can adopt the recommendations, adherence of ESRD patients to treatment regimens can be improved.

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.32>**GENDERED EFFECTS OF WATER SCARCITY ON RURAL LIVELIHOODS IN SOUTH AFRICA: A FEMINIST POLITICAL ECOLOGY PERSPECTIVE****Mandla A Mubecua**

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Globally, rural women rely heavily on water resources to sustain their livelihoods. However, water scarcity presents significant socio-economic challenges, particularly in rural contexts where livelihoods are closely tied to natural resources. In South Africa, water scarcity disproportionately impacts women due to their gendered roles in water collection, household management, and subsistence farming. This paper examines the gendered dimensions of water scarcity through the theoretical lens of Feminist Political Ecology, highlighting the intersections of gender, power relations, and access to resources in rural communities. Drawing from existing literature, the study investigates how socio-cultural norms, policy frameworks, and environmental degradation collectively shape women's experiences and adaptive strategies in response to water scarcity. The analysis reveals that women often face intensified labour burdens, diminished income opportunities, and increased exposure to health risks as a result of water-related challenges. Additionally, systemic inequities in water governance structures limit women's agency and participation in decision-making processes, thereby reinforcing their marginalization. In response, the paper recommends the development of gender-sensitive water infrastructure, including the establishment of localized and secure water access points to alleviate both physical and emotional burdens on women. Moreover, it advocates for institutional reforms that promote the active and meaningful inclusion of women in water governance, ensuring that their voices are central to policy and planning processes.

Keywords: Water scarcity, rural livelihoods, gender, Feminist Political Ecology, water governance

Introduction

The scarcity of water is not only a South African problem neither an African one but a global challenge. This is evident in global development agendas like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), where clean water and sanitation are addressed in Goal 6, and gender equality is highlighted in Goal 5. In South Africa, gender equality continues to be a central theme in development discourse. However, the intersection between gender and access to essential resources like

water remains underexplored. Despite a growing body of literature on South Africa's water-related challenges, limited attention has been given to how gender dynamics influence, and are influenced by, water access and governance. This oversight is critical, as water scarcity often exacerbates existing gender inequalities. Men and women are affected differently by the availability or lack of water, with women disproportionately burdened by water-related responsibilities and vulnerabilities.

To effectively examine these dynamics, feminist political ecology theory provides a valuable analytical lens. This theoretical framework enables a deeper understanding of gender relations, power structures, and socio-cultural expectations, particularly as they pertain to resource access. As noted by Mandara, Niehof, and Horst (2017), water provision is still shaped by entrenched patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes. Çaro, Bailey, and Van Wissen (2012) further emphasize that in many households, particularly those headed by women, the responsibility of collecting water often falls on women and young girls. This burden reflects broader patterns of gendered oppression, reinforced by discriminatory policies and cultural beliefs (Silva et al., 2020). Watkins (2006) argues that water scarcity is less about physical limitations and more deeply rooted in systemic issues such as authority, poverty, and inequality. Although the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) guarantees the right to water for all citizens, the lived realities of women especially those in marginalized communities reveal persistent disparities in access and control. In fulfilling this constitutional obligation, the South African Government adopted a Free Basic Water Policy in 2001. The policy provides for allocation of free basic water of about 6kl per household per month. Despite all the progressive realisation and incremental fulfilment of the right to water in South Africa, the country is still characterised by gendered and inequitable distribution (Jacobs-Mata, Mukuyu and Dini, 2021:10, Nastar, and Ramsar, 2012:7), crisis of water scarcity, governance and power dimensions (Forster, Downsborough and Chomba, 2017:521, Sutherland, Scott and Hordijk, 2015).

Except the introduction, the paper has five themes, firstly, is the conceptualization of gender, secondly, gender Inequality in South Africa (a brief historical background), followed by a Feminist Political Ecology Perspective theory, which is further divided into two; gender inequality and access to water, governance in Feminist Political Ecology: A focus on water management.

Methodology

This study relied on secondary data to explore the gendered effects of water scarcity through the lens of feminist political ecology. The use of secondary data allowed for a broader understanding of how water scarcity impacts individuals differently based on gender, and how these impacts relate to the theoretical underpinnings of feminist political ecology. A comprehensive textual analysis was conducted on existing literature relevant to the gendered dimensions of water scarcity in South Africa. This approach enabled the researchers to contextualize the issue within South Africa's socio-political and environmental landscape. While not all sources explicitly addressed feminist political ecology, many provided valuable insights into water scarcity and gender, which were analyzed to support and enrich the theoretical framework. Although feminist political ecology is a relatively new analytical lens in the South African context, a range of scholarly work exists on water scarcity and gender, offering diverse perspectives that were critically reviewed in this study.

Conceptualization of Gender

Gender is a complex and multifaceted concept that has attracted significant scholarly attention across various disciplines. It is commonly defined as the socially constructed differences between women and men, encompassing cultural ideals of masculinity and femininity, as well as the sexual division of labour within households, organizations, and institutions (Scott and Marshall, 2009). Unlike biological sex, which is rooted in physical attributes, gender is a social and cultural construct shaped by societal norms and expectations. It is developed through individual behaviours, interpersonal interactions, and institutional structures, often resulting in systemic patterns that create advantages for men over women (Erlina, Normadilla, and Nika, 2020).

The social construction of gender implies that it is not a fixed or tangible phenomenon, but rather a dynamic process that varies across historical periods, cultures, and social contexts. This variability presents significant challenges for researchers seeking a universal definition of gender. As Van den Brink, Benschop, and Jansen (2010) note that the understanding and

implications of gender differ markedly among individuals, organizations, cultures, national conditions, and within the frameworks established by state actors. Consequently, any attempt to conceptualize gender must account for its fluidity and context specific meanings.

One of the critical challenges in defining gender lies in the issue of inclusion and exclusion. Because gender is socially constructed, there are debates about who is encompassed within its definitions and who may be marginalized by gender-related policies. Suda (2002) emphasizes that gender should not be mistakenly equated solely with women or men. Rather, gender refers to the relationships between men and women, the socially constructed roles attributed to each, and the cultural interpretations attached to biological differences. This perspective underscores that gender is relational and embedded in a broader social context, influencing how individuals experience and express their identities.

Moreover, gender encompasses a set of social attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female. These attributes extend beyond individual characteristics to include the expected roles, behaviours, activities, and opportunities that society deems appropriate for men and women (Anglin, Kincaid, Short, and Allen, 2022). The social expectations tied to gender shape power relations between women and men and influence broader societal structures, including labour markets, political participation, educational opportunities, and access to resources (Bonvillain, 2020).

Gender relations are not static; they are continuously produced and reproduced through social practices and cultural representations. Individuals internalize gender norms through socialization processes, while institutions reinforce and legitimize these norms through policies, practices, and discourses (Schneider and Bos, 2019). Thus, gender is simultaneously an individual identity and a structural force that organizes social life. Understanding gender as both a relational and institutional phenomenon is crucial to recognizing the systemic nature of gender inequalities and the ways in which they are maintained over time.

Furthermore, contemporary discussions on gender have expanded beyond the binary framework of male and female to recognize the existence of diverse gender identities. The traditional dichotomy of masculinity and femininity is increasingly challenged by movements advocating for the rights and recognition of transgender, non-binary, and gender-non-conforming individuals. This evolution in the conceptualization of gender reflects broader social changes and highlights the importance of adopting inclusive and flexible definitions that accommodate a range of gender experiences. Ntshalintshali and Nojiyeza (2025:184) posit that gender inequality is an intersection of race, class, power, and patriarchal domination. Access to water and sanitation services in a post-apartheid South Africa is still racially, class and gender skewed and more so in rural areas where most of women lives.

Gender Inequality in South Africa: A brief historical background

For a long time, South Africa was governed by apartheid policies a pattern of power, institutions and legislation that regulated the planning and management of all sectors of society along racial lines (Singh and Naidoo, 2017). The policies of the apartheid regime in South Africa have shaped the current existing inequalities in race and gender. Hence, no conversation of the continuing determinations to change water services delivery would be thorough without providing some consideration on the apartheid system of governance and its broad implications on both water management as a resource, and its delivery as a service (Muller, 2020). Although, the democratic government has worked very hard to address gender inequality by introducing policies and programs that strive for equality among all South Africans, gender inequality still prevails in different societal spheres.

According to Palvic (2000), gender equality, is equality between men and women, entails the concept that all human beings, both men and women, are free to develop individualistic skills and be able to choose without any limitations set by prejudices, rigid gender roles and

stereotypes. The arrival of democracy in South Africa brought with it challenges that still need to be addressed to overcome the inequalities of the past. According to Ngarava, Zhou, and Monde, (2019) water related policies such as the White Paper on Water Supply and Sanitation, the White Paper on National Water Policy 1994 and the 1997 Water Services Act 108, have not been properly implemented on gender perspectives in matters of water security.

Against this background, policies and legislation on achieving equity emerged. Despite this, a gender disparity still exists in access to resources. Regardless of efforts made by government and other bodies to eliminate gender inequality, Gouws (2016) argues that whilst a critical mass (number of women) is important in decision making, an even more important element is that women's voices are heard, that their interests, perspectives, and experiences are voiced so as to bring about a shift, and change the power and culture of institutions. Accordingly, attention has increasingly turned towards advancing the status of women from 'users and choosers' to 'makers and shapers' through to enhanced and more influential roles in decision-making, particularly in water resources management (Cornwall and Gaventa, 2001). The recent studies (Sutherland, Scott and Hordijk, 2015, Nastar and Ramasar, 2012, Forster, Downsborough and Chomba, 2017, Jacobs-Mata and Dini, 2021, Mphahlele and Zandamela), focused on lack of equity in water reticulation in South Africa, including lack of human capital, however, still ignored the gender disparities in water supply provision.

Girls and women in rural South Africa bear a disproportionate burden of water scarcity. Drawing on the work of Graham, Hirai, and Kim (2016), it is estimated that 56 percent of adult women in these areas are responsible for fetching water, compared with 31 percent of female children and only 3 percent of male children. This daily chore imposes significant physical strain: Geere, Hunter, and Jagals (2010) report that, in Limpopo Province, women commonly carry loads averaging 19.5 kg on their heads over distances of approximately 337 m, and 69 percent of those sur-

veyed experienced spinal or back pain as a result. The time devoted to water collection also has profound social consequences: young girls often miss school or lack sufficient time for homework, while girls overall spend an average of 19.5 hours per week on household chores, including water fetching. Moreover, the long journeys required to obtain water exacerbate psychosocial stress, particularly in communities where women lack formal water rights and decision-making power (Graham, Hirai, & Kim, 2016).

A Feminist Political Ecology Perspective

Feminist Political Ecology derives from a feminism theory, therefore, before discussing the feminism theory and how it relates to water scarcity in South Africa, it is important to understand the feminism theory. Feminism as a social movement began in the United States of America in the 1960s (Michaud, 2021). It was a social reaction to the post-World War II characteristics of the society where women were only expected to be mothers and wives. These expectations therefore degraded women to roles of subordination to men (Kritzinger, 2002). In general, Feminism is a theory that seeks to challenge the prevailing notions concerning men and women in society (Babbie, 2011; Phillips, 2025). Learning from the work of Biana (2020), a feminist theory takes into account the lived experiences of both men and women, not just women, with a focus on oppression. It is the extension of feminism movement into theoretical or philosophical discourse.

Significant principle to which many feminist theorists adhere is the necessity of analysing how gender inequality intersects with multiple inequalities, including racism, classism, ageism, and ableism, to form an interlocking system of oppression that impacts women and men's everyday lives (Benstead, 2021). At the core of the feminist theory is the focus on inequality and how that inequality is structured and experienced at the macro and micro levels (Dillon, 2010). While there may be disagreement about where feminist theory belongs or worldview, oppression disruption is an essential part of feminist work.

This article intends to explain gendered effects of water scarcity on rural livelihoods through the feminist political ecology perspective. Feminist Political Ecology is explained as an interdisciplinary framework that explores the connection of power, gender and environment. Historically, the theory emerged in the 1990s, it comes from the political ecology, and it emphasise how environmental issues are caused by social inequalities, especially gender dynamics (Elias, Joshi and Meinzen-Dick, 2021). The Feminist Political Ecologists believes that women and men relate differently with the environment because of the different social roles, duties, as well as the access to resources (Ergas, McKinney and Bell, 2021). The distinctions are not just natural but are generated or caused by historical, cultural, and political processes. The theory argues that environmental degradation and resource disagreements often have differences effects, overly affecting poor people in the communities, particularly women (Gandy, 2022). Furthermore, the Feminist Political Ecology opposes the beliefs that the challenge to the environmental knowledge is neutral. However, it values local, gendered knowledge systems and supports inclusive decision-making in environmental governance. Through the connection of environmental problems with challenges like race, colonialism and patriarchy, the theory intends to reveal the hidden power relations that shape both ecological and social outcomes (Ergas, McKinney and Bell, 2021). The following section intends to relate the feminist political ecology theory with water scarcity.

Gender Inequality and Access to Water

Gender inequality plays a critical role in shaping access to water resources. As Watkins (2006) argues, issues surrounding water availability are deeply embedded in structures of authority, poverty, and inequality, rather than being solely about the physical scarcity of water. This highlights that access to, control over, rights to, governance of, and experiences with water resources are profoundly influenced by gendered social roles. In many societies, these roles consistently position women in a subordinate relationship to water governance, despite their primary responsibility for water-related tasks (Dickin and Caretta, 2022). Water

is a fundamental resource for agricultural production and rural livelihoods (Bhattarai, Upadhyaya, Neupane, Devkota, Maskey, Shrestha, Mainali and Ojha, 2021). Nevertheless, formal and informal institutional structures across the developing world tend to perpetuate gender disparities. While women are primarily responsible for water-related labour, men often hold the rights and powers associated with water governance and management (Udas, 2014). This division reflects a broader dichotomy between women's 'practical needs' relating to everyday tasks such as household care and their 'strategic interests,' which involve gaining control, influence, and decision-making power within water management systems. Consequently, men often possess greater adaptive capacity in the face of environmental stresses and resource scarcity, whereas women are rendered more vulnerable to such challenges (Le Masson, 2016; Dankelman, 2010).

The roots of gendered power structures related to water can be traced back to the home environment. Odeny (2020) contends that gender norms are inculcated at an early age, as children observe and internalize the gender roles modelled by their families. Therefore, to address gender inequality in water access comprehensively, it is necessary to consider how these roles and expectations are established and reinforced during childhood. Without challenging these foundational norms, efforts to promote gender equity in water governance are likely to face persistent barriers (Koebele, Méndez-Barrientos, Nadeau and Gerlak, 2024).

Women's vulnerability to water insecurity is compounded by their proximity to water sources and the nature of their water-related responsibilities (Dickin and Caretta, 2022). The physical demands of water collection often expose women to hard labour, water-borne diseases, and heightened risks of physical and sexual harassment (UN, 2019). In many rural and peri-urban areas, women must walk long distances to collect water, sometimes navigating unsafe environments (Adal, 2025). This burden not only jeopardizes their physical health and safety but also limits their opportunities for education, economic engagement,

and political participation (World Health Organization, 2023).

Moreover, men's control over water resources frequently translates into broader economic advantages (Alvarado, Siqueiros-García, Ramos-Fernández, García-Meneses and Mazari-Hiriart, 2022). Men are often better positioned to use water for activities that contribute to the formal economy, such as commercial agriculture or industrial enterprises (Boserup, Kanji, Tan and Toulmin, 2013). In contrast, many of the water-related activities performed by women such as ensuring access to safe drinking water, maintaining hygiene standards within households, and supporting educational attainment through improved sanitation remain unrecognized, undervalued, and uncompensated. These critical contributions are often rendered invisible within economic accounting systems, further entrenching gender disparities. It is essential to recognize that the challenges women face regarding water access are not solely technical but are deeply political and social (Bukachi, Omia, Musyoka, Wambua, Peter and Korzenevica, 2021). Power dynamics at the household, community and institutional levels must be interrogated and transformed to achieve equitable water governance. Women living in poverty often face compounded disadvantages that necessitate targeted and context specific responses (Diwakar, 2023).

In short, gender inequality remains a critical factor influencing access to water resources. Women's central role in water-related tasks contrasts sharply with their limited rights and decision-making power regarding water governance. Addressing this imbalance requires transformative approaches that challenge entrenched gender norms, promote equitable resource distribution, recognize and value women's contributions to water management and community well-being. Only through such comprehensive strategies can sustainable and inclusive water security be achieved.

Governance in Feminist Political Ecology: A Focus on Water Management

Governance constitutes a fundamental dimen-

sion of Feminist Political Ecology, encompassing the structures, institutions, and processes responsible for decision-making related to environmental management and the allocation of resources. Within this framework, Feminist Political Ecology critically interrogates the patriarchal orientation of governance structures, which tend to prioritize economic development, technological advancement, and innovation over social and cultural considerations. Mphahlele and Zandamela (2021:156) acknowledges that local government structures such as water services authorities (WSAs) and water service providers (WSPs) are central to water supply service provision, however poor skills development impacts negatively on service provision. Other relevant institutions are water user associations (WUAs), Irrigation Management Committees (IMCs) and traditional authorities (Dirwai, Senzanje and Mudhara, 2019:127), however gender disparities and power dynamics shape these post-apartheid water institutions.

In the context of water management, governance in Feminist Political Ecology is intricately linked to the power systems that establish, facilitate, and drive water governance, as well as the disparities in ownership and access between men and women. As Nelson (2012) asserts, political power and governance control are central to the regulation and distribution of water resources. Governance systems possess the authority to own, regulate, and allocate water, as well as to permit or restrict access, with women often disproportionately affected by exclusionary practices.

These governance structures include formal government bodies at both local and national levels, alongside other influential power systems (Nelson, 2012). However, Elmhirst (2016) emphasizes that Feminist Political Ecology primarily engages with governance at the community level, rather than at broader national or governmental spheres. This localized perspective highlights the everyday experiences of marginalized groups, particularly women, whose voices are frequently absent in decision-making processes.

Despite their central role in domestic water collection, women's participation in water

governance remains significantly limited. Existing water governance frameworks often fail to account for gendered social roles within households, thereby perpetuating structural inequalities. Feminist Political Ecology advocates for the active inclusion of women in water management processes, emphasizing the necessity of community-based approaches to achieve equitable and sustainable water governance.

Empirical evidence from parts of Africa and Asia illustrates that women's involvement in water management is crucial for ensuring the sustainability of water resources. However, the persistent exclusion of women from decision-making structures not only undermines governance outcomes but also threatens the long-term viability of water management initiatives.

Conclusion and recommendations

This work seeks to explain the effect of scarcity of water on rural livelihoods through the feminist political ecology perspective. The paper focused on two aspects of the theory which are accessibility and governance of water. Starting with water accessibility, the paper shows that gender differences play a critical role in shaping access to water resources. This is because water is a fundamental resource for agricultural production and rural livelihoods. Nevertheless, formal and informal institutional structures across the developing world tend to perpetuate gender disparities. While women are primarily responsible for water-related labour, men often hold the rights and powers associated with water governance and management. This division reflects a broader dichotomy between women's 'practical needs' relating to everyday tasks such as household care and their 'strategic interests,' which involve gaining control, influence, and decision-making power within water management systems. Consequently, men often possess greater adaptive capacity in the face of environmental stresses and resource scarcity, whereas women are rendered more vulnerable to such challenges. Women's vulnerability to water insecurity is compounded by their proximity to water sources and the nature of their water-related responsibilities. In many rural and peri-urban areas, women must walk long distances to col-

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cates for the active inclusion of women in water management processes, emphasizing the necessity of community-based approaches to achieve equitable and sustainable water governance. About the recommendations of the

study, the paper suggests a gender sensitive water infrastructure that reduces women's physical burden and improves safety, such as localized, safe water points.

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.33>**ANTI-SMUGGLING ACTIVITIES AND BORDER DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: AN EVIDENCE-BASED ANALYSIS****EKERETE, John Peter**

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of anti-smuggling activities on border development in Nigeria, focusing on security, economic growth, and socio-political stability. While anti-smuggling operations aim to curb illicit trade and enforce legal compliance, they have significantly influenced border communities' livelihoods. It addresses a pressing issue in Nigeria's economic and security landscape—smuggling—by examining the effectiveness of anti-smuggling activities and their implications for border development. It becomes significant by providing insights beyond conventional enforcement narratives. It becomes novel by distinguishing itself using an evidence-based approach to explore the intersection between anti-smuggling measures and border development. This paper employs qualitative research methods, analysing primary and secondary data sources. Findings suggest that while anti-smuggling operations enhance national security by reducing illicit trade, they also disrupt economic activities in border communities. The paper concludes that a comprehensive approach integrating security measures with infrastructural and socio-economic interventions is essential for sustainable border development. The paper recommends a balanced approach integrating effective border security policies with economic empowerment initiatives to achieve sustainable border development.

Introduction

Border security remains a crucial aspect of na-

tional governance, particularly in developing nations facing challenges such as illicit trade, arms

trafficking, and human smuggling. In Nigeria, where land borders stretch 4,047 km and maritime borders cover 853 km (Onyekwelu, 2014), managing border security is a complex and pressing issue. The colonial-era partitioning of African territories, conducted without considering local socio-cultural affiliations, has resulted in porous borders that facilitate illegal trade, transnational crimes, and security threats, undermining both national stability and economic growth. As a result, Nigeria has become a hub for smuggling networks, contributing to the proliferation of contraband goods, human trafficking, and illicit arms trade. The consequences of these unchecked activities extend beyond the economy, influencing the political landscape, national security, and regional stability.

Eselebor (2018) posits that Nigeria has over 1,400 illegal border routes, allowing terrorists, smugglers, and traffickers to move freely between neighboring countries. These weakly monitored entry points facilitate the movement of illicit goods, narcotics, counterfeit products, and even unauthorised migration, all of which pose significant threats to internal security and economic progress. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2021) reports that illicit arms trafficking, particularly the movement of small arms and light weapons (SALW), continues to fuel insurgency, banditry, and violent crime across the country. Empirical data suggest that an estimated 70% of illicit arms used in Nigeria's conflicts originate from cross-border smuggling routes (Edeh & Olaniyan, 2020). The influx of these weapons has exacerbated ongoing conflicts, particularly in the North-East region, where Boko Haram insurgents capitalise on ungarded borders to acquire arms and supplies.

In furtherance, human smuggling and trafficking remain major concerns, with Nigeria serving as

both a source and transit point for irregular migration and human trafficking networks. According to Adegoke (2022), Nigeria is one of the most significant hubs for trafficked persons in Africa, with thousands of migrants attempting to cross into Europe and the Middle East through illicit means every year. Victims, particularly women and children, are often subjected to forced labour, sexual exploitation, and other forms of modern slavery. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM, 2020) reports that weak enforcement of Nigeria's border regulations has exacerbated human trafficking, with many victims deceived by traffickers under false promises of employment opportunities abroad. This issue is further compounded by organised criminal syndicates operating freely across Nigeria's borders, taking advantage of the country's inefficient border control policies.

The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) plays a pivotal role in combating smuggling, enforcing trade laws, and generating government revenue. However, despite its strategic mandate, studies (Oladipo, 2020; Okeke and Nwankwo, 2021; among others) have questioned the effectiveness of anti-smuggling operations due to several systemic challenges. Ibrahim and Adamu (2019) affirm that corruption within the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) has significantly compromised border security enforcement, as Customs officials frequently collude with smugglers in exchange for bribes. A Transparency International (2021) study found that border control corruption has allowed illegal goods to enter the country unchecked, leading to loss of revenue and security vulnerabilities. This institutional inefficiency, combined with bureaucratic delays, poor coordination between security agencies, and inadequate resources, has weakened Nigeria's ability to implement effective border management strategies.

The World Customs Organisation (WCO, 2021) reported that despite Nigeria's efforts to adopt

modern border surveillance technologies, such as drones, electronic scanning systems, and automated checkpoints, enforcement efforts remain constrained by limited personnel, poor infrastructure, and weak intelligence-sharing mechanisms. Similarly, Oladipo (2020) noted that while NCS operations are meant to curb illicit cross-border activities, they often face resistance from smuggling cartels that have deep-rooted networks and influence in border communities. In some cases, smugglers employ sophisticated techniques, such as concealing contraband in cargo shipments, bribing officials, and using underground supply chains, making it difficult for law enforcement to intercept illicit trade effectively.

Beyond security concerns, economic implications of anti-smuggling efforts remain a contentious issue in Nigeria. The relationship between anti-smuggling measures and economic sustainability is often viewed through a dual lens—on one hand, stricter border controls curb illegal trade, but on the other, they disrupt the livelihoods of local traders and informal economies that depend on cross-border commerce. Adegbite and Ojo (2017) argue that Nigeria's frequent border closures and restrictive trade policies have caused severe economic hardships, particularly for small-scale traders who rely on informal trade routes for survival. A major example of this is the Nigerian government's 2019 border closure policy, which was aimed at curbing the smuggling of rice and other contraband goods. While the policy reduced illegal rice imports, it also had unintended economic consequences. The World Bank (2020) found that the border closure triggered inflation, increased food prices, and led to economic strain on small businesses, particularly in border communities where cross-border trade is a primary source of income. In addition, the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS,

2021) reported that inflation rose by 13.7% during the border closure period, disproportionately affecting low-income households and informal traders. This underscores the dilemma facing border security policymakers—balancing national security priorities with economic sustainability and regional trade integration. Moreover, border communities often resist anti-smuggling enforcement due to economic dependency on informal trade networks. Okeke and Nwankwo (2021) assert that many households in Nigeria's border regions depend on smuggling-related activities for their livelihood, making strict border control measures socially and politically sensitive. In some instances, security personnel enforcing anti-smuggling laws face hostility from local populations, who view them as a threat to their economic survival. As a result, efforts to implement effective border control measures must be accompanied by economic alternatives for affected communities, such as trade facilitation programmes, cross-border economic zones, and poverty alleviation initiatives. Against this backdrop, this paper explores the complex relationship between anti-smuggling activities and border development, analysing their impact on security, economic prosperity, and regional stability. After this introductory remark, this paper conceptualizes border development and anti-smuggling activities with Nigeria's border region. It examines the role of Nigerian Customs Service in anti-smuggling activities. It queries the impact of anti-smuggling activities on the Nigerian economy by providing a balanced perspective. It discusses the anti-smuggling strategies in Mexico, the European Union, and ECOWAS by drawing up lessons for Nigeria. It also analyses the Nigeria Customs Service and Anti-Smuggling activities at Border Communities in Nigeria. It presents the theoretical framework by hinging on structural functionalism. It adopts qualitative method of data collection and analysis. It summarises the findings and draws up concluding remarks.

Concept of Border Development

Border development refers to the social, economic, and infrastructural growth of regions adjacent to national boundaries. It is a multifaceted concept that involves security improvements, trade facilitation, infrastructural investment, and cross-border cooperation. Border areas serve as gateways between nations, playing a crucial role in regional integration, economic interactions, and national security. Effective border governance not only enhances trade efficiency but also fosters peace, stability, and sustainable development (Coskun, 2016). However, border regions often face unique developmental challenges stemming from historical boundary delineation, socio-economic disparities, weak institutional frameworks, and security threats. These factors significantly influence the overall success of border development policies in various countries.

Brunet-Jailly (2017) posits that well-managed border regions can stimulate economic growth by facilitating legal trade, industrialisation, and intergovernmental cooperation. Countries with strong border management policies have successfully leveraged their borderlands as economic hubs, attracting investments and fostering diplomatic relations with neighboring states. For example, the European Union's Schengen Area has demonstrated how seamless border interactions can enhance economic activity while ensuring strict security compliance (Zaiotti, 2011). In contrast, poorly regulated border areas often become havens for illicit trade, smuggling, human trafficking, and terrorism, which hinder regional economic growth and social development (Andreas, 2003).

Border development also involves infrastructural expansion aimed at boosting transportation networks, communication systems, and energy access in frontier regions. Many underdeveloped

border areas in Africa and Asia suffer from limited access to essential infrastructure, leading to economic marginalisation and security vulnerabilities (Adepoju, 2019). According to the World Bank (2020), border regions with weak infrastructure suffer from poor economic performance, as they remain isolated from the larger national economy. Conversely, countries that have invested in cross-border infrastructure projects—such as highways, railway systems, trade corridors, and energy pipelines—have witnessed significant economic transformation. A study by Scholvin and Plagemann (2020) affirm that border cities with well-developed transportation hubs experience higher economic activity, as they attract investors seeking to exploit cross-border trade opportunities. Security remains a crucial dimension of border development, as the stability of border regions determines national and regional security. Poorly secured borders increase the risks of transnational crimes, including arms smuggling, drug trafficking, and illegal migration (UNODC, 2021). In developing countries, weak border enforcement has been linked to terrorist infiltration and ethnic conflicts, particularly in regions where state presence is minimal (Eselebor, 2018). To mitigate these threats, governments have increasingly focused on border security initiatives, including patrol surveillance, biometric identification, and the deployment of modern border technologies (Donnan & Wilson, 2020). However, over-militarisation of border zones without corresponding development strategies can lead to economic stagnation and displacement of local communities (Newman, 2006).

Trade facilitation plays a pivotal role in border development, as border regions often rely on cross-border trade activities for economic sustenance. The ease of conducting business across borders determines the livelihood of border communities, the efficiency of supply chains,

and the overall competitiveness of national economies. According to Widdowson and Holloway (2017), streamlining customs procedures, reducing bureaucratic delays, and integrating digital trade platforms can significantly boost border trade efficiency. However, poorly managed anti-smuggling operations can disrupt the flow of legal goods, leading to economic losses, increased inflation, and unemployment in border communities (Adegbite & Ojo, 2017). Nigeria's 2019 border closure policy, which was implemented to curb the smuggling of rice and petroleum products, inadvertently triggered economic hardships for local traders and increased the cost of essential goods (World Bank, 2020). While the policy successfully reduced contraband imports, it also harmed small businesses that depended on cross-border trade. Effective border development strategies require collaborative governance frameworks that involve multiple stakeholders, including national governments, regional bodies, local communities, and private sector actors. Cross-border economic zones, trade pacts, and regional integration agreements have proven to be successful in enhancing border economies (Coskun, 2016). For instance, ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) has initiated policies to harmonise trade tariffs, facilitate movement across borders, and enhance cooperation among member states. Similarly, the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) seeks to eliminate trade barriers and improve cross-border commerce across Africa, ultimately promoting border development (UNECA, 2021).

Another aspect of border development is the socio-cultural dimension, which influences interactions between border populations. Many border communities share historical, ethnic, and linguistic ties, making them crucial players in cross-border cooperation (Asiwaju, 2001). However,

in cases where government policies fail to account for local dynamics, tensions and conflicts may arise. Flynn, (1997) posits that restrictive border policies that fail to consider local economic structures can lead to smuggling and illegal trade as survival mechanisms. Community involvement in border management decision-making is essential to promoting sustainable development while addressing security concerns.

Concept of Anti-Smuggling

Scholars have (Adeyinka, 2014; Andreas, 2003; Donnan and Wilson, 2020; among others) conceptualised anti-smuggling in various ways, reflecting its multi-dimensional nature encompassing economic policies, security enforcement, legal frameworks, and cross-border trade regulations. Anti-smuggling refers to a set of strategies, regulations, and enforcement mechanisms designed to prevent the illegal movement of goods, people, and contraband across national borders (Adeyinka, 2014). However, different scholars view anti-smuggling from distinct perspectives, influenced by their disciplinary backgrounds and research focus. From a law enforcement and security perspective, Andreas (2003) sees anti-smuggling as a state-driven enforcement mechanism aimed at detecting, intercepting, and prosecuting individuals and groups engaged in illicit trade. This perspective emphasises the role of border security agencies, intelligence operations, and customs regulations in suppressing illegal transactions. He further posits that smuggling is not only an economic crime but also a security threat, as it facilitates transnational crimes such as arms trafficking, drug trade, and human smuggling. This view aligns with studies by Donnan and Wilson (2020), who describe anti-smuggling as a geopolitical tool used by nations to safeguard territorial integrity and prevent cross-border criminal activities.

From an economic and trade policy standpoint, Coskun (2016) conceptualises anti-smuggling as a trade regulation mechanism aimed at protecting domestic industries, stabilising revenue collection, and ensuring market competitiveness. According to this perspective, smuggling arises due to market distortions, including high import tariffs, price differentials, and excessive trade restrictions. Coskun posits that overly restrictive anti-smuggling measures can sometimes disrupt local economies and border communities, as informal cross-border trade serves as a livelihood strategy for many households. This aligns with the findings of Afrika and Ajumbo (2012), who estimate that smuggling contributes nearly 20% to Nigeria's GDP, highlighting its economic significance despite its illegality.

Other scholars focus on the social and developmental implications of anti-smuggling efforts. Adegbite and Ojo (2017) posit that anti-smuggling should not only be seen as an enforcement strategy but also as a developmental framework. They propose a "holistic approach", where anti-smuggling efforts are complemented by socio-economic policies that integrate border communities into formal trade structures. Their study highlights how strict border enforcement measures, such as Nigeria's 2019 border closure policy, negatively affected local traders, causing inflation, supply chain disruptions, and unemployment. Similarly, Flynn (1997) views anti-smuggling policies as double-edged swords, capable of curbing illegal trade while inadvertently pushing vulnerable populations into deeper economic hardship. From an international relations and policy perspective, Widdowson and Holloway (2017) describe anti-smuggling as an international cooperative framework aimed at harmonizing border security policies across nations. This perspective highlights the role of global organizations such as the United Nations Office on

Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Customs Organization (WCO), and INTERPOL in coordinating anti-smuggling initiatives at an international level. These scholars emphasize that bilateral and multilateral cooperation between nations is essential for effective anti-smuggling enforcement, as smugglers often exploit jurisdictional gaps, weak governance, and cross-border corruption to evade detection.

A criminological perspective focuses on the adaptability and resilience of smuggling networks despite intensified anti-smuggling enforcement. Okeke and Nwankwo (2021) describe anti-smuggling as a continuous battle between enforcement agencies and organised smuggling syndicates, where criminals evolve their tactics to bypass security measures. Their studies reveals that smugglers employ false documentation, underground routes, bribery, and digital communication networks to sustain illicit trade operations. Similarly, Eselebor (2018) underscores how corruption within border enforcement agencies weakens anti-smuggling efforts, enabling criminals to circumvent customs regulations through bribery and collusion. A legal perspective of anti-smuggling focuses on legislative frameworks and legal deterrence. Oladipo (2020) conceptualises anti-smuggling as a legal doctrine that defines penalties, sanctions, and judicial processes for individuals and organisations engaged in smuggling activities. This view highlights the importance of strict legal enforcement, customs laws, and criminal justice systems in deterring smuggling. Many countries have enacted anti-smuggling legislation that prescribes severe punishments, including financial penalties, imprisonment, and asset forfeiture for convicted smugglers. However, Newman (2006) warns that legal frameworks alone are insufficient without effective implementation and institutional integrity.

Role of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) in Anti-Smuggling Activities

The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) plays a critical role in enforcing anti-smuggling policies, ensuring compliance with trade regulations, and securing national borders. As the primary agency responsible for safeguarding Nigeria borders, the NCS is tasked with preventing the illegal movement of goods, protecting government revenue, and facilitating legitimate trade. The effectiveness of NCS operations directly impacts economic stability, national security, and regional trade relations. However, despite its strategic mandate, the agency faces significant challenges, including corruption, inadequate resources, weak infrastructure, and the increasing sophistication of smuggling networks (Osimen et al., 2017).

The Nigeria Customs Service Act empowers the agency to monitor imports and exports, prevent the smuggling of contraband goods, and ensure compliance with national trade laws (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2020). Through its enforcement efforts, the NCS is expected to intercept illegal goods, seize smuggled items, and prosecute offenders. Studies (Adeniji, 2018; Owino, 2019; among others) have shown that effective customs enforcement contributes significantly to national revenue generation, as duties and tariffs collected from imported goods form a substantial portion of government income (Ekeocha & Nwosu, 2019). In addition to enforcing trade compliance, the NCS is a key player in border security management. Nigeria's porous borders present a serious challenge, allowing smugglers to move contraband goods, arms, narcotics, and even human trafficked individuals with relative ease. As part of its anti-smuggling operations, the NCS works alongside other security agencies, including the Nigeria Immigration Service

(NIS), the Department of State Services (DSS), and the Nigerian Police Force, to secure border entry points and disrupt illicit supply chains (Adewuyi, 2018).

Despite its critical role in border enforcement, the NCS is plagued by multiple operational challenges that undermine its effectiveness. One of the most significant barriers to efficient enforcement is corruption within the customs administration. Osimen et al. (2017) highlight that bribery, collusion with smugglers, and abuse of power among customs officials severely weaken anti-smuggling efforts. Research by Transparency International (2021) found that corrupt customs officers often accept bribes to allow smuggled goods to pass through checkpoints unchecked, enabling illicit trade networks to flourish. Another major issue affecting the effectiveness of the NCS is inadequate resources and poor infrastructure. Many border posts are understaffed, lack modern surveillance equipment, and struggle with outdated inspection facilities (Ibrahim & Adamu, 2019). A study by the World Customs Organization (WCO, 2021) found that Nigeria lags behind many countries in deploying modern customs technologies such as automated cargo scanning, biometric verification, and digital trade documentation systems. Without adequate surveillance infrastructure, customs officers struggle to detect and intercept smuggled goods, especially those concealed in legitimate shipments (Oladipo, 2020).

The increasing sophistication of smuggling networks also poses a major challenge to the NCS. Smugglers constantly adapt to new enforcement measures, using underground supply chains, false documentation, and advanced transportation techniques to evade detection. Studies show that many smugglers exploit unregulated border

routes, bribe customs officials, and use encrypted communication channels to coordinate illicit activities (Okeke & Nwankwo, 2021). In some cases, smuggling networks receive backing from powerful economic and political actors, making it difficult for the NCS to dismantle them without high-level institutional support (Eselebor, 2018). Given these challenges, researchers and policymakers emphasize that effective border control requires multi-agency coordination, technological surveillance, and community cooperation. A study by Donnan & Wilson (2020) recommends that the NCS should strengthen partnerships with other security agencies to improve intelligence sharing and enforcement efficiency. Enhanced collaboration between customs officers, immigration officials, and law enforcement agencies can improve the identification and disruption of smuggling networks. Another crucial strategy for improving anti-smuggling efforts is the adoption of advanced surveillance technology. Ibrahim and Adamu (2019) advocate for investment in digital customs management systems, real-time tracking of shipments, and the use of drones for border surveillance. Many developed nations have successfully reduced smuggling by integrating AI-powered scanning systems and automated border control facilities (World Bank, 2020). If properly implemented in Nigeria, these technologies can help customs officers monitor high-risk shipments, analyze trade patterns, and improve interception rates.

Community cooperation is also essential for effective anti-smuggling enforcement. Adegbite & Ojo (2017) emphasize that border communities should be engaged in anti-smuggling campaigns, as many residents depend on informal cross-border trade for their livelihoods. Policies that criminalize entire border populations without offering alternative economic opportunities may lead to resistance and increased illicit trade activities. Instead, the government should implement community-based intelligence programs,

economic empowerment initiatives, and awareness campaigns to encourage public support for legitimate trade activities (Widdowson & Holloway, 2017). The operations of the NCS have far-reaching implications for economic development and national security. In the economic sector, efficient customs enforcement promotes trade transparency, reduces revenue losses, and strengthens domestic industries (Coskun, 2016). When smuggling is effectively curtailed, local manufacturers and producers benefit from reduced competition from illegally imported goods, leading to increased productivity and job creation (Afrika & Ajumbo, 2012). In addition, customs revenue—generated through import duties, excise taxes, and tariffs—provides significant funding for national development projects (World Bank, 2020).

On the security front, a well-functioning customs system helps prevent the entry of illegal arms, narcotics, and counterfeit goods, thereby reducing organised crime, terrorism, and drug-related violence (UNODC, 2021). Smuggled weapons have been linked to conflicts involving insurgent groups, banditry, and urban gang violence in Nigeria, emphasizing the need for tight border security measures (Edeh & Olaniyan, 2020). However, excessive enforcement measures without proper trade facilitation policies can also harm the economy.

The Impact of Anti-Smuggling Activities on Economic Growth

Anti-smuggling activities play a crucial role in shaping Nigeria's economic landscape by influencing trade policies, government revenue, local industry growth, and national security. The enforcement measures carried out by the NCS have contributed positively to economic stability by reducing illegal trade, increasing revenue generation, and protecting domestic industries. How-

ever, these measures also present economic challenges, particularly for border communities and informal traders, who rely on cross-border trade for survival. The impact of anti-smuggling efforts can be analyzed from both positive contributions and economic challenges.

Positive Contributions of Anti-Smuggling Activities

i. Revenue Generation

One of the most significant contributions of anti-smuggling operations is the increase in government revenue. The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) plays a vital role in collecting import duties, tariffs, and penalties on illegal goods intercepted at the borders. These revenues contribute substantially to government funding for infrastructure, social programs, and public services. Studies have shown that effective customs enforcement significantly boosts national revenue. According to Ekeocha & Nwosu (2019), revenues collected from customs duties and anti-smuggling fines in Nigeria contribute to nearly 30% of non-oil government income. This demonstrates how robust border security policies can strengthen economic growth by ensuring that all imports are properly taxed and regulated.

ii. Protection of Local Industries

By restricting the inflow of smuggled goods, anti-smuggling efforts help protect local manufacturers from unfair competition. Smuggled goods, particularly counterfeit products, substandard imports, and illegally subsidized foreign goods, often undermine local industries by flooding the market with cheaper alternatives. When these illegal imports are curbed, domestic producers experience increased demand for locally made goods, leading to job creation and industrial growth (Osimen et al., 2017). This is particularly crucial in sectors such as agriculture,

textiles, pharmaceuticals, and consumer electronics, where Nigerian manufacturers compete with imported goods. Adegbite & Ojo (2017) argue that strict anti-smuggling measures support the "Buy Nigeria, Grow Nigeria" initiative, encouraging consumers to purchase locally manufactured products and, in turn, strengthening Nigeria's industrial base.

i. Crime Reduction and National Security

A major non-economic benefit of anti-smuggling enforcement is its role in curbing organized crime and ensuring national security. Smuggling is often linked to other forms of illegal activity, including arms trafficking, drug smuggling, human trafficking, and money laundering. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2021) reports that weak border enforcement contributes to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in West Africa, fueling insurgencies, armed robbery, and banditry. The NCS's anti-smuggling operations help prevent illicit arms from entering the country, thereby reducing crime rates and enhancing national security. Furthermore, anti-smuggling efforts have led to major drug seizures, preventing narcotics from infiltrating local communities and worsening public health crises (Ibrahim & Adamu, 2019).

Economic Challenges of Anti-Smuggling Activities

Despite the economic and security benefits of anti-smuggling efforts, stringent enforcement measures have also created economic hardships for certain groups, particularly informal traders and border communities. These challenges highlight the need for a balanced approach that en-

hances border security while safeguarding economic livelihoods.

i. **Disruption of Informal Trade**

A significant portion of Nigeria's border economy is informal, with many households relying on cross-border trade for their livelihood. Stringent anti-smuggling measures, such as border closures, increased surveillance, and high penalties for unauthorized trade, have disrupted the economic activities of informal traders. Many of these traders operate in the agricultural and textile sectors, engaging in the import and export of goods between Nigeria and its neighboring countries. Flynn (1997) argues that excessive trade restrictions often push border communities into deeper economic hardship, leading some individuals to resort to illegal smuggling as a survival mechanism. The Nigerian Association of Small-Scale Traders (2020) reported that stricter border controls led to business closures, job losses, and financial instability among border residents, particularly in Seme, Idiroko, and Jibia border towns.

ii. **Inflationary Pressures**

The restriction of smuggled goods, particularly essential commodities such as foodstuffs, petroleum products, and consumer goods, has led to inflationary pressures, affecting consumers across the country. Many smuggled goods, such as rice, frozen poultry, vegetable oil, and fuel, were previously available at cheaper prices due to illegal cross-border supply chains. However, with stricter enforcement of anti-smuggling laws, the reduced availability of these goods has driven up local prices, thereby reducing consumer purchasing power (World Bank, 2020).

A key example of this was Nigeria's 2019 border closure, which aimed to curb rice smuggling and promote local rice production. While the policy successfully reduced the inflow of illegally imported rice, it also led to a sharp rise in food prices, with inflation increasing by 13.7% during the closure period (Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, 2021). The sudden scarcity of imported food products created financial strain on low-income households, highlighting the economic trade-offs associated with anti-smuggling enforcement. In addition, petroleum smuggling remains a major issue in Nigeria due to the country's fuel subsidy policy, which makes domestically sold fuel cheaper than in neighboring nations. Smugglers often transport fuel illegally across borders, benefiting from the price differentials. However, when strict enforcement measures reduce smuggled fuel supplies, there are spillover effects on domestic fuel prices and supply chains, affecting transportation costs and inflation rates (Eselebor, 2018).

Balancing Anti-Smuggling Measures with Economic Growth

Given the dual impact of anti-smuggling operations on the economy, scholars advocate for a balanced approach that integrates security enforcement with trade facilitation strategies (Coskun, 2016). Ibrahim and Adamu (2019) suggest that border policies should be structured to encourage formal trade while minimizing the need for illicit transactions. Governments can achieve this by lowering excessive tariffs, simplifying customs procedures, and promoting regional trade agreements. The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) presents an opportunity for Nigeria to enhance legal trade routes, thereby reducing reliance on smuggling as an economic activity (UNECA, 2021). Another recommended strategy is the empowerment of border communities through alternative

economic opportunities. Adegbite & Ojo (2017) argue that governments should implement economic inclusion programs for small traders, providing business grants, skills training, and access to microfinance. By offering legal trade incentives, border communities can transition from informal smuggling operations to formalized commercial enterprises, ensuring sustainable economic growth.

Anti-Smuggling Strategies in Mexico, the European Union, and ECOWAS: Lessons for Nigeria

Empirical research on anti-smuggling activities from various regions, including Mexico, the European Union (EU), and ECOWAS countries, has demonstrated that effective border enforcement strategies require a combination of security measures, economic incentives, and trade facilitation policies. While stringent law enforcement and border control mechanisms play a crucial role in curbing illicit trade, evidence suggests that economic imbalances, high tariff rates, and weak trade policies often create conditions conducive to smuggling. A review of global anti-smuggling strategies provides valuable lessons for Nigeria in enhancing its enforcement measures while promoting economic stability. Mexico's experience with smuggling and illicit trade, particularly along its border with the United States, has been well-documented. The country has struggled with drug cartels, human smuggling, and illegal weapons trade, making border enforcement a top national priority.

According to Andreas (2003), Mexico has implemented militarized border patrols, intelligence driven operations, and enhanced surveillance systems to disrupt smuggling networks. The government has also adopted joint task forces with U.S. law enforcement agencies, such as U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)

and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), to combat transnational smuggling operations (Martínez, 2018). Despite the heavy militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border, empirical studies suggest that economic factors continue to fuel smuggling activities. Astorga & Shirk (2010) found that restrictive U.S. trade policies, wage disparities, and demand for cheap labor contribute to ongoing smuggling operations, particularly in agriculture, textiles, and informal retail goods. This highlights the limits of security-driven anti-smuggling approaches and underscores the importance of creating economic incentives for legal trade and employment. For Nigeria, this suggests that while strict border enforcement is necessary, complementary economic policies must be in place to reduce the incentives for smuggling.

The European Union (EU) has adopted a holistic approach to combating smuggling, emphasizing trade liberalization, border harmonization, and technology-driven enforcement. Unlike Mexico's military-based strategy, the EU has successfully reduced smuggling by eliminating internal trade barriers while strengthening external border control. Zaiotti (2011) argues that the Schengen Agreement, which allows for the free movement of goods and people within EU member states, has reduced illegal trade by making formal trade easier and more profitable. Empirical studies from Germany, France, and the Netherlands indicate that simplifying trade regulations and reducing high tariffs contribute to lower smuggling rates (Widdowson & Holloway, 2017). The EU's Customs Union has also streamlined tax structures and trade compliance mechanisms, allowing businesses to operate legally without excessive bureaucratic restrictions. A study by Coskun (2016) shows that EU countries have combined trade facilitation measures with technological border controls, including electronic cargo tracking and automated

customs clearance, to ensure compliance while minimizing smuggling risks. For Nigeria, the EU's experience demonstrates that excessively strict trade policies can be counterproductive, as they create incentives for illegal trade. Instead of relying solely on border enforcement, Nigeria can adopt trade liberalization policies, such as lowering import tariffs, streamlining customs processes, and promoting regional trade agreements, to reduce the appeal of smuggling.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) presents a valuable case study for Nigeria, as it shares similar economic and geopolitical challenges. Several West African nations have implemented cross-border co-operation mechanisms to combat smuggling, particularly in the agriculture, petroleum, and manufacturing sectors. Studies by Adepoju (2019) indicate that countries like Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal have successfully reduced smuggling by harmonizing regional trade tariffs and simplifying customs procedures. One of the most effective ECOWAS policies has been the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS), which allows for duty-free movement of locally produced goods across member states.

Research by Scholvin & Plagemann (2020) suggests that countries with integrated trade policies experience lower smuggling rates, as traders prefer formal trade routes when economic barriers are minimized. This contrasts with Nigeria's frequent border closures and restrictive trade policies, which have historically encouraged smuggling rather than deterring it (World Bank, 2020). Based on empirical studies from Mexico, the EU, and ECOWAS, Nigeria can enhance its anti-smuggling strategies by adopting a balanced approach that integrates security measures with economic policies. Several key lessons

emerge from these global case studies. Strengthening border security with advanced technology is essential, as Mexico and the EU have demonstrated the importance of digital surveillance systems, cargo scanners, and real-time border tracking mechanisms in enhancing enforcement without over-relying on manual inspections (Oladipo, 2020).

Simplifying trade regulations to encourage formal trade can also be effective, as the EU's experience suggests that lowering tariffs and simplifying customs procedures reduce incentives for smuggling (Coskun, 2016). Nigeria should reform its customs procedures to encourage businesses to comply with trade laws rather than resorting to illegal trade routes. Regional trade integration is another critical component, as ECOWAS countries that have implemented the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) have seen reduced smuggling. Nigeria should strengthen its commitment to regional trade agreements, allowing legal trade to flourish while making smuggling less attractive.

Economic support for border communities is also crucial, as studies show that poverty and lack of employment opportunities drive smuggling activities (Adegbite & Ojo, 2017). Providing alternative economic opportunities for border communities, such as access to micro-finance, vocational training, and agricultural investment programs, can reduce dependence on smuggling as a source of livelihood. Additionally, combating corruption in border enforcement is necessary, as empirical studies from Mexico highlight that corruption within customs and border patrol agencies weakens enforcement efforts (Astorga & Shirk, 2010).

Nigeria must implement strict anti-corruption

measures, accountability frameworks, and whistleblower protection mechanisms within the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) to improve the credibility of anti-smuggling operations. Empirical evidence from Mexico, the European Union, and ECOWAS countries demonstrates that successful anti-smuggling operations combine security enforcement with economic incentives. While border control and intelligence-led enforcement are crucial for preventing illicit trade, they must be accompanied by trade liberalization policies, regional cooperation, and economic support for border communities. For Nigeria, adopting similar strategies—such as modernizing border security infrastructure, reducing trade barriers, and strengthening regional trade partnerships—can significantly enhance anti-smuggling efforts while fostering economic growth and stability. Through a balanced policy approach that integrates security with trade facilitation, Nigeria can curb smuggling while promoting sustainable economic development.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of structural functionalism will be adopted as the theoretical framework for this study because it essentially focuses on the role of the state structures and its functions. Structural-functional theory explains how political institutional failure has engendered insecurity in Nigeria which is a by-product of arms smuggling emanating from weak border control on the part of the governmental agencies and institutions. Sovereign states have a responsibility to conduct certain basic tasks for the welfare and well-being of their people, as well as to ensure that their internal processes run smoothly. Linking this theory to the problematic in Nigeria, reveals that the Police, Army, Civil Defense, Customs, Department of State Security and other security agencies are institutions or structures that perform designated functions capable of sustaining security or thwarting it.

Also, government (legislature, executive and judiciary) on the other hand performs basic functions to support security forces, by way of creating, enforcement and sanctioning of offenders of these policy/laws geared towards effective border control operations aimed at checks on arms smuggling and other illicit smuggling. The implication of the above is that these institutions and structures in Nigeria though, perform their security/statutory functions, much of the attitudes of these border security personnel while carrying out their functions and activities are outright whelmed with selfish and corrupt practices with overwhelming emotional influence, they are engulfed in aiding and abating in arm smuggling activities. This has done no good to the country than a feeling of insecurity unlike in the United States where the security departments upholds and effectively Mann her borders and properties within the state. Some unscrupulous border security personnel are in connivance with syndicate groups who indulge in arms smuggling in the country, thus, making mess of effective border control in Nigeria.

In the same vein, the primary function of government is to protect lives, respect fundamental human rights of the citizens, freedom of the press, and maintain law and order. The study contends that these functions are hardly enforced by the Nigerian Government and that this has been the reason why the country is suffering from weak border control resulting in insecurity of all kinds.

That is why the system continues to suffer from different kinds of violence ranging from Islamic fundamentalism, ethnic militias, youth restiveness and regional/sectional violence etc. This shows that the institution or structure (security agencies) charged with the responsibility of border control has not been performing its functions as expected, as its errors and mistakes have marred adequate security resulting in

wars, breakdown of law and order, riots and violence in the country.

Methodology

To achieve the objectives of this study, a qualitative research approach was employed to explore the effectiveness, challenges, and implications of anti-smuggling operations carried out by the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS). The study relied on primary data sources, gathered through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders involved in border security enforcement. This qualitative method was chosen to allow for a deeper understanding of the operational dynamics, enforcement strategies, and limitations faced by NCS personnel in Seme and Idiroko border patrol units. The primary data collection process involved semi-structured interviews with selected participants, including: Senior Staff of the NCS – officers responsible for decision-making, policy implementation, and high-level coordination of border security activities. Junior Staff of the NCS – frontline officers directly involved in daily enforcement, surveillance, and anti-smuggling operations. Management Officials of the NCS – supervisors and administrative personnel overseeing strategic border control efforts.

Participants were purposively selected based on their expertise, years of experience, and direct involvement in anti-smuggling enforcement. The interview questions were designed to capture operational challenges, smuggling trends, enforcement strategies, and inter-agency cooperation mechanisms. Interviews were conducted in a confidential setting to encourage honest responses and avoid potential biases that could arise from institutional constraints. For data analysis, content analysis was used to systematically interpret interview responses within thematic frameworks. Thematic analysis enabled the identification of key patterns, trends, and recurring challenges in NCS anti-smuggling ef-

forts. The study focused on themes such as border security measures, smuggling adaptation techniques, corruption and enforcement loopholes, inter-agency collaboration, and community engagement.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Nigeria Customs Service and Anti-Smuggling activities at Border Communities in Nigeria According to the expressed information, many of the participants were aware of the role that Nigeria Customs Service played in the reduction of smuggling activities in Nigeria. This was buttressed by some of the respondents who said;

“Nigeria Customs Service is there to suppress smuggling.”¹ Another respondent claimed that:

....., It is not easy to curb trans-border activities but to me I think they have tried because for the time being I think they have been able to stop some people I think I have some friend who are out of the smuggling business because they say

there is no way, road is tight. For example, within this axis here eh, some weeks ago a rice came through water but because of the cost of involve in moving them, they have not been able to cross one single bag. You can imagine someone bringing in up to 300 bags but up till now they can't still cross one bag into the town they lack equipment the government should do more by giving them enough equipment.²

This was also supported by one of the respondents who said that:

Nigeria Customs Service critically contribute to suppress smuggling activities in the Nigeria

border despite the challenges all border areas in Nigeria, although the Nigerian Customs Service are critically contributing to reduce to the minimum activities in border areas.³

Nevertheless, in terms of generating internal revenue, the Nigeria Customs Service also encouraged the patronage of locally made products which are contributing to the internal revenue in Nigeria and also indirectly creating job opportunities for local people in the country. This was buttressed by some of the respondents who said;

What we did is that what so ever that comes in we will make sure it is government policy. Government policy is that the least of the items unlike you pick the rest of them soaps, Maggi, right now government said we should only use cement in Nigeria that we have been encouraging

the use of locally made products.⁴

And this was supported by another respondent who submitted thus:

..., we have to seek for the assistance from the air force so that we carry on our duties. We also generate revenue that is our major target, anything you do without you generating money for government you are running a business-like last year they gave us 900 billion naira which we surpassed it by four hundred and something billion which we generated 1.3 trillion naira. Same thing this year, I think it is 1.3 trillion which everybody according to what our controller said we

have to, although the flipped the charges into able command. Initially we generated 800 million naira monthly but currently it is more than that.⁵

This was also supported by another respondent who opined that:

... so, they left everything in the hands of Customs who are using limited resources and they are performing their work even with the closure of the border you will have noticed that we generate a lot into the purse of the government.⁶

Another respondent said that;

... The government will make more revenue since they have been

able to block all loopholes the government will make more revenues, all these agros will not be able to go out and it will be consumed within the country.⁷

Summary of Findings

The study explored the role of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) in anti-smuggling activities and border management within Nigeria's border communities. Findings revealed that the NCS plays a pivotal role in reducing smuggling activities, despite significant challenges. Participants acknowledged the efforts of the Customs Service in suppressing smuggling, highlighting instances where stricter enforcement measures have deterred smugglers from operating. For example, respondents noted that tighter surveillance and enforcement have rendered cross-border smuggling, such as rice trafficking, increasingly difficult. In addition to its security role, the NCS has significantly contributed to internal revenue generation. By enforcing government policies that promote the use of locally made goods, the Customs Service has encouraged local production, thereby creating job opportunities and supporting economic growth. Respondents also highlighted the impressive revenue figures achieved by the NCS, surpassing annual targets and reinforcing the importance of their work in national

development. However, challenges persist, including inadequate resources and equipment, which limit the effectiveness of their operations. Respondents emphasized the need for greater governmental support to equip the NCS adequately for optimal performance. Despite these obstacles, the NCS continues to contribute substantially to the suppression of smuggling and the generation of government revenue, underscoring its critical role in Nigeria's border management framework.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study highlights both the positive and negative impacts of anti-smuggling activities on border development in Nigeria. While anti-smuggling efforts contribute to national security, revenue generation, and the protection of local industries, they also pose economic challenges for border communities that rely on informal cross-border trade. Stringent enforcement measures, if not carefully managed, can disrupt livelihoods, increase inflation, and encourage underground smuggling networks. Therefore, to maximise the benefits of anti-smuggling efforts while minimising economic disruptions, a balanced approach is necessary—one that integrates security, trade facilitation, and community development strategies.

To enhance the effectiveness of Nigeria's anti-smuggling framework, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Enhancing Technology Use:**
The deployment of AI-driven surveillance systems, electronic cargo tracking, biometric verification, and real-

- time monitoring can significantly improve the detection and prevention of smuggling activities. Advanced technologies such as drones, automated customs clearance, and data analytics should be adopted to strengthen enforcement while reducing corruption and human error.
2. **Border Community Involvement:** Engaging local communities in border management can foster cooperation and reduce resistance to anti-smuggling policies. Establishing community-based intelligence networks, awareness programs, and legal trade incentives can encourage border residents to report smuggling activities while transitioning into the formal economy.
 3. **Economic Incentives:** The government should introduce microfinance programs, business grants, and entrepreneurial training for individuals affected by strict anti-smuggling measures. Providing alternative economic opportunities can reduce dependency on illegal trade and promote sustainable development in border regions.
 4. **Regional Collaboration:** Strengthening
 5. **Partnerships with neighboring countries** within ECOWAS and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) framework can enhance intelligence sharing, coordinated border patrols, and harmonized trade policies. A joint anti-smuggling task force between Nigeria and its neighbors can improve enforcement efficiency while facilitating legitimate trade.
 6. **Policy Reforms:** The Nigerian government must implement flexible trade policies that balance security concerns with economic sustainability. This includes reducing excessive import tariffs, simplifying customs procedures, and establishing special trade zones to encourage legal trade while discouraging smuggling.
 7. **Partnerships with neighboring countries** within ECOWAS and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) framework can enhance intelligence sharing, coordinated border patrols, and harmonized trade policies. A joint anti-smuggling task force between Nigeria and its neighbors can improve enforcement efficiency while facilitating legitimate trade.
 8. **Policy Reforms:** The Nigerian government must implement flexible trade policies that balance security concerns with economic sustainability. This includes reducing excessive import tariffs, simplifying customs procedures, and establishing special trade zones to encourage legal trade while discouraging smuggling.

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.34>**RE-ENFRANCHISING THE ARTS INTO THE MISSION OF HUMAN WELLNES****Moagisi Edwin Seleka**

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kavithal@srmsit.edu.in**Abstract**

The battle among epochs, generations and world views orchestrated by the inevitable intraspecific competition among humans has resulted in fewer scientific solutions regarding what is and what should be allowed into modern approaches to health and wellness. In this qualitative study, the researchers investigated the role of the Arts among humans and their wellbeing. They attempted to establish the innate health resources that creation has endowed all human beings with, though neglected in the quest for modernity with its over-the-counter mode of symbiosis. The results of this social engineering have been the rendering of intrapersonal healing inactive. This study, therefore, sought to establish the facts regarding how the ancients and the moderns used the power of the Arts towards the wellbeing of humans, the survival and preservation of the species prior to the commercialization of health. Data for the study were generated through texts that already exist in the public domain. Textual analysis was used as the method of analyzing data. The results of the study revealed that the recreative power of the Arts can play a vital role in wellness. They have demonstrated the correlation between the limbic system, recovery and sustenance of the human species. It is hoped that the study will add to conscientization with regard to the anti-thesis of auto-immune destruction which is auto-immune recreation. Considering the study findings, this research, therefore, recommends that the ministry of health, particularly public health, should encourage health practitioners to supplement their modern scientific approaches with equally scientifically agreeable benefits of the Arts.

Keywords: Arts, humour, music, bibliotherapy, human wellness

1. Background and Contextualization of the Study

It is all but certain that active participation in the treatment was only through laughter or the cultivation of the will to live (Frankl, 1986). The argument above is substantiated by Norman Cousins's case who took it upon himself to mobilize the natural defence mechanisms of the body, which are innate and indispensable. This might not always be true with organic diseases, however, the re-education to compensate for disability of innate or accidental origin is imperative to human survival, particularly in this post-covid 19 era and global politics and economics. Like cure,

rehabilitation implies participation of the mind as well as of the body, integrated through the volition, for a creative process of adaptive changes (Cousins, 2016). Five themes emerged from the observation above. First, a cultivation of the will to live, re-education, to compensate for disability of innate or accidental origin, participation of the mind and body, volition and creative processes of adaption. The five above suggest a psychogenic approach to wellness, which begins with the will to live. This aspect of survival has been adroitly chronicled in Man's Search for Meaning by Frankl (2016). The health existentialist above

also implicates mental shape in the word re-education. This is reminiscent of Kgotso Seatlholo's argument that just like ignorance, education could cripple, hence the need for re-education. This cannot be wrong as the mind is the seat of the volition and the domicile of the muse (creative Arts).

Studies show that up to 90% of patients who reach out for medical help are suffering from self-limiting disorders to access re-invention abilities available within the range of the body's own healing powers (Cousins, 2016). According to Berton Roueche, "Placebo derives its power from the infinite capacity of the human mind for self-deception" (Cousins 2016, p63). Cousins (2016, p63) himself states that "this interpretation is not held by placebo scholars...believe that the placebo is not powerful because it fools the body but translates the will to live into a physical reality."

Dramatic Arts concur with the above. In Act 5 Scene 3 of the play *Macbeth* by Shakespeare, produced about 500 years ago, this playwright warns humanity through his character, the physician, that some illnesses cannot be healed by a physician but by the patient herself (Lady McBeth). This ancient observation seems to have fallen on deaf ears. However, humanity cannot be trapped in the abyss of ignorance eternally. This failure to take an existential stance with regard to wellness has created a dependency syndrome which has translated into what Cousins (2005) calls a pill-grabbing generation, a very costly relationship between the populace and the medical fraternity. Shakespeare's wisdom above is corroborated by modern scientists such as Levitin (2019). This ethnomusicologist and neurologist emphasizes this point by citing Herbert Read, who argues that "Art, at the dawn of human culture was a key to survival, a sharpening of the faculties essential to the struggle for existence. Art, in my opinion, has remained a key to survival" (Levitin, 2019). This is further buttressed by the observation of Balfour (2004, p1) who avers that, "Since the beginning of time, man [sic] has used music (Art) to call forth healing spirits, banish evil, dispel illness and create a place of comfort and wellness." This argument is supported by Ito *et al.* (2022, p2) who state that "music has been widely used in clinical

practice throughout history." It is, however, unfortunate that, this monumental truth has been subject to the human intra-specific competition which in this case has manifested in wars of survival, that play out even in the intellectual arena. NiaNia *et al.* (2017) chronicle the conflict above as they lament the subversion of Matekita (*Maori*) (healing), which is suffering from what could be regarded as social Darwinism, an intra-specific competition in which cultures of 'superior' societies survive at the expense of lesser endowed ones. This war has always been muddled with extremes between modern approaches and ancient ones, as well as rivalry among epochs and ideologies. This has led to over-generalizations that 'shepherded' participants in this discourse away from certain achievements regarding human wellness and drowned multiple voices into a monologue in favour of co-modification and merchandization agenda.

The origin of the human species unravels that, amidst this epistemic deficit, one human ability or endowment has remained part of every culture, high or low, modern or traditional, affluent or poverty-stricken, "civilized" or "uncivilized"; that is, the Arts. It still remains a conundrum that, despite the fact that books are made of words, humans still find the urge to buy novels or anthologies, not as set works but for leisure. They still engage in activities such as visiting the cinema, or theatre to watch plays and stand up comedies. As if not enough, they maniacally demonstrate an obsession with music to the point of even committing suicide as reportedly done by one young girl in Gelukspan, outside Mafikeng in the Northwest province on hearing that Brenda Fassie, the popstar, had died. Still, in our modern day, this subconscious reliance on Arts, particularly in South Africa, cannot be ignored, especially, when cogitated upon, against realities such as Beatlemania, a phenomenon that swept through the Western world in the years between 1963 and 1966 (Taylor, 2017).

The extent to which human beings hold sacrosanct the innate and yet subconscious need for the Arts is unequivocally manifest in the fact that advanced countries such as the United States have imported phenomenal stand-up comedians such as Trevor Noah from South Africa. In the same vein, one cannot help but remember the filling of convention centers during performances of

comedians such as Aggrey Lonaka (The impersonification of president Thabo Mbeki), or Pablo, in “*A night of thousand laughs*” in East Africa, both on YouTube. Equally, mind-boggling is the metaphysical powers that are normally invoked by the Arts in performances such as that of the Dervish dance of the Sufi Muslims. This dance reportedly triggers transcendence and the dissolution of the ego (Harel *et al.*, 2021). Yet another illustration to the assertion above is the daily ritual of the traditional healer who beats the drums- a precondition for decoding oracles on their clients’ prospects of wellness and reality, from the spiritual realm.

Several parts of the Christian Bible also record the mystery of the Arts, music in particular, the mistress of all Arts. In the book of 2 Kings 3: 15-16, the prophet Elisha requested music and simultaneously divulged the *sine quanon* position of music as the bedrock of his prophetic powers. Another enigma of this Art is recorded in the actual therapeutic power of music, which the young David administered to King Saul, with a hundred percent rate of success against the psychiatric disorder. This Art reportedly restored the king to his sanity which was vital to optimal functioning in his position as head of state (1 Samuel 16: 23). Modern musico-therapists such as Levitin (2024) are revealing the dopaminergic power which are said to restore calm. This gives us a hint that this non-invasive approach to wellness could justifiably be touted for recovery from mental disturbance without the side effects of antidepressants which modern approaches would have resorted to (Saha *et al.*, 2021). It is this overview of the Arts which makes them crave a more scholarly investigation of their relationship with humanity. In this study, this task will be carried out with a brief discussion on human wellness and its history, theory of the Arts/apologetics of Art and confessions by artists on their trade. The paper will finally conduct a brief autobiographical summary of Norman Cousins, the history of Bibliotherapy, humour and music. The study will then draw a conclusion and state the recommendations.

2. Art and the artist

Whimsatt and Brooks (1964) argue that Art is a civilizing influence. They further contest that,

through comedy, it helps us to jettison the assertive emotions. Through tragedy, it fosters the integrative emotions, teaching us to live together, and through its cathartic effects, it helps the individual to endure what is otherwise without remedy. In addition to the above, Art is an expression of ourselves for our own sake. For instance, Koesler cited in Whimsatt and Brooks (1964) regards laughter as a discharge of nervous tension. Defining the Arts and an artist can best be done by interchangeably talking about the Arts, their function, the artist and what he/she does. To accomplish this task, researchers rely on definitions that arise from confessions of artists and observations of the *literati* on some genres. Although in some cases, definitions will restrict themselves to certain genres, the definitions will be treated as ‘tributaries’ leading to a general understanding of the Arts. We begin this task by looking into what William Wordsworth regards the poet as. According to this poet Laurette, a poet

*“...is a man speaking to man, a man,
...endued with more lively sensibility,
more enthusiasm and tenderness, who
has a greater knowledge of
human nature and a more comprehensive
soul than are supposed to be
common.”*

Two very important character attributes are highlighted by Wordsworth with regard to who the poet is. According to him, “a poet is a man with a lively sensibility and more enthusiasm, possessing greater knowledge of human nature and a more comprehensive soul than the average man” (Shrestha, 2015, p1). The assertion above places man as a being who is able to fathom things that other people who are devoid of his giftedness are not able to discern. That is to say, the artist is astute on the nature of human beings, and perhaps even more knowledgeable about us than we know ourselves. This certainly raises him above other fellow mortals. Wordsworth (Shrestha, 2015, p1) does not end there; he continues:

*Among mankind, a man pleased with his
own passions and volitions,
and who rejoices more than other men in
the spirit of life, that is, in him
delighting to contemplate similar volitions
and passions as*

*manifested in the goings-on of the uni-
verse,
and habitually impelled to create them
where he does not find them.*

In the lines above, Wordsworth reveals the fact that a poet is possessed by passions and volitions. He is therefore alluding to the poet's well-being and like a medical doctor, a nurse, or even a priest, a poet has a *mania* for life and is missional in terms of depositing his spirit (in-spir-a-tion) into other humans who are probably *ex-pir-ing* (dying). In a similar vein represented by the South African jazz group, Stimela, Wordsworth reveals the artist as existing in a mental and spiritual plateau that has the capacity to tap into the immaterial world inaccessible to the five senses and trivialize the pain. When this happens, a departure from the material world may facilitate the trivialization of the soma's experience thereby rendering it ineffective. The plea to the "diseased" whose serotonin levels have been affected by the curse of this world to the point of existential frustration is made by the jazz group Stimela. In their album titled steam track, they have got a song with a refrain "Go on living your life." In this very song, there is a stanza with the lines which provide counselling, or if you will, mind-altering as follows:

*Never mind the ups and downs
Never mind the falling rain
Look up high above the sky
See not what you see
Hear not what you hear
Go on living your life*

This song targets the psyche and promulgates an altered state thereof. Below, we continue with Wordsworth.

In his philosophy of the Arts, Wordsworth describes the artist as a person possessing transcendental powers which *insulate* him from the *sting* of aversive stimuli darting at him. It is this personality legacy which he wishes to bequeath to any soul that opens up to his/her artistic production. A classic example is a sonnet titled, "On his blindness" by John Milton. Below, are the lines of the sonnet, followed by a paragraph on the background and moral lesson of the poem.

When I consider how my light is spent

*Ere half my days in this dark world and
wide,
And that one talent which is death to
hide
Lodg'd with me useless, though my soul
more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and pre-
sent
My true account, lest he is returning
chide,
"Doth God exact day-labor, light de-
nied?"
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies: "God doth
not
need
Either man's work or his own gifts: who
best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best.
His
state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without
rest:
They also serve who only stand and
wait.*

This sonnet was written just after Milton had become blind. His first reaction to his blindness encodes frustration and despair or to put it in Frankl's words, an existential vacuum (Frankl, 1949). He wallows in the frustration engendered by uncontrollable stimuli, blindness, which assails him and steals his sight which is an indispensable faculty to his "perceived" sense of purpose as a human being. While he begins with murmuring and dwelling in negative chatter, resilience and Multiple Perspective Advantage (MPA) (Leaf, 2013) lift him from the quagmire of disabling chatter into an elevated perspective about his situation. He somersaults back into the life of productivity through his volition. This becomes the communicative purpose and moral lesson the efferent reading of his text rewards any reader of the poem with. The activation of the volition and the choice to let go of rigidity on his convictions, restores him to a life of productivity. It is this flexibility, MPA and willingness to live which the author wishes to inject into the soul of his readers as a form of inoculation against inev-

itable challenges that are prescribed for our providence individuated paths to greatness and purpose.

With the view to shed some light on the concepts the authors are grappling with here, Grout (2017) selected several aphorisms on Art and the artist. He claims that “an artist is someone who reveals important things on behalf of the world, someone who, as the poet Mary Oliver tells us, pays attention, is astonished and tells us about it” (Grout, 2017, p292). He further cites Thomas Merton on the effect of Art stating that: “*Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time, whether it's cave paintings or toe-tapping, gospel music is a potent pathway to God*” (Grout, 2017; Merton, p324). Grout adds a necessary condition towards accessing the clinical and aesthetic benefits of Art as he states: “*When done with the reverence and respect it deserves, it provides prophetic insight and magical moments of transcendence*” (Grout, 2017; Merton, p135).

In the metaphor of a planted seed that must die and rot for it to germinate and leave many seeds, Art seems to request from humanity, some metaphorical death in order to approximate the nature of the omnipotent creator, and thereby conquer human frailties. The argument above incorporates the metaphysical and non-empirical powers of the Arts.

In Walter Brueggeman's terms (cited in Grout, 2017, p93), “to practice Art, be it to chip a statue, arrange flowers, or write a situation comedy, is to affirm meaning, to say yes to the mystery, despite all the tragedy and ambiguities that surround us.” Resonating with the view above, Brueggemann lobbies for a perception that acknowledges the fact that the Arts warrant a deeper reverence as a potent ingredient of wellness, particularly against psychogenic ailments. The universality of the Arts, as gleaned from some African languages such as Gikuyu suggests a metaphysical presence in the soul and work of a mortal called the artist. These languages coincidentally use names that describe both God the creator of the universe and the artist as an individual who communes with the supernatural and imitates the main creator (Ngugi, 1998; Zwilling, 2015). African equivalents of the English word “artist” are Mumbi (Gikuyu), and its Setswana

cognate “Mmopi.” The two are an equivalent of the word “creator” which in the two cultures, is another name for God, the Creator of the universe. Hence, an artist is referred to as a re-creator. This now unravels the subconscious reason why people fill the stadia, convention centers, cinemas and theatres, buy novels and are hooked to soap operas. They are either captivated by the mystical powers in the machinations of the artist or responding to their instinct to be created anew. Despite ideological evolution, the Western view of the Arts similarly hinges on metaphysics. To the Greeks, there is an umbrella name for all the Arts as the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne called the Muses (Zwilling, 2015). The word *muse* is the source word of the artistic genre, music. The nine muses with famous attributes include *Calliope* (the goddess of fair voice-Epic poetry), *Clio* (renown-history), *Erato* (lovely-lyric poetry and songs), *Euterpe* (gladness-eulogy and flute playing), *Melpomene* (singing-tragedy), *Polimnia* (many songs-mime), *Thalia* (abundance and good cheer-comedy), *Terpsichore* (joy in the dance-dance) and *Urania* (heavenly-astronomy).

To the Romans, an artist is known as *vates* (Shaman). This ties in well with Friedrich Nietzsche's argument that “when the danger to man's will is greatest, Art approaches as a saving sorcerer and a healing expert (Grout, 2017, p292).” Two keywords surface here, and they are the “will” which in Wordsworth's argument discussed earlier as a synonym of the word volition, and “sorcerer” which is a more emphatic expression of the reviving power of the Arts, meaning they can raise the dead or are capable of restoration. In a treatise titled *Man's Search for Meaning*, Frankl (1984) conducted an in-depth discussion on the centrality of the will in human wellness and survival. The reader might do well to read this text.

3. Music

Music is one of the most powerful expressions of humanity and is deemed to be the oldest Art that man has used consciously or subconsciously. Archaeologists such as Nicholas Conard discovered a mammoth tusk from the Ice Age about 37000 years ago at a dig in Southern Germany. Its existence suggests that humans must have brought musical instruments with them when they left

Africa for Europe. Humans seem to have an almost wilful, evasive quality, defying simple explanations so that the more we find out, the more there is to know (Conrad, 2007).

Confucious held a view that music expressed the accord of heaven and earth (metaphysical). The Indian musicians thought their chants were composed by the gods and not by themselves. Indian and Chinese stories tell of singers changing the seasons and creating fire or water: while the Bible tells of Jericho walls falling at the sound of military horns, and Jewish priests wore bells to enter a holy place to ensure their spiritual protection.

Neurology is one discipline that has attempted to prove the efficacy of the arguments made by social scientists above. Koelsch (2018, p13) reports that “There are many brain regions that become active due to music-evoked emotions. These include: the (anterior) hippocampal formation, the amygdala, the auditory cortex, the nucleus accumbens/ventral striatum, the dorsal striatum, the medial and lateral orbitofrontal cortex, the anterior cingulate cortex as well as the anterior insula, pre-SMA [pre-supplementary motor area], rostral cingulate zone and *mediodor*.” The surface area of the brain affected by music attests to the power of music to usurp attention and play repeatedly in the mind, whether deliberately listened to or eavesdropped into per adventure. With its relationship to the brain and the limbic system by extension, music also triggers good hormones, which by translation engender wellness. This assertion is corroborated by Cohen (2003, p356) who argues that music creates ecstasy just like E- drug. This scholar continues, “music and visual stimulation would probably help you[sic] get to the endorphin-releasing point quicker... it lifts you up to a plateau of natural ecstasy. This originally Greek word literally means to drive out of one’s mind. This attribute of music which serves as a pastime and escape strategy is common among the Arts. To temporarily being driven out of oneself suggests a suppression or derailment of the mind from ruminating over trashy and toxic chatter thereby, stopping the body from inadvertently “dragging” itself into a state of auto-immune destruction. Cohen further claims that this Art form triggers the release of another feel-good hormone, oxytocin, which affects forms of behaviour such as trust,

empathy, reciprocity, group conformity, anxiety and overall social decision-making under different environmental conditions (Cohen, 2003).

Tanabe *et al.* (2001) perceive music as a potent form of distraction that may have a place in Music Education settings. These researchers state that patients recovering from coronary artery bypass graft who listened to music or watched music videos demonstrated significant decreases in pain ratings on their second postoperative day. This observation is corroborated by Lu *et al.* (2021, p279) who aver that “...music is more effective at modulating the affective dimension rather than the sensory dimension of pain perception. They further claim that:

Songs stick on our heads, playback in our dreams, pop into our unconsciousness at unexpected times. The answer lies in music’s ability to serve as an honest signal. To hold memories and to move us neurochemically (Lu *et al.*, 2021, p279).

Though Western music has abandoned all these ideas, the story of the minstrel Olpheus taming wild beasts with his melodies reminds us that the Ancient Greeks also believed strongly in the magical force of music. Sacks (2010) adroitly describes how this happens in his book “*Musophilia, how the brain processes music*.”

Poulsen *et al.* (2019) argue that, “Music is a safe and inexpensive intervention that nursing staff and patients can perform without provider orders. Although music is considered a distraction, a small study using both Positron Emission tomography (PET) scan and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) found that music activated the caudate and nucleus accumbens regions of the brain. These regions respond to pleasurable experiences leading to a dopamine release and euphoric state.”

Levitin (2006, p269) supports the idea above by stating that both music listening and therapy have been reportedly capable of helping people overcome a variety of psychological and physical problems. This Art has proved to be a means for improving peoples’ moods. This involves mirror neurones whose purpose is to train and prepare the organism to make movements it has not made before. These neurones are found in the Broca’s

area, which is a part of the brain intricately associated with speaking and learning to speak. These neurones are implicated in the old mystery of mimicking parents' facial movements. It may also explain why musical rhythm moves us, both emotionally and physically. Levitin (2006) reveals that music processing is distributed throughout the brain. This might be the reason Sharma (2021, p214) states that "the right kind of music electrifies access to the muse within you, me and every other creature. A good song opens me up, gets me going and once in a while with a special track rolling-breaks my heart in the tiniest of ways."

Experimental studies done on healthy humans revealed that neuro-psychological and neurochemical substrates are associated with music-induced analgesia. Lu *et al.* (2021) concluded that music can modulate pain as a distractor, a mood regulator, a stress reliever which rewards the body by suppressing pain. It has been discovered that endorphins which are pain-annihilating hormones have been observed to have a similar effect as heroin, which is a derivative of opium. Opium has been used for over 5000 years, about 100 years after the death of Christ, to cure asthma, epilepsy, etc., and also creates a feeling of relaxation and bliss. Its medical version is morphine, named after Morpheus, the god of sleep (Huxtable & Schwarz, 2001, p1).

4. Humour

This section of the study begins with indigenous wisdom, a Setswana observation which asserts that *Boitumelo senatla, bo phekola babobodi*. Literally, this ancient aphorism means, happiness is a *conquistador* who heals the sick. In this section, where humour is the subject, an attempt is made to discuss the relationship between human wellness, which can come in a variety of genres. From a psychological perspective, humour involves cognitive, emotional, behavioural, psycho-physiological and social aspects. The term humour can refer to a stimulus, which is intended to produce a humorous response, a mental process, or a response (exhilaration). Laughter is the most common expression of humorous experience. Bennett and Lengacher (2006) support the above statements by stating that, humour and laughter are associated with a pleasant emotional state.

One of the greatest writers of all time in the English world, Samuel Langhorne Clement popularly known as Mark Twain, is said to have survived because of this personal humour. Among his personal tragedies were firstly, his father died when he was 11 years old, a tragedy that brought his formal education to an end, as he had to start working at 12; his wife died very early and three of his children died before him. Peterson and Seligman (2004) report that, despite those challenges, Twain's own children attested to their father's great sense of humour which could be attributed to the perception of a hero they perceived him to be. These psychologists provide us with snippets of humour in the early life of Mark Twain. Among them are when he reportedly played a prank on his mother, who reacted by complaining that he was giving her more trouble than any of her other children. Then he said, "I suppose you were afraid I wouldn't live." She looked at him and said, "no; afraid you would." Another time, when he almost drowned in the Mississippi river waters, his mother did not seem much alarmed. "I guess there wasn't much danger. People born to be hanged are safe in water" (p583). Indeed, this sense of humour and mastery of incongruity are the ones which have made his novel, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, a humdinger. Confirming the axiom that the lamb takes after its mother, he begins the novel in the words,

Notice!

Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted;

persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished;

persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot!

Peterson and Seligman (2004) provide three definitions of humour. The first one is the playful recognition, enjoyment and/or creation of incongruity, second, a composed and cheerful view on adversity that allows one to see its light side and thereby, sustain a good mood. Thirdly, it is the ability to make others smile or laugh. Yet another attempt at defining this concept states that, humour is an umbrella for all funny phenomena, including the capacities to perceive, interpret, enjoy, create and relay incongruous communication. The term humour never entered the field of comic and funny until the late 16th century. Prior to that, humour referred to bodily fluids, which

are blood, phlegm, black and yellow bile. The mixture of these four humours in given people was expressed in their physical appearance, physiognomy and proneness to disease. Optimally, humours were balanced, but a predominance of one over the other presumably produced a given temperament. Pathologies of all kinds were explained by imbalanced humours. As medical science progressed, humoral theory was abandoned, although it survived in folk theory. Humours were used to explain labile behaviour and mood in general, and the term humour came to refer to one's predominant mood, either positive (good humour) or negative (bad humour). These two humours eventually became the terms for disposition, and by the end of the 17th century, good humour referred to the disposition, trait, or habit of being cheerful.

Colom *et al.* (2011) as well as Carbelo and Jáuregui (2006) use the term humour to refer to the diverse causes of laughter (black, blue, harmless, satirical, ironic, witty, vulgar, absurd, oral, literary, graphic, physical and improvised humour). In sum, humour is any stimulus that can provoke laughter in a person: games, jokes, funny stories, cartoons, embarrassing situations, incongruences, practical jokes, and so on – though there is no commonly accepted theory for explaining how humor gives rise to laughter (Jáuregui, 2007).

Recently, research has begun to evaluate the both positive and negative effects of laughter. As Jáuregui (2007) points out, humour has effects in four dimensions: a- Psychological effects b- Physiological effects c- Effects on productivity and d- Interpersonal effects. Below, an effort is made to look into them in more detail. a- Psychological effects: Laughter triggers pleasure. It activates the mesolimbic dopaminergic system (a reward system that provides us with pleasure when we obtain something valued or desired). Vrticka *et al.* (2013), using neuroimaging techniques, observed that humour activates subcortical regions, including the nucleus accumbens, a key component of the mesolimbic dopaminergic system. The degree of intensity of humour correlated positively with the activation of these regions. Humour can provide a good way of getting through situations, of putting everyday problems in perspective, of dealing with everyday stress-

ors. This positive emotion would be in opposition to any negative emotion we might experience in situations such as anxiety, sadness or anger. In addition to being an element of resilience, it has also been observed to be an effective strategy in the process of coping with problems (Martin, 2019).

Studies have shown that people who score high on the Coping Humor Scale tend to be more able in dealing with stressful situations. They interpret problems as challenges rather than threats, are capable of distancing themselves emotionally, and cope actively with problems. Such people also tend to experience fewer negative emotions in stressful situations. Some research has suggested that one of the best strategies for helping people adapt to work situations is the use of a sense of humour in the workplace (Mornhinweg & Voignier, 1995).

Humour can be effective for combatting stress, as has been shown in diverse experiments. For example, it was explained to individuals taking a test that during the session they would receive an electric shock, a lie that was intended to provoke a state of stress. Those participants who, at the start of the session, listened to a comedy recording scored lower on a self-administered anxiety scale than those who listened to less humorous material. Other experiments have also found differences in physiological measures of stress (heart rate, skin temperature and conductivity) between people in “humorous” and “non-humorous” conditions. Although it is true that certain specific applications of humour can have psychological benefits, other applications may be detrimental, or even counter-productive (e.g., when a victim is ridiculed–bullying at school or work –, cruel or hurtful jokes–gender violence), insofar as they can trigger serious problems in the targets of the humour.

Numerous studies have tried to confirm whether humour produces healthy psychological changes: stimulation of the immune system, reduced sensitivity to allergies, lower blood pressure, and so on, but the empirical results in this field are often contradictory, confusing or questionable. For example, not all medical studies support the thesis of a therapeutic effect of humour; moreover, such studies often have methodological deficiencies or are too small-scale, and in any case, it is far from clear what precise

mechanism produces the hypothetical benefits (Martin, 2019). However, just like in the case of music that does not appeal to someone's cultural upbringing, even certain types of humour may produce the opposite effect from the expected. Various studies have found a negative relationship between humour and health, with those scoring higher on a humour scale showing poorer medical condition, that is, more illness and higher mortality than more serious people (Friedman *et al.*, 1993). This would appear to be due to an association between sense of humour and a more carefree lifestyle that makes unhealthy habits more likely: smoking, drinking, over-eating, unprotected sex and so on. Thus, people with a happy, optimistic and fun-loving disposition may have a greater tendency to take part in risky activities and neglect their physical ailments, contributing to poorer health. In an interesting study, a positive correlation was found between sense of humour and health in those who gave a high value to their life activities, but a negative correlation among those who did not give much value to the things that occupied their time (Svebak *et al.*, 2004). Different types of relationships have also been found between health and different kinds of sense of humour. For example, people who abuse alcohol and being cautioned by family members or friends, may trivialize the warning but not avert the repercussions (Kuiper *et al.*, 2004).

Humour protects the mind from immune-diminishing states such as helplessness. In a study conducted by Seligman (2004), it was observed that learned helplessness in rats made them more susceptible to tumours, suggesting that it affected not only their behaviour but also their cell systems, and made their immune systems more passive. Among humans, humour is another way of helping the mind not to arrive at this state. Though rodents were used in the experiment, what is derivable for humans is that certain states of the mind affect the physical (psycho-somatic). Indeed, Seligman (2004) did find out that, while learned helplessness affects the immune system, humour can boost it. This is also corroborated by Frankl (2008). In the same study by Seligman, it was argued that pessimists would hold on to a belief that their illness is "permanent" "no matter what they do," and as such will not act to prevent

the illness or seek neither medical, nor social intervention. On the other hand, Martin (2001) argued that positive emotions, regardless of how they have been generated, can have analgesic effects, stimulate immunity or help neutralize the sequelae of negative emotions. This was also demonstrated in a study by Newman and Stone (1996), particularly on the relationship between anxiety reduction and humour. Hence, laughter is capable of reducing the stress and anxiety that directly worsens the quality of life and indirectly affect physical health.

This brings us to what is called, laughter therapy, which is a form of laughter in the absence of humour (Kuru *et al.*, 2018). Corroborating the above, Fry (1994), who is cited by Messa and Baum (2020) argues that, relaxing laughter gives rise to a significant increase in the heart rate, so that for normal hearts, it brings diverse benefits for the heart muscle, similar to those obtained from any aerobic exercise. Like in the case of music, Zweyer *et al.* (2004) substantiate the above with an observation that humour has an analgesic effect. They insist that the enjoyment of comedy is analogous to that of music.

The ancients also relied on humour. Goffman (2004) reveals that humour was an instrument for transmitting profound wisdom in the teaching tales of Taoism, Sufism and Zen. Goffman further cites Timothy Leary who cites Socrates stating that "The aim of human life is to search for the truth, to the nature of things as they are, not as they are interpreted by the conventional mind" (Goffman, 2004, p45). The above argument suggests that what we know about almost everything might not be all that exists, even with regard to wellness. There is still more outside the cave as Plato would have said (Jacobos, 1993). Below, we present the case study of Norman Cousins who took an existential route towards his own wellness, despite not being a physician by vocation. This is intended to depict the indisputable excellence of the Arts.

Self-literate humans have tapped into what Cohen (2003) calls the internal pharmacy- every human being is deployed with, into this world. Among these is Norman Cousins who was diagnosed with a terminal illness. The Physician who diagnosed him told him that he had only six months to live, and that his chance for recovery

was 1/500. He engaged in self-audit and established that worry, depression and anger in his life contributed to, and perhaps helped to cause his disease. In his internal “dialogue,” he cogitated, “...if illness can be caused by negativity, can wellness be created by positivity?” He resolved to make an experiment of himself using laughter as one of the most positive activities at his disposal. He sourced all the comedy movies he could find. This was before the advent of the VCRs, so he had to rent the actual films. He read and had friends read funny stories to him. His friends were asked to call him whenever they said, heard or did anything funny. He was in enormous pain, so great that he could not sleep. However, laughing for five solid minutes, he found relief from pain for several hours, resulting in him finally finding the long-awaited sleep. He fully recovered from his illness and lived another twenty happy, healthy and productive years. His journey is chronicled in his book *Anatomy of an Illness*. This is also corroborated in studies such as that of Bennett and Lengacher (2008).

5. Bibliotherapy

*Come quickly here,
that I may pour my spirits in thine
ear,
and thrash out with the whiplash
of my tongue,
all that impedes you from the
golden round,
which fate and supernatural aid
both seem to have crowned you
with, already.
Act 1 Scene 5, Lines 21-26 of
McBeth by William Shakespeare.*

At the centre of human communication, there is the power of words, spoken or written. When spoken, we talk of orature, when written, we talk of literature. The excerpt above is taken from the scene wherein lady McBeth is soliloquizing, casting the spells to evoke murderous thoughts and the audacity to execute them in McBeth, her husband. A few keywords immediately jump to mind here, and they are: spirits, whiplash of the tongue, impediments, fate and supernatural aid endowments. Despite running parallel with the biblical chronicling of the power of words which, Ngugi (1998) cites in his *Pen Points, Gun Points*

and Dreams. This excerpt is axiomatic in terms of the power of words, which are the building blocks of literary Arts. The paradox here is, words can heal, words can kill. Deployed from the soul of the Sharman, they can preserve life; cast from the heart of a witch/wizard, they can harm life. This ushers us into the use of the written words on the last but one aspect of this study - bibliotherapy, which is the centre of discussion in this section.

The concept of bibliotherapy is premised upon an injunction by an Egyptian king as cited by Tyron Edwards (cited in Miller, 2018). According to this king, whose name has not been mentioned, “The books we read should be chosen with great care, that they may be, as an Egyptian king wrote over his library, *The medicines of the soul*.”

In his world, Weimerskirch (1965) reports that, bibliotherapy started in the early 19th century in America. One of the pioneers of this approach to wellness is Benjamin Rush. Through his influence, many mental hospitals established libraries for their patients. In a paper titled, *On the Construction and Management of Hospitals*, Rush presented a talk on the 10th of November, 1802, and this is what he said for amusement: “A small library should, by all means, compose a part of the furniture in every hospital.” Further to the above, and on the same page, he also stated that:

An intelligent man and a woman be employed to attend the different sexes, whose business shall be to direct and share in their amusements and to divert their mini conversations, reading, and obliging them to read and write upon subjects suggested from time to time by those attending physicians (Weimerskirch, 1965, p.10).

The history of bibliotherapy in America goes back at least to the early part of the 19th century. Benjamin Rush was one of the first Americans to recommend the use of bibliotherapy. John Minsoni Galt, II, was the first American to write an article on the subject. Reading was considered one of the best therapeutic measures in treating mental patients, and by the middle of the 19th century every major mental hospital had a patient library, of which many were quite extensive. Newspapers and periodicals were supplied in great numbers, and the works of Sir Walter Scott enjoyed great popularity. That is why hospitals

in Europe have introduced libraries for patients (Weimerskirch, 1965).

Bibliotherapy, like any phenomenon, has also been subjected to negativity. Miller (2018) reports that at the end of the 19th century, Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell famously forbade Charlotte Perkins Gilman from reading or writing as part of her treatment for neurasthenia. Weimerskirch (1965) argues that, lately, doctors are becoming more receptive to reading as therapy. This intentional use of reading for the promotion of mental and emotional health is commonly known as bibliotherapy. Weimerskirch further reports that, book historian Leah Price, has written of recent bibliotherapeutic literary public health programs in the UK, which have introduced books on prescription and mood-boosting. These programs receive funding from the National Health Service and enable physicians to prescribe self-help books, fiction, and poetry to patients suffering from various mild to moderate psychiatric conditions. This has led to some researchers recently seeking to empirically study the psychological effects of reading literary texts, most notably, Keith Oatley and Bijal Shah. Their inspiration is derived from the words of Charmides in Plato as cited in Shah (2024, p9):

If the head and body are to be well, you must begin by curing the soul. That is the thing. And the cure my dear youth, has to be effected by the use of certain charms and these charms are fair words.

Critiques of therapeutic culture, however, abound. In 1966, Philip Rieff, surveying the triumph of a historically new character type that he called “Psychological Man,” suggested that an emerging therapeutic culture would transform how and why people read; he prophesied that literature would in the future be “preserved mainly for [its] therapeutic potential.” In her collection of essays titled *Against Interpretation*, published the same year as Rieff’s warning, Susan Sontag provided a more capacious account of the emerg-

ing biblio-therapeutic sensibility. She argues that Art is not dying, but it is ameliorating and getting directed to a new function. She sees Art as a new kind of instrument for modifying consciousness and organizing new modes of sensibility. Recent attempts, under banners such as “post-critical reading,” “surface reading” (Best and Marcus), and especially “reparative reading” (Sedgwick), have similarly sought to move beyond a critical appraisal of Art.

6. Conclusion

In light of this over-abundance of evidence which is despised and medical care has become a commodity and a privilege accessible to those who have money, as well as the rampant corruption which makes the future bleak for healthcare services among the poorer. Humanity must go back to ancient ways that have preserved it. This inevitably and wittingly brings us to a consideration of the Arts as an ancient self-preservation and curative measure that human ancestors relied on. In this paper, we looked into the definition of the Arts, the artist and recreational genres such as poetry, other literary Arts and humour, bibliotherapy and music. The study has demonstrated that there are several psycho-somatic benefits that are derivable from the consumption of any form of Art, and these include: reality interpretation, alteration and trivialization, perception elevation and MPA (Leaf, 2015). These, as Plato has argued, have a ripple effect, positively so, on the body.

7. Recommendations

The teaching of the Arts everywhere should raise awareness towards their clinical potential. Curriculum for healthcare sciences should also explicitly teach this non-invasive and cost-effective approach to wellness. Hospitals, old-age homes, orphanages and hospices must begin to consider the use of the Arts to mitigate and combat the effects of their shoestring budgets.

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.35>**CHALLENGES FACED DURING OMUGWO (POSTPARTUM CARE) IN IGBOLAND: EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF HUSBANDS****KELECHI JOHNMARY ANI**

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kani4christ@gmail.com ORCID ID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6617-1484>**Abstract**

Postpartum care, which is generally called Omugwo has been part of the culture of man since creation. Amongst the Igbo, it is a special form of care that is given to a lady after birth. This form of care involved the family of both the wife and husband considering its deep-rooted cultural significance. This study evaluates the nature of Omugwo amongst the Igbo people with special focus on the challenges that husbands face. The study used primary and secondary sources to develop its content. It found that husband face economic, social, psychological and cultural problems of different forms during Omugwo. The scenario is worsened by the fact that cultural norms does not allow for complaints from both husband of the wife and the husband to the mother in-law that is often abandoned. The study therefore calls for increased attention from the extended family to a male spouse that is giving postpartum care to the wife as well as the husband or father –in law, whose wife have gone to take care of their daughter. This is significant as it will help in managing the gender-based crisis that men face during Omugwo.

Keywords: Men, Omugwo, gender, women, Igboland**Background to the Study**

The nature of God's creation is that there is inherent plan to maintain procreation and continuity of existence notwithstanding the interventions of man that tends to reshape the existential reality. Amongst human beings, giving birth and taking care of the new born called Omugwo amongst the Igbo people remains a fundamental path to the sustenance of creation. When a woman gives birth in African society, the health workers, either orthodox or modern experts are expected to attend to the lady in the first few days before allowing her and the new born to go back home. Consequently, she continues to receive further care in her husband's house.

In the Igbo culture, when a man and woman decide to get married, there is a traditional process that must be followed. The man will arrange a day to visit the woman's parents with his own parents and kinsmen in order to introduce them.

It is important to note that each community in Igboland has specific days on which they perform their marriage rites. If the woman's parents accept the proposal, they will provide the couple with a list of items required for the wedding.

Once all of these items have been obtained the bride price will be paid as agreed upon by both parties. This finalizes the traditional marriage rites and makes the woman legally married to her husband. However, in the event of divorce or disagreement leading to separation, only the bride price paid will be refunded to the man. All other items purchased as part of the marriage list are forfeited and cannot be returned regardless of their cost. It is believed that these items were given out of love. Furthermore, if a divorce occurs and the bride price is not refunded by the woman's family, she remains legally married to her husband and no other man can marry her. In such cases, it is expected that *Omugwo* (a traditional postpartum care practice) will commence

immediately after childbirth and last for three months depending on both mother and baby's health. Overall, following these traditional practices is an important aspect of Igbo culture when it comes to marriage and family life (Igbokwe, 2023).

The practice of *Omugwo* is a long-standing tradition in many Nigerian communities including Amaimo in Imo state, while it is often viewed as a time of celebration and bonding between family members, it is in most cases a challenging period for men who are expected to take on new responsibilities and navigate cultural expectations. This study seeks to explore the challenges that men face during *Omugwo* in Amaimo from 1950-2020 and provide insight into how these challenges can be addressed.

During the period of 1950-2020, Amaimo, a vibrant community in Igboland, witnessed significant social and cultural changes. *Omugwo*, the traditional postnatal care system, plays a crucial role in this community, involving the active participation of family members, particularly men. However, the challenges faced by men during *Omugwo* have received limited attention in research and literature.

This study aims to shed light on the specific challenges men encounter during this period and explore their experiences within the context of Amaimo's evolving socio-cultural landscape. By examining the various dimensions of these challenges, such as adjusting to new responsibilities, balancing work and family life, and navigating cultural expectations, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of men during *Omugwo* in Amaimo (Ogalashie, 2023).

The findings of this study will not only contribute to the existing body of knowledge on *Omugwo* but also serve as a valuable resource for individuals, families, and communities in addressing these challenges and fostering a supportive environment for men during this significant transitional period (Oko & Achebe, 2011)

Through a combination of qualitative interviews, surveys, and analysis of relevant cultural and historical data, this study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges men face during *Omugwo* in Amaimo from 1950-2020. Ultimately, it is hoped that the insights gained from this research will contribute to the well-being and empowerment of men in the community.

Statement of the Problem

Scholars have published and written on the concept of *Omugwo*, the challenges and importance of *Omugwo*, but the challenges that men face both the immediate father of the child and the father-in-law whose wife leaves for the *Omugwo* which lasts for a whole period of three months has received little or no attention. This research explores some of the challenges faced by men during the traditional postnatal care practice of *Omugwo* in Amaimo, Imo State, to address the gap in knowledge, to illuminate the often-neglected facet of *Omugwo* and to understand their experiences, perspectives, and contributions during this period.

Despite the rich tapestry of existing literature on childbirth practices and postpartum care, there remains a conspicuous gap in understanding the large experiences of men during *Omugwo*. This study aims to unravel the intricate socio-cultural, psychological, and familial dimensions that shape the challenges faced by men, thereby contributing a crucial layer to the existing discourse on family dynamics and postpartum well-being. By bridging this gap, the research aspires to inform policies, healthcare practices, and societal attitudes, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for both men and women during the transformative period of *Omugwo*.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the psychological, social, and economic impacts of the Igbo custom of *Omugwo* on men and the focus of this research is the men in Amaimo but it would definitely apply to men in other parts of the Igbo communities. Both the husbands of new mothers and the fathers of the new mother whose

wife leaves for the Omugwo. This study will explore how the practice of Omugwo affects men's lives, including their roles within their families, their work lives, and their mental health.

In addition, this study seeks to understand the unique challenges faced by men during the period of Omugwo, including the need to balance work and family responsibilities, the loss of companionship and support, and the challenges of parenting alone. It is hoped that the findings of this study will inform future research, policy, and practice related to the experience of men during Omugwo.

The study also aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on postnatal care practices and gender dynamics in Amaimo. This understanding can inform the development of targeted support programs and interventions that address the unique needs of men, promoting their active involvement and well-being during the *Omugwo* process.

Furthermore, the study aims to raise awareness about the importance of men's participation in postnatal care and challenge traditional gender norms and expectations. By highlighting the challenges faced by men, the research aims to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for all individuals involved in *Omugwo*, promoting gender equality and strengthening family dynamics.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is that it addresses a gap in the literature on the experience of men during Omugwo. While there is a growing body of research on the experience of women during Omugwo, little is known about the impact of the custom on men. This study will provide valuable insights into this understudied area, with implications for supporting and empowering men during this important life transition. In addition, the findings of this study may have implications for family policy and support services in Nigeria and other countries where the custom of Omugwo is practiced.

When considering the significance of this research, it is important to consider the potential implications of its findings for men, families, and society. First, the study will help to increase understanding and support for men who are facing the unique challenges of Omugwo. Secondly, it will provide insights into how families can best adapt to the changing roles and responsibilities of men and women during Omugwo. Third, it will also inform the development of policies and programs to promote the well-being of families during this period. Finally, it may contribute to a broader understanding of the role of culture in shaping the experiences of men and women.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the challenges men face during Omugwo in Amaimo from 1950 to 2020. The base year is of importance because it was the year of the departure of some of the Omugwo traditional practices in Umuofor community which were termed "ungodly and unhealthy" like female circumcision and the use of traditional medicines that were in most cases dangerous and ineffective. Those practices had to be made away with because of the acceptance of civilization and Christianity which led to most communities being liberated, 2020 On the other hand was chosen because of the Corona virus which significantly affected custom of Omugwo particularly in terms of physical and social isolation that has been necessary to curb the spread of the virus. During the period of the virus, many new mothers were not able to travel to their parents' home nor were their mothers able to travel to them, most were required to quarantine for a period of time upon arrival. In addition, restrictions on gathering had limited the traditional practice of bringing extended family members and community members together to support the new mothers and her baby and in most cases; these led to a sense of isolation and increased stress for both father and mother of the new baby.

Exploring the scope of study regarding the challenges men face during Omugwo in Amaimo

from 1950 to 2020 involve analyzing the experiences on men's roles and responsibilities during the postpartum period. It would be interesting to investigate any shifts in societal attitudes, changes in traditional practices, and the overall well-being of men in this context.

Methodology and Sources

This work adopts a narrative and analytical method of historical representation and both primary and secondary sources of history were used to collect data and gain information on the given topic. In interpreting information derived from both primary and secondary sources, qualitative approach in historical methodology was used.

The primary source involved data collected mostly through interviews while secondary data were collected by consulting some relevant materials, books, journals and articles on the subject under study, the internet was also consulted. This study made use of basic and qualitative research methodology by asking open ended questions aimed at discovering the period of this study. Descriptive analytical method was also used in the interpretation of the data collected.

Traditional Gender Roles in Postpartum Care

According to Mrs. Ike Augusta, after delivery in Igbo land, the woman's mother visits the nursing mother. She is not expected to do anything except sleep, eat, breastfeed, bath, receive visitors. The mother of the woman does all the chores and child care in order to allow the mother gain enough to regain her strength after a long 9 months and painful child-birth. She is also not allowed to have sex with her husband during that period (Ike, 2023).

The mother prepares the ritual meal – *Ji mmiri oku* (Yam Pepper soup with fish) and *Ofe Nsala* (White Soup) served with pounded yam. The meals are prepared with lots of sizzling spices as they believe that feeding the nursing mother with lots of spicy meals enhances breast milk production and also remove blood clots from the nursing mother's body. There's also hot water treatment and massages. The mother baths the woman 2-3 times a day with hot water massages

on the abdominal and genital area, the baby is also massaged in order to make them flexible and have a good structured body. In the Indian culture- the method of bathing the baby whilst balancing on the mother's leg gave comfort to both mother and child and helped with pain relief whilst promoting deep sleep for mother and infant.

This Omugwo ritual typically lasts for three months after that the woman makes her first public appearance – a special appearance at the market square where she dances with the baby and shows the baby to the public. However, due to Christianity, this practice has been replaced with the child dedication done at the church. Some people perform this dedication less than 14 days after delivery, which seems to blow my mind every time because I do not believe the woman has rested or healed enough to engage in such activities; the stress of planning such event often takes a toll on the nursing mother (Mbawuike), 2023.

Postpartum care is the care and support that's given to a new mother and her baby after child-birth. In traditional Igbo society, this care is seen as crucial for ensuring the health and well-being of both the mother and the child. It involves a combination of physical care, emotional support, and spiritual guidance.

In traditional Igbo culture, there are clear gender roles that are observed during the period of postpartum care known as Omugwo. These roles are rooted in the belief that men and women have different responsibilities in the family and community, and that each must fulfill their role in order to maintain harmony and well-being. Generally speaking, the man's role during Omugwo is to provide financial and material support for the family, while the woman's role is to care for the newborn baby and to adhere to a strict set of rituals and restrictions. The traditional gender roles during Omugwo can be quite strict and rigid. For the man, this often involves providing the new mother and her baby with gifts of money, food, and other necessities, and ensuring that the family is well-provided for. In some cases, the man may also be responsible for organizing a naming

ceremony for the baby, as well as providing ritual sacrifices to the gods. On the other hand, the woman is expected to adhere to a number of restrictions during Omugwo, such as staying indoors, avoiding certain foods, and abstaining from sexual activity. She is also expected to devote her time and energy to nursing the baby (Oyèwùmí, 2005).

During Omugwo, the traditional gender roles for women also include a number of tasks that are seen as essential to the health and well-being of the new mother and baby. These can include breastfeeding, caring for the baby's umbilical cord, washing and dressing the baby, and keeping the house clean and tidy. The new mother is also expected to refrain from engaging in any activities that could be seen as physically or emotionally draining, such as cooking, doing housework, or socializing with friends and family. It is believed that these restrictions and tasks are necessary for the mother to fully recover from childbirth and bond with her baby.

Perhaps the most important role is that of the father of the baby. In traditional Igbo society, it's believed that the father plays a crucial role in the health and well-being of the new mother and child. The father is expected to provide material support, such as food and supplies for the family. He is also expected to protect the family from harm and to ensure that the mother has the rest and support she needs to recover.

Men's Involvement in Postpartum Care

It is important to note that there is a significant variation in men's involvement in postpartum care across cultures and societies. In some cultures, such as in parts of Africa and South Asia, men play a very active role in postpartum care. In other cultures, such as in North America and Western Europe, men's involvement is typically limited to providing financial and emotional support. That being said, there has been a growing trend towards increased father involvement in postpartum care in recent years. In terms of the reasons for this trend, there are several factors at play.

First, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of father involvement in child development. Second, there has been a shift in attitudes about gender roles, with more fathers wanting to be actively involved in their children's lives. Third, there has been an increase in paternity leave policies and other workplace accommodations that make it easier for fathers to balance their work and family responsibilities. Fourth, there have been a growing number of programs and initiatives aimed at promoting father involvement in postpartum care.

There is a growing body of research that shows that fathers play a crucial role in their children's physical, cognitive, and emotional development. For example, studies have found that children whose fathers are more involved in their lives tend to have better cognitive outcomes, are less likely to engage in delinquent behavior, and have better emotional regulation skills.

Moving on to the second factor, there has been a shift in attitudes about gender roles in recent years. More fathers are challenging traditional notions of masculinity and fatherhood, and are instead embracing a more involved and nurturing role in their children's lives. For example, some fathers are now more comfortable taking on child-rearing tasks that were traditionally seen as "feminine" or "women's work," such as cooking, cleaning, and changing diapers. Some fathers are even choosing to stay home with their children while their partners work outside the home.

Next, there has been an increase in workplace policies and accommodations that make it easier for fathers to balance their work and family responsibilities. For example, some companies now offer paternity leave, flexible work schedules, and telecommuting options that allow fathers to spend more time with their children. There has also been a push for more family-friendly policies at the national level, such as paid family leave and tax credits for child care expenses.

Finally, there have been a growing number of

programs and initiatives that promote father involvement in postpartum care. These include home visiting programs, parenting classes, and fatherhood support groups. These programs are designed to help fathers develop skills and knowledge to support their children's development, as well as build a sense of community and support among fathers (Emezue, 1997).

It is important to understand that the participation of men in postpartum care is considered beneficial for both the mother and child. For the mother, it helps to reduce stress and anxiety, and it provides a sense of support and belonging. For the child, the presence of the father helps to promote bonding and attachment and provide a sense of security and comfort. So overall, men's participation in postpartum care is seen as important and beneficial for the family as a whole. One benefit is that it helps to reduce the risk of postpartum depression in mothers. Studies have shown that when fathers are involved in caring for the mother and child, it helps to reduce stress levels and improve the mother's mental health. It also helps to improve the physical health of the mother and child (Ojiakor, 1993).

Factors Influencing Men's Involvement

There are a number of factors that can influence men's involvement in postpartum care. One important factor is the cultural context. In some cultures, it's considered the norm for men to be actively involved in caring for the mother and child after birth. In other cultures, this may not be the case. Another factor is the individual beliefs and attitudes of the father. If a father values family and child-rearing, he may be more likely to be involved in postpartum care. There are also other factors like work demands, financial concerns, and the quality of the relationship between the parents.

Another factor that influences men's involvement in postpartum care is their own health and well-being. Fathers who are struggling with their own mental health, such as depression or anxiety, may find it more difficult to be actively involved in their child's care. Similarly, fathers who are

struggling with addiction or other health problems may not be able to provide the level of care that they would like.

Challenges Faced by Men During Postpartum Care

We can divide these challenges into two main categories: personal challenges and external challenges. Personal challenges are those that are related to the individual man, such as their own health and well-being. External challenges are those that are related to the society or environment that the man is in, such as societal expectations and norms.

One of the biggest challenges for men during postpartum care is balancing their role as a father with their role as a provider. This can be especially difficult if the man is the sole breadwinner for the family. They may feel a lot of pressure to provide for their family financially, while also wanting to be present and involved in their child's life. This can lead to feelings of stress, guilt, and even depression.

During Omugwo, the baby is under three months. The baby and mother need extra care to avoid any mistakes that will affect the baby or mother adversely. The man is expected to take part in this responsibility. Whenever the baby cries in the night, the man is expected to get up from his bed and know what the cause of the problem. Sleepless nights affect the health of a man. The man engages in several responsibilities such as fetching water for daily consumption in the family (Okoye, 2009).

Regular visitors during Omugwo are also a challenge for one that likes his privacy. Omugwo is a period of joy, happiness and celebration. Friends and relations will continue to visit the family to celebrate with them for the new born baby. As they come, they will eat food and drinks and take Nzu Omugwo. There is little or no time for the man to rest.

Non availability of finance is the most pressing challenges that face a man during Omugwo in

Amaimo. A man is expected to have reasonable amount of money before the arrival of his new born baby. An expense is on daily basis. There is much pressure on the man if the cash is not there for him to provide for the daily needs of the family during Omugwo. A man needs to pay hospital bills, provide food for the wife and new born baby. He needs also to entertain his mother-in-law and visitors who will be visiting his house to welcome the new baby.

Sexual abstinence is also one of the challenges; a man will not have sexual intercourse with the wife during Omugwo which is expected to last up to three months and above to avoid unwanted pregnancy. During this period of Omugwo, the man sleeps alone. He does not go close to the wife. He does not eat, play, or bath with the wife. This is to enable the baby mature and be able to walk on his own. The woman should be allowed to regain lost blood and strength during child labour and forget the tension and pains she had during labor. The man does not sleep in the same room or on the same bed with the wife during Omugwo. It is difficult or tempting but to avoid had i known. It is advisable for the man to stay miles from her. The temptation is there but the man must be patient enough rather than falling some sort of trouble. The temptation to have sex outside is full of a lot of hazards. One may contact diseases or infection which may take away life. Engaging in extra marital affair would cost much which should have been channeled on taking care of the family (Nwachukwu, 2005).

In some cases, some men have abandoned their families and run away for their inability to provide money/food for the family. Some men have sent out their children as house helps to enable them raise money for Omugwo. Some men have suspended child bearing because of lack of money. Improper care to a woman and the new born baby may lead to the death of the woman and the baby or both. A true life event happened in Amaimo, a man named Francis went into borrowing of money during Omugwo and was unable to pay back after many months and that led to his having high blood pressure which led to his

death. One Igbo adage says “one who says that Omugwo is not expensive and stressful, let him take care of a dog during the period the dog on infant stage (Opara, 2009).

According to Dennis, “My dad did not find my mother’s Omugwo runs easy at all. It became bad that after an initial six weeks of being with my oldest sister in Benin doing Omugwo, she barely stayed for another one week when the call for another Omugwo came from my brother. My dad initially said no, but had to allow her after my brother insisted and even accused my mother of being biased against his wife.

He felt that since my mother did it for my sister, she should also be there for him. So, off my mother went to Asaba. The two weeks she was away was like two years. My dad complained of not being given food at the right time and many other excuses. My younger brother and I did our best to help out but he wanted his wife back. On her return, my father just sat his wife down and read the riot act to her, “Henceforth, no Omugwo beyond one week for you, because I also have to be cared for. Let your children know that you have a husband who needs your care and warmth first before any other thing.” Now that I have my own family, I also stopped once and pondered how life would be if my own wife decides to leave me at home and go for one Omugwo for so long” (Agubama, 2023).

Another major challenge men face is that of pressure coming from the mother-in-law who came for the Omugwo, if she is the nagging type, a wasteful woman, domineering or dirty type, it will definitely be hell for the man who will be earnestly praying for the Omugwo period to be over as soon as possible.

Furthermore, more external challenge that many fathers face is a lack of access to resources and support services. In Amaimo, there are limited resources available for fathers, such as father-friendly workplaces, support groups, or parenting classes. This makes it difficult for fathers to

get the help and support they need. Another external challenge is the stigma that some fathers face when trying to be more involved in their child's life. Some fathers may face criticism or judgment from others for taking on a more active role in parenting.

According to Felix, "Osuofia in a movie saw the danger of jumping off to go for Omugwo. Well, his adventure proved how hard the mothers work to care for a new mother. But I think they should always remember that their own husbands are back at home too. The difficult ones are those who go abroad for Omugwo. In fact, they should be given a time frame so that they don't go and think they have the license to stay for as long as one year. If care is not taken, some of the women even want to be there to nurse like two children before they remember home. How do they want the men to cope for that long period alone? As for me, my father is aging and needs his wife's care and support so, Omugwo for anybody at that must not extend a week and she knows so" (Ohaegbulam, 2023).

IMPACT OF OMUGWO

The Economic Impact

It is very important to know that Omugwo is a vital part of the culture of Umuofor, and it's seen as a way to strengthen the bonds between families and communities. It's also seen as a way to ensure the health and well-being of the mother and child, and to provide support during the vulnerable postpartum period. It's also important to understand that Omugwo has a significant social impact in Umuofor. It's seen as a rite of passage for young women, and it's considered an important way to build connections within the community. This is because the women who serve as Omugwo helpers are often chosen from a wide range of families and age groups, and they're seen as a resource for new mothers who may be struggling with the challenges of parenting (Achebe, 2010).

Social Impact

Omugwo helps build connections within the Umuofor community. The tradition brings together women from a wide range of ages, backgrounds, and experiences, and it allows them to share knowledge and support each other. This helps to strengthen the bonds between families and communities, and it also builds a sense of trust and camaraderie.

Children in families that participate in Omugwo tend to have better social skills and better emotional regulation. This is because they have more exposure to different types of people and experiences through the tradition. So, not only does Omugwo have an impact on the current generation, it also has an impact on the next generation.

Another social impact of Omugwo is its role in passing down traditional knowledge and values. For example, the women who serve as Omugwo helpers often share cultural and religious traditions with the new mothers. They also teach the mothers about traditional values, such as respect for elders and community responsibility. These values are important in Umuofor society, and they're passed down through the tradition of Omugwo. A perfect example is the tradition of "Omugwo gifts." When a woman serves as an Omugwo helper, she's traditionally given a special gift from the new mother's family. This gift is often a piece of jewelry or clothing, and it represents the gratitude and respect of the family. The gift also symbolizes the new mother's hope that the Omugwo helper will bring good fortune to the family.

Omugwo has a social impact in Umuofor society. It's been found to have a positive effect on gender equality. In traditional Umuofor society, men have typically been seen as the head of the household and the primary decision-makers. But with the introduction of Omugwo, women have had more opportunities to be leaders and decision-makers in the home (Friedmann-Klarén, 2000).

Economic impact: let me define what i mean by the "economic impact" of Omugwo. When we talk about the economic impact, we're referring

to the ways in which Omugwo affects the financial well-being of individuals and families in Umuofor. This includes both direct and indirect economic impacts.

It's important to note that this income is not just limited to the payment received for providing Omugwo services. The women who provide Omugwo also gain access to social and professional networks, which can lead to future opportunities for employment or entrepreneurship. So, even after the Omugwo service is complete, the woman still benefits economically from the relationships she's built.

A direct economic impact is related to childcare. In many cases, the women who provide Omugwo also provide childcare services for the new mother. This means that the new mother can return to work sooner and have more time to focus on her career. This can lead to higher earnings and increased economic stability for the family.

Indirect economic impacts are those that are not directly linked to the tradition, but are still caused by it. For example, the women who provide Omugwo services may have more money to spend on goods and services in the community, which can boost the local economy. Another indirect economic impact is the impact on the next generation. By providing childcare services, the Omugwo tradition can allow the new mother to provide a better education for her children. This can lead to increased economic opportunities for the next generation, which is another example of an indirect economic impact (Falola, 2009)

Cultural Impact

Omugwo has many cultural impacts for women; Diving into the cultural impacts for me, In Amaimo, the husband is expected to take on a supportive role during the Omugwo. He is equally expected to provide financial support for the family, as well as assistance with tasks like cooking and cleaning. In this way, the Omugwo is seen as an opportunity for the husband to demonstrate his care and commitment to his family.

Additionally, the Omugwo is seen as a time for

the husband to build a strong bond with his child. In Amaimo, the father is expected to spend time with the child during the Omugwo, playing and interacting with the baby. This time is seen as crucial for the development of the father-child relationship. The Omugwo is also a time for the father to learn from the experienced mumu, who may offer advice on parenting and child rearing.

It's also important to note that the cultural impact of the Omugwo is not just about the immediate family. The Omugwo is often seen as a time for the extended family and community to come together and support the new mother and child. Relatives and friends may visit the family during the Omugwo, bringing gifts and helping with household tasks. This is seen as a way to strengthen the bonds of the community and create a sense of belonging and support (Peter, 1989).

Psychological Impact

The psychological impact of the Omugwo can be significant for the father. The Omugwo is a time of great change for the father, as he transitions from a single man to a father. This can be a difficult and stressful process, as the father may feel unprepared for the new responsibilities and challenges of fatherhood. It's also common for fathers to experience anxiety about their ability to provide for and protect their child.

Another psychological challenge that fathers may face during the Omugwo is the sense of isolation. During this time, fathers may feel disconnected from their friends and social networks. They may feel like they don't have the time or energy to maintain their friendships and social activities. This can lead to loneliness and a sense of alienation. Additionally, some fathers may feel pressure to conform to traditional gender roles, and this can conflict with their own personal values and beliefs. The challenges faced by men during Omugwo, particularly in psychology which can be difficult for men. These psychological impacts can affect the well-being of men. The financial difficulties and societal expecta-

tions related to Omugwo may contribute to increased stress and anxiety among men. The pressure to fulfill traditional roles and expectations can be overwhelming, leading to psychological distress. Men facing challenges during Omugwo, such as financial constraints, may experience feelings of inadequacy or a sense of failure in meeting expected societal and cultural standards. This can negatively impact self-esteem and self-worth.

The inability to fully participate in Omugwo practices may raise questions about cultural identity and belonging. Men may experience a sense of detachment or alienation if they perceive themselves as not meeting cultural expectations, potentially affecting their psychological well-being. Challenges during Omugwo may influence family relationships. The challenges men experience during Omugwo include balancing work and family life, feeling overwhelmed or inadequate, and having limited support systems. These challenges are exacerbated by traditional gender roles and outdated notions of masculinity. To address these challenges, we need to create a more inclusive and supportive system for all families. One way to put these ideas into practice would be to create more government-funded support systems for parents. These could be government funded childcare programs, paternity-leave policies, and programs to help single parents. By investing in these types of programs, we can make it easier for all parents to balance work and family life (Falola, 2001).

Education and public awareness campaigns about the importance of fatherhood and the many different forms it can take. Another way to tackle the problems is to establish supportive social and community-based initiatives to help new parents. Workplaces could be more accommodating of parent's needs, with flexible hours, paid leave, and support for employees who are new parents. It is important to emphasize that these ideas are not just about helping individual men, but about creating a supportive society for everyone. Promoting healthy family relationships, we can create a better environment for children to grow up

in and for everyone to thrive.

There are a few things that could be done to help ease the challenges faced by men during "Omugwo". One is to offer more support and resources for fathers, both in terms of practical assistance and emotional support. For example, there could be support groups or workshops specifically for fathers, and more flexible work policies to allow fathers to spend more time with their children. I'd like to recommend challenging traditional notions of masculinity and fatherhood. This could involve promoting more diverse and inclusive representations of fathers in the media, as well as challenging harmful stereotypes about masculinity. Fathers could be shown as capable of expressing vulnerability and emotion, and as involved in child-rearing and domestic tasks. By redefining masculinity, we can make it easier for men to balance work and family life without feeling overwhelmed or inadequate (Falola, 2009b).

There is need to encourage open communication between the husband and his in-laws to express concerns and expectations during the Omugwo period and also foster a supportive environment where everyone feels comfortable discussing their needs and concerns. Men are mandated to actively participate in the process by assisting with household chores, childcare, and other responsibilities. This can foster a sense of unity and shared responsibility. Counselling is a major, couples should be granted access to counselling services to address any emotional or relationship challenges that may arise during this period. Professional guidance can be valuable.

Conclusion

Omugwo, a traditional Nigerian practice where a woman's mother or mother-in-law provides post-natal care to their daughter or daughter-in-law after safe delivery has remained a popular practice. Within the period, men often grapple with societal expectations, navigating changing gender roles, and balancing responsibilities during this period, which put excessive pressure on them.

Traditional gender norms may limit their involvement, hindering active participation in the care of their partner and newborn but they are also left to struggle to provide necessary resources that would be used to take care of the baby, new mother and the mother that visited for Omugwo. Additionally, evolving dynamics in modern times demand a reevaluation of men's roles during Omugwo, necessitating adaptability and understanding amidst societal shifts.

Men have over the years faced enduring challenges during the Omugwo tradition in Nigeria, reflecting both cultural traditions and evolving societal dynamics. One notable challenge stems from entrenched gender roles, where traditional expectations often cast women as primary caregivers during the postnatal period. Men, adhering to these norms, often find it challenging to actively engage in the care of their partners and newborns, contributing to a sense of exclusion and limited involvement.

As societal attitudes evolved over the decades, so did the dynamics of gender roles. Men navigating Omugwo during the recent times, often found themselves negotiating changing expectations and struggling to strike a balance between their traditional roles and the evolving demands of modern relationships and collapsing Nigerian national economy.

In contemporary times, while societal norms continued to evolve, men are faced the challenge of reconciling traditional expectations with a growing desire for increased involvement in the postnatal care process. Husbands and fathers need to play more active roles in parenting be

cause the Omugwo tradition presents a unique set of challenges, necessitating a delicate balance between respecting cultural practices and embracing more egalitarian roles within the family.

In conclusion, the examination of challenges faced by men during the Omugwo tradition underscores the intricate interplay between cultural norms, evolving gender roles, and the imperative for adaptability within a dynamic societal landscape. From the confines of traditional expectations, where men were relegated to peripheral roles in postnatal care, to the nuanced complexities of navigating changing gender dynamics in contemporary times, this study highlights the need for a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted challenges encountered.

The persistent adherence to entrenched gender roles has manifested as a formidable barrier to active male involvement in the Omugwo tradition. As societal norms gradually evolved, men encountered the intricate challenge of negotiating a delicate equilibrium between historical expectations and the emerging ethos of gender equality. The latter half of the 20th century witnessed a paradigm shift, introducing new dimensions to the challenges faced by men during Omugwo, wherein the evolving dynamics necessitated a recalibration of familial responsibilities.

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.36>**DIFFERENT SHADES OF PATRIARCHY IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL DOMAIN****Dr. Pumlanj Majavu***Department of Political Studies and International Relations**North West University (NWU)*Pumlanj.Majavu@nwu.ac.za**Abstract**

The central argument of this article is that the South African political domain is largely patriarchal. It is patriarchal in the sense that men and a certain kind of masculinity tend to be privileged. The privileging of men, as in all patriarchal instances, goes with disadvantaging of women and a certain kind of femininity. In the political domain patriarchy works in different, yet interconnected, ways to disadvantage women. One of these is through subtle articulations that are intended to characterize women as hypersexual beings who have no place in formal politics. In the South African context, the article argues, the idea of who belongs and who does not, and who is hypersexual and who is not is still largely informed by the racial past that continues to be part of the nation. For this reason, the article makes use of Black feminist theoretical lens to advance its central argument. The article further argues that the 2024 national elections possibly renewed or further entrenched patriarchy within the country's politics. Hence as much as the 2024 elections are largely celebrated as a testament of a matured or maturing democracy, the outcome of those elections failed to dismantle patriarchy in the political domain. Patriarchy, as a result, continues to be sustained as a norm in the country's political sphere.

Keywords: *Patriarchy, Black feminism, masculinity, national-populism.*

Introduction

Over the years women have become an important and perhaps a permanent feature of South Africa's political sphere. This is the case whether we are looking at women's participation within political parties and or the number of women in many political institutions in the country. For instance, the four biggest political parties in the country, namely the African National Congress (ANC), Democratic Alliance (DA), uMkhonto weSizwe Party (MKP), and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), currently all have a woman, and in some cases women, in their top decision-making structures or executive. In parliament, in the judiciary, and in government and many other political institutions women are numerically represented. Consequently, the argument that women are not represented in the country's politics no longer holds.

However, numbers alone do not signify the end of a long-established gender ideology (Gouws

2021; Hassim 2009). Having more women representatives does not mean that patriarchy ceases to exist. To begin with, patriarchy, much like other ideologies and systems of oppression, does not work with numbers alone. For instance, as Gqola (2021: 13) points out, patriarchy can and is maintained even in political societies "which have the largest number of women in high political office". Patriarchy, after all, "is a system—a dynamic web—of particular ideas and relationship" (Enloe 2017: 16). In other words, patriarchy does not wear the same face as it manifests itself differently across space and time. It is sustained through daily social and cultural norms, social and political relations, ideologies, and by institutions and systems of power (Enloe 2017). Therefore, it is possible for patriarchy to cease to exist in one form, say in numerical representations, but for it to exist in other forms as illustrated below.

This article contributes to the scholarship that, in part, confirms the fact that our society is one

where women are viewed, treated, talked to and about in largely sexist undertones even though we are, on one hand, a country that embraces equality (Gqola 2007). The principle of gender equality, on one hand, and the normalization of patriarchy, on the other, often mean that women in the country, including those in politics, are generally in what could be thought of as an ambivalent position (Gqola 2007). According to Gqola (2007: 116) “The Republic of South Africa, therefore, has the contradictory situation where women are legislatively empowered, and yet we do not feel safe in our streets and homes”. That patriarchy continues to be a reality is also reflected in the fact that “women’s bodies are seen as accessible for consumption — touching, raping, kidnapping, commenting on, grabbing, twisting, beating, burning, maiming — and control” (Gqola 2007: 120). As argued below, the ‘contradictory locations’ that Gqola (2001) highlights also applies to women in politics. In the political sphere, the ‘contradictory’ positionality is, at times, demonstrated by the reality whereby women may be numerically represented even though they are treated as though they do not fully belong.

The concept of contradictory locations is compounded when the woman in question is Black. It is compounded because for Black women the issue at hand is, historically, not merely patriarchy, but rather the convergence of patriarchy with anti-Blackness. Put simply, this article therefore studies the South Africa political landscape through the theoretical lens of feminism, and specifically Black feminism. Black feminist scholars have historically theorized the way race and patriarchy intersect to shape the lived experiences of Black women in the world (Crenshaw 1989; Crenshaw 1991; Gqola 2001; Gqola 2004; King 1988). According to Crenshaw (1991: 1243) “the experiences of women of color are frequently the product of intersecting patterns of racism and sexism”. Patriarchy, in other words, can be and is race specific (Collins 2004). In its South African context, the race specific patriarchy of our time ostensibly builds from and reinforces the old racial construction of Black women as a racial and gendered almost-person persons. Black

feminist theoretical lens will thus be deployed in this article to critically analyze the multifaceted ways in which patriarchy manifests and is sustained by its primary beneficiaries in the South African political landscape.

At this stage, perhaps one ought to state that this is a theoretical article. It is theoretical article that is written from a feminist, and specifically Black feminist theoretical perspective. What that means, as stated in the previous paragraph, is that this article recognizes the fact that Black women’s gendered political experience is, amongst others, shaped by racism (Collins 2004; hooks 1992). In other words, unlike white women, Black women are disadvantaged in multiple ways by a racialized patriarchy. This is the racialized patriarchy that has, as discussed below, framed Black women as anything but normal beings (hooks 1992; Gilman 1985). Black feminism, therefore, highlights the entrenched links between patriarchy and racism as ideological and systematic tools that intersect to disadvantage Black women (Crenshaw 1991).

The article is made up of different sections that together work to advance the key argument of the article, namely that patriarchy, in more ways than one, continues to shape our politics to the point where forms of hypermasculinity pronounce themselves as radical or transformative politics. The next section after this introductory section provides a brief overview of the literature on how other scholars have written about the modalities of patriarchy in the political domain. And the two sections after the literature review critically analyze the various ways in which patriarchy is sustained and reinforced in the country’s political domain. One of these sections starts with what many would consider crude forms of sexism, while the other analyses what might be considered subtle ways that sustain patriarchy in the country’s political landscape. Put together, the sections confirm the feminist view that patriarchy is adoptable and can be both crass in one instance, while subtle in another (Enloe 2017). Perhaps because of our history as a country, some, if not all our current challenges cannot be understood without factoring in the racial ideology that

produced and continues to reproduce many of our political problems –including patriarchy.

Writing on Women in Politics

As previously mentioned, this article builds from and contributes to and is in conversation with the existing literature that has unmasked the almost pervasive nature of patriarchy in the political domain. This is the political domain where hegemonic masculinities have historically reigned supreme above all other socially constructed genders and sexualities across space and time (Brown 1988). Patriarchy, in the domain of politics is, as Pateman (1989: 34) correctly puts it, “so thoroughly” entrenched that even political ideologies such as liberal democracy and socialism have patriarchal foundations. In the past, the dominance of hegemonic masculinities was often based on the patriarchal ideology that women do not have the natural ability to reason and or to think rationally (Pateman 1989).

Consequently, over time to think of political figures has largely meant to think of men in politics (i.e. see Bos et al 2022). April (2012: 7), for instance, argues that the South African political historiography has largely focused on black “male figures”. In these political and historical texts “almost every woman is labelled as a wife, a widow, a sister-in-law, a sister or a daughter” (Bradford 1986: 356). Such discursive tropes when it comes to Black women, as Gqola (2004: 49) points out, serve to depict women not as “active participants to end apartheid”. Rather than active participants and Black intellectuals, Black women are cast as having provided maternal support to their husbands and sons (April 2012; Gqola 2004).

This, of course, does not necessarily mean women did not or do not publicly partake in politics, rather the problem is that the participation and contribution of women in politics has historically been placed in the margins and, at worst, not seen as part of the political (Dlakavu 2017a). Patriarchy has historically sought to both limit and to make invisible the contribution of women in politics (Dlakavu 2017a; Masola 2019). The patriarchal idea and prac-

tice of writing off women’s contribution in politics is part of keeping politics a public sphere largely for men. This is, unfortunately, the case even in political spaces or organizations that, on one hand, are or seem to be progressive and revolutionary.

Recent scholarship demonstrates that patriarchy within supposedly progressive political spaces continues to be a social fact. For instance, Naicker (2024) illustrates how, on one hand, male student activists can be progressive against one form of oppression, and on the other hand, enact another on women student activists. Reflecting on her experience as a woman Mavuso (2017) contends that student politics in her campus were articulated, led, and dominated by male students. Women activists in these supposedly progressive political spaces have to contend with not being seen as equal to their male counterparts and it is women who are on the receiving end of gender-specific abuse and assault by their supposed male comrades (Maluleke and Moyer 2020; Mavuso 2017; Naicker 2024).

Recent research on the country’s national political parties also confirms the fact that patriarchy remains a significant and problematic part of our body politic. Ndlovu (2022: 396) argues that “political parties continue to consolidate patriarchal dominance” by not centering their politics on resolving the gender inequalities in the country. Muringa, Sanele and Aiseng (2024) point out that the country’s politics almost operates like a ‘boys club’ because men continue to dominate in several ways. Women in politics not only have to navigate or confront patriarchy within politics but also must contend with patriarchy in the broader society including the patriarchal representation of women politicians in the media (Muringa et al 2024).

The argument that politics is a domain of men is not limited only to the South African political landscape. Scholars in the United States of America have argued that even though in that country they had women running for the presidency “sex-linked inequalities still exist” in the political realm (Bos, Greenlee, Holman, Oxley and Lay 2022: 498). According to Bauer and

Santia (2022) criticism directed at women politicians tends to be more gendered than that aimed at men. Furthermore, while men in politics are expected to be ambitious, women have historically been expected not to exude political ambitions (Sweet-Cushman 2022). Women in politics often “face attacks for being too masculine and not feminine enough” (Bauer and Santia 2022: 691). Women are seen as too feminine, weak, emotional and indecisive, while, on the other hand, being a woman who is seen as too masculine goes with “being too aggressive and not likeable enough” (Bauer and Santia 2022: 691). Patriarchy, in multiple ways, places women in politics in ambivalent positions where to be a woman is a problem whether one is a woman who demonstrates feminine or masculine traits. In their study, Bauer and Santia (2022) found that most people tend to be quicker to accuse women politicians of being incompetent. The accusation is ready at hand most probably because, from a young age, people are socialized to think of politics as a domain for boys and men (Bos et al 2022). The society is largely socialized to think of men when we think of political leadership (Bos et al 2022).

What we learn from the brief overview above is that there is enough consensus among scholars that politics mostly continues to be characterized by various interconnecting modes of patriarchy. So much so that even ostensibly progressive political platforms are, in one shape or another, patriarchal. The literature from the US demonstrates that even the most liberal polities in the world can and are not free from patriarchy. The current article, therefore, continues and adds to the literature discussed above. It does so in numerous ways: firstly, it starts by highlights the fact that the manifestations of patriarchy in the political domain are rooted in the country’s anti-Black history. Patriarchy in our South Africa case, often intersects with the racial ideology that has historically reduced and depicted Black women as hypersexual freaks. Moreover, the article argues that the 2024 elections, despite its largely celebrated outcome of being a sign of a maturing democracy, did not

move the needle as far as patriarchy is concerned. In fact, the 2024 elections was a renewal of patriarchy in the political domain.

Sexualizing Bodies and the clothes of un-belonging

Although patriarchy is a worldwide phenomenon, it does have its own geographic and racial specificity (Collins 2004). As already pointed out, when it comes to Black women in South Africa, patriarchy works in tandem with anti-Blackness to produce what we earlier referred to as a racialized patriarchy. In the country’s recent history, one of the ways in which racialized patriarchy has and is articulated in the political sphere is through various modes of sexualizing Black women. For instance, Jane Moloisi-Sithole, then the DA member of the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature was said to be dressed like a sex-worker in the legislature by an ANC MPL Vusumuzi Windvoël (Davis 2015). Lindiwe Zulu and Phumzile van Damme have both been called sexual deviants, namely “straat meid” in public political settings (Davis 2017; Pillay 2014). According to Verashni Pillay (2014), ‘straat meid’ is a slang “that generally refers to a rough woman, sometimes a prostitute, who is uncouth and wild”.

In the anti-Black discourse, the Black woman has historically been framed as an icon of wild and uncontrollable hypersexual desires (Gilman 1985). The iconization of Black women as wild sexual freaks went hand in hand with the narrative that their bodies are bearers of “contagions” (Stoler 2010: 46). While white women can be represented as complete bodies, Black women have traditionally been reduced to sexual body parts (Gilman 1985). According to Gilman (1985: 213), “the black female was widely perceived as possessing not only a “primitive” sexual appetite but also the external signs of this temperament – “primitive” genitalia”. In addition, to refer to someone, almost always a woman, as a prostitute has historically been another way of saying that the said person is of “lesser moral standing” (Levine 2003: 193). Thus, to say a Black woman politician is dressed and behaves like a prostitute in a political setting is to communicate who belongs and who does not, and who holds a high moral

ground and who does not belong through racial patriarchal lens.

The racial patriarchal lens of looking at women and thinking of women as hypersexual freaks of low moral standing is not only reserved for women who may belong to opposition parties. Within political parties' women are seemingly also reduced to hypersexual beings by men who, in paper, are their political allies. An EFF member, Naledi Chirwa, was told, in a political event, by an EFF male member that her dress code was sexually inappropriate (Dlakavu 2017b). An ANC member Sizophila Mkhize was reportedly told the same thing by her in-paper allies in a political meeting (Mahlangu 2020).

The commentary on the sexual appropriateness of one's clothing has historically been reserved for women (Wolf 2002). Furthermore, the racial-specific patriarchal comments directed at both Chirwa and Mkhize need to be understood at two interconnected levels. Firstly, the signal that was being communicated to both women is that their bodies, their behaviour and dress is solely for men. In other words, in a patriarchal polity women are, in reality, not free to behave and dress however they want (Gqola 2021). Both the EFF and ANC men were communicating the South African reality of entitlement that men feel towards women's bodies (Gqola 2015). Ours is a patriarchal society where men rape, assault, and kill women on the patriarchal basis that women were dressed inappropriately (Gqola 2021). What is at play here is the "political weapon against women" that patriarchal polities across space and time have used to prescribe and control women's dress code and behaviour (Wolf 2002: 10). The political weaponry is, in other words, a license, a getaway ticket of sorts and, as often has been the case, a legal argument to justify sexual assault of women in the country (Gqola 2015).

And, on the second level, connected to the first of course, is that patriarchy justifies its lethal violence and assault on women's bodies through an entrenched political narrative that women are "so stupid, so passive and beaten

down that we can only wear short skirts, revealing or tight clothes, get drunk, wear kangas, smoke cigarettes, or do drugs, do anything to signal to men that we are aroused and are asking for it" (Gqola 2007: 117). In the anti-Black gaze, therefore, Black women such as Chirwa and Mkhize are hyper-sexual bodies who are viewed "as available for sexual access with impunity" (Baderoon 2014: 84). Baderoon (2014: 87) argues that the violent sexualization of Black women's bodies in post-apartheid South Africa is part of the "direct legacies of slavery" society in the Cape. As was the case then (Baderoon 2014), sexual violation of Black women's bodies is "often made women's responsibility" (Gqola 2007: 120).

In patriarchal societies rape and sexual assault on women by men is often blamed on women (Gqola 2015; Wolf 2002). For instance, Wolf (2002: 41) points out that men who harass women often justify their sexism by blaming women for supposedly "wearing provocative clothes". It is worth noting that the entitlement that men feel towards women's bodies translates into a reality whereby just being a woman, no matter the dress code or sexual orientation, in a patriarchal society is to 'provoke' and or 'incite' sexual harassment by men (see Gqola 2015; Wolf 2002). Both Chirwa and Mkhize, in essence, were being told that they would be responsible for their own sexual assault, and such an assault would not be penalised because through their dress code, in a patriarchal society where women are constantly reminded that they do not matter, they are asking to be raped (Gqola 2015).

The gendered nationalist-populist zeitgeist

In one sense, it is true that the 2024 elections outcome was a significant political shift in the country's political landscape. It was significant because there was no clear winner, and the ANC lost the parliamentary majority that it enjoyed since 1994. Perhaps what was even more significant is the fact that the then governing party accepted the election results as emanating from a legitimate democratic process. The break from the ANC dominance, however, was not necessarily a move away from the patriar-

chal gender ideology that has historically privileged men and hegemonic masculinity traits. If anything, the 2024 elections outcome possibly signal a renewal of the old gender ideology.

The idea that 2024 saw a renewal of patriarchy emanates from the fact that patriarchy has historically not been bound to one mode of privileging men over women. As a result, patriarchy knows when it is acceptable to be crass and or gross as discussed above, and at the same time it knows when not to be blunt. Patriarchy survives largely by knowing when to sound, look and being reenacted as benign (Enloe 2017). It is partly by seeming to be benign and by seeming to be harmless that patriarchy is normalized. The 2024 elections political outcome, celebrated by many as signaling the strength of our democracy, should also be understood, in part, as a perpetuation of benign patriarchy in formal politics. Hence Gouws and Madsen (2024:3) argue that the elections brought along with them somewhat new challenges for women because of “the rise of big man politics, marked by patriarchal behaviour and violent masculinities”.

While Gouws and Madsen, rightly so, focus on the MKP as the epitome of ‘big man politics’, their argument can be extended to other political parties. For example, only one of the 10 political parties that formed the national coalition government, dubbed the Government of National Unity (GNU), is led by a woman. In fact, from the 18 political parties that are represented in the National Assembly only one of them is led by a woman. Instead of increasing, “Women’s representation in the National Assembly remained at 45 per cent” (Gouws and Madsen 2024: 3). After the 2019 national elections half of the ministers were women, but after the 2024 elections men make up 56% of the ministers (Gouws and Madsen 2024). As mentioned earlier, representation through numbers is an important way of determining progress, or lack thereof, but numbers alone do not always give us the full picture nor tell us the nuances that have historically sustained patriarchy across space and time. Enloe (2017: 17 & 16), for example, writes of the “multiple” “ideas and relationship[s]” that collaboratively work

towards what she calls a “sustainable patriarchy”. The South African political sphere also has its multiple forms of sustaining patriarchy. And one of these is through various forms of a militarized nationalistic populist narrative.

The concept of national populism is used here to highlight the fact that, although there is a distinction between populism and nationalism (De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017), at times they intersect and co-exist (Singh 2021, also see Brubaker 2017). While populism is conceptualized as a thin ideology premised on framing the relationship between ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’ as an antagonistic one (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017), with national populism the populist concept of ‘the people’ is articulated through a cultural and nationalistic frame against a supposed foreign enemy (Singh 2021). The South African version of ‘the people’ has historically been ‘our people’. National populists evoke populist sentiments through political narratives about the virtuous people who are considered part of the nation (Tas 2020). What national populists often do well is to articulate and perform a political narrative that “recount[s] and reconnect[s] the past, present and future” (Tas 2020: 2). But, much like in other political discourse, “narrative performance” of national populism (Tas 2020: 2) is gendered. It is gendered, in many ways, and one of which is that in its recounting of ‘the past, present, and future’ the reality of gender inequalities is often considered secondary.

Enloe (2014:93) writes that “nationalism typically has sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation, and masculinized hope”. In one sense, this ends up producing a masculinized political orientation that largely privileges men. What Enloe (2014) says about nationalism also applies to national populism. In its South African version, the masculinized political orientation of national populism has given us political parties that are not only led and dominated by men but have adopted various forms of militarism as a supposed signifier of transformational or radical politics. Perhaps the two parties that exemplify this the most in the current epoch are the EFF and the MKP.

Both the EFF and the MKP are nothing if not national populist. Both political parties, for instance, are centered around their ‘big man’ leaders. Perhaps more problematic is the fact that both parties’ fashion themselves as masculinized semi-military movements. One of the problems with modelling a political party as a semi-military movement is the fact that a hyper masculinized form of violence is often glamorized. For starters we should understand hypermasculinity, according to Gqola (2015: 154), as “a heightened claim to patriarchal manhood, to aggression, strength and sexuality”. Modeling a political party as a semi-militarized movement is one way of reenacting and of reinforcing the old gender ideology that has historically privileged men and hypermasculine traits over women and femininity.

The gender ideology of both the EFF and the MKP is the sort that confuses hypermasculinity militarism as the only path towards the liberation of ‘our people’. But this form of sustaining patriarchy is not different from the one discussed in the literature review section above, where we learnt that to be ‘radical’ one feels compelled to reenact hypermasculinity traits that, in no small part, glamorizes violence. What we end up with, alas, is people confusing hypermasculinity as “radical transformative politics” (Gqola 2015: 153). At first, this sort of hypermasculinity is directed at whoever is identified as the enemy, but beyond the supposed enemy, the political domain ends up being reduced to a hypermasculine contest of who can make the loudest violent threats in the name of ‘radical transformation’. People who do not fit into this hypermasculinity box are characterized as weak, cowards who do not belong to the political domain.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated the fact that the South African political domain is still very much patriarchal. As was the case in the past, patriarchy is an ideology and a system that works to privilege men and masculinities over women. It is an ideology that is rooted in the belief that women are inherently inferior to men. As inferior beings, women have, over the years, been systematically reduced to beings who should not partake in public affairs; they are people who, at least in the past, should be confined to private and domestic matters. This old idea has never been totally dismantled, rather the idea has metamorphosized into a situation where women can be in the public arena but are treated differently from their male counterparts. Unlike their male counterparts, they are sexualized by men. In the political domain, patriarchy is also sustained through the articulation of certain ideologies and through the kind of politics that are glorified. Importantly patriarchy does not always have to announce its existence. Unannounced or not, patriarchy continues to be a central, yet unfortunate, feature of South Africa’s political sphere.

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SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPARISON OF EUPHEMISMS IN NORTHERN SOTHO AND SISWATI FOLKLORE NARRATIVES

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Abstract

The goal of this study is to identify the linguistic, social, and cultural elements that influence the use of euphemistic terms in Northern Sotho and Siswati by examining them via a sociolinguistic lens. By looking at how euphemisms work in both languages, the study explores the cultural settings that shape their development as well as the social roles they play in upholding civility, avoiding taboos, and reflecting cultural norms. Data from oral traditions, written texts such as proverbs and folklore, and semi-structured interviews with indigenous speakers are all used in this qualitative study. The study uses sociolinguistic theories, especially Dell Hymes' Ethnography of Communication, to examine how these expressions conform to communicative standards. Thematic analysis is used to identify categories of euphemisms pertaining to death, sexuality, bodily functions, and social hierarchies. The results show that while euphemisms' social roles are identical, their lexicon and metaphorical imagery varies, reflecting different cultural influences. The importance of euphemisms in maintaining oral traditions' intergenerational continuity and their changing application in contemporary settings like media and education are discussed. To foster linguistic respect and cultural understanding, the study's conclusion suggests including euphemism studies into language instruction. By enhancing knowledge of euphemisms in Bantu languages and illuminating the relationship between language, culture, and society, it advances scholarly work.

Key words: Social Hierarchies, Taboos, Oral Traditions, Folklore, Death, Social Class, Language Education, Bantu Languages, Ethnography of Communication and Age.

Introduction

Euphemisms are important linguistic tools for reflecting cultural values, regulating social interaction, and navigating taboo themes in traditional communities. Euphemisms are profoundly ingrained in the societal fabric of Northern Sotho and Siswati traditional traditions, rather than being simply rhetorical tactics. These narratives provide a rich setting for investigating how language is used to encode and maintain gender roles, social hierarchies, and power dynamics. While previous research has mostly focused on the semantic and cultural purposes of euphemisms, there is a need to broaden the analysis to include how these phrases reflect or challenge gender stereotypes

and power structures.

Even while euphemism has been extensively researched as a linguistic tactic in many different languages, comparative sociolinguistic studies that concentrate only on African languages particularly Northern Sotho and Siswati remain noticeably lacking. Most of the work now in publication typically discusses euphemism from a broad language or semantic standpoint, paying little attention to its social roles in folkloric traditions. Furthermore, nothing is known about how euphemistic idioms shape, preserve, and transmit cultural values through oral literature. Therefore, a comparative study is required that looks at the social meanings and

cultural consequences of euphemisms in the context of folklore in addition to highlighting their linguistic patterns. By examining how euphemistic language reflects and promotes social norms, taboos, and identities in Northern Sotho and Siswati groups, this study seeks to close that gap.

Expressions known as euphemisms substitute milder or more acceptable words for direct language that is frequently unpleasant or uncomfortable. According to Asseel (2020) euphemisms are used in various languages to address delicate subjects like sexuality, death, illness, and social hierarchy. This study investigates euphemistic terms in Siswati and Northern Sotho, emphasizing how they represent social customs, cultural norms, and societal values. The study explores the function of euphemisms in upholding societal harmony, abiding by taboos, and encouraging respect in communication by examining them in these two closely related languages.

Both Northern Sotho and Siswati, which belong to the wider Bantu language family, have unique linguistic and cultural traits that influence the creation and usage of euphemisms. This study examines the parallels and discrepancies between the ways these two languages handle euphemistic terms through a comparative analysis. This study examines the relationship between euphemisms and communicative competence, social settings, and cultural values using Dell Hymes' *Ethnography of Communication* as a framework. The study also discusses how euphemisms have changed in today's culture and how important they are to media and education, two examples of contemporary communication (Burridge 2012).

From a sociolinguistic standpoint, this research investigates euphemistic terms in Northern Sotho and Siswati folklore. Comparative research on African languages and their oral traditions is conspicuously lacking, even though euphemism has been studied in a variety of linguistic situations. By examining how euphemistic language is employed in folklore accounts to reflect and maintain societal values, taboos, and conventions, this study fills that vacuum. The study examines the grammatical structure and

cultural meaning of euphemisms in a selection of folklore texts from both languages, drawing on sociolinguistic and pragmatic theories. Textual analysis and interviews with cultural custodians were used to collect data, which will then be categorized to identify trends, purposes, and distinctions. Through highlighting the sociocultural functions that euphemisms play in upholding respect, navigating delicate subjects, and strengthening identity within groups, the findings seek to advance knowledge of euphemism as a cultural and communication approach in African oral literature. Recommendations for additional research on euphemistic language in other African languages and oral traditions are included in the study's conclusion.

Theoretical Framework

To examine euphemistic expressions in Northern Sotho and Siswati, this study uses two fundamental theories:

Communication Ethnography (Dell Hymes, 1974)

A fundamental paradigm for comprehending how language use is intricately woven into social and cultural contexts is offered by Dell Hymes' *Ethnography of Communication* (Strukowska 2020). This theory offers a paradigm "the speaking model" for analysing speech occurrences and highlights the significance of context in communication.

A thorough examination of how euphemisms are used in Northern Sotho and Siswati to handle delicate subjects like death, sexuality, and disease is made possible by the model's elements, which include Setting, Participants, Ends, Act Sequence, Key, Instrumentality, Norms, and Genre.

Euphemisms are frequently employed in culturally relevant settings where upholding social harmony is crucial, such as weddings, funerals, or traditional rites (Mbaka 2020).

Relationships between speakers, such as those between people of different genders or between seniors and younger community members, have an impact on the use of euphemisms (Alqahtani, Busabaa and Salih 2022).

In hierarchical societies where proper language use is determined by age and status, euphemisms are in line with social standards regarding civility and respect (Ahmad 2024).

Euphemisms in oral traditions, like proverbs and folktales, emphasize how cultural norms are passed down through the generations (Pascal-Mbakwe and Okoronkwo 2024).

This theory offers a thorough framework for examining how euphemisms are effective instruments for expressing culturally sensitive ideas in a respectful and courteous manner.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory

The management of face-threatening acts (FTAs) in communication is the main emphasis of politeness theory. Euphemisms are linguistic devices used to reduce the likelihood of social conflict or discomfort, especially when discussing taboo subjects (Onebunne and Ugwumba 2024).

Positive Politeness: By avoiding overt references to sensitive or disagreeable subjects, euphemisms frequently seek to promote societal harmony (Ahmad 2024). In Northern Sotho, for instance, euphemisms for death, like *go fela* ("to end"), alleviate the harshness of death and show compassion for the grieving.

Negative Politeness: When talking about forbidden topics, euphemisms assist speakers keep their distance and show respect (Crespo Fernández 2005). Euphemisms like *ku-khotsama/kushona* (Fakude 2006:30), which means "to be no more," show a careful attitude to death in Siswati, making sure the speaker doesn't offend the listener.

This study illustrates the complex relationship between language, society, and culture by integrating these two theories to show that euphemisms are cultural artifacts as well as linguistic tools. A comprehensive study of the role of euphemisms in Northern Sotho and Siswati-speaking populations is made possible by this dual-theoretical approach.

Literature Review

The existing literature on euphemisms in African languages emphasizes their significance in preserving social harmony, conveying courtesy, and handling taboo themes. In Northern

Sotho and Siswati traditional narratives, euphemisms are frequently used to discuss delicate topics including sexuality, death, and societal transgression. Semenya (2010) and Mabuza (2015) found that euphemistic language reflects and reinforce cultural norms. However, there is little research into how these euphemisms interact with gender roles and power dynamics. An enlarged analysis would shed light on how language discreetly reinforces or challenges patriarchal institutions, demonstrating the sociolinguistic mechanisms that support or undermine traditional gender expectations.

The pragmatic, sociolinguistic, and cultural aspects of euphemism have long attracted scholarly attention in linguistics, particularly within the fields of pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and discourse analysis. Euphemism is commonly defined as the substitution of a more socially acceptable or less offensive word or phrase for one that may be considered harsh, direct, or taboo (Al Noori 2021). This linguistic strategy enables speakers to address sensitive subjects such as death, sexuality, illness, and bodily functions without violating social norms or threatening interpersonal harmony. Scholars, from a sociolinguistics perceptive agree that euphemism functions as a social lubricant, allowing individuals to maintain politeness and avoid embarrassment or offence. Over time, euphemism has evolved to reflect social values and ideologies, making it an important area for both linguistic and cultural investigation (Ren and Yu2013).

One of the foundational frameworks for understanding the use of euphemism in language is Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory, which explores how individuals use language to manage face defined as the public self-image every person wants to claim for themselves. According to their theory, euphemisms are employed as politeness strategies to mitigate face-threatening acts (FTAs) in communication. When speakers anticipate that their utterances might embarrass, offend, or impose upon their listeners, they often resort to euphemistic expressions to cushion the impact. For example, instead of using blunt terms like "die," speakers might say "pass away" or "go

to sleep,” depending on the cultural and social context. This use of indirectness allows speakers to remain respectful and considerate, particularly when navigating delicate topics. Within many African cultural settings where communal harmony and respect for elders are highly valued, euphemism becomes a powerful tool to uphold these principles (Mudau 2016).

In African societies, euphemism transcends the mere avoidance of offensive language, it is an essential communicative and cultural practice. Euphemisms are frequently found in oral traditions such as folktales, proverbs, ceremonial speeches, and songs, where they perform various social functions. According to Agbenyo (2023), oral literature in Africa often makes extensive use of figurative language and symbolism, which includes euphemistic expressions that encode societal taboos, beliefs, and values. These expressions help preserve cultural integrity while allowing room for criticism, instruction, and moral education within accepted boundaries. For instance, a tale that warns against moral decay might use euphemism to discuss sexual immorality without breaching the community's standards of decency (Bayisa 2017). In this sense, euphemism becomes both a linguistic and ethical necessity.

Scholars such as Mphahlele (1997) and Rafapa (2005) have investigated euphemism in African languages and observed that these expressions are often used to soften discussions of taboo subjects such as death, sexuality, illness, infertility, and misfortune. In Northern Sotho, for instance, terms for death and sexual acts are frequently encoded through metaphor and allusion. The phrase *go ya le badimo* "to go to the ancestors" is often used to refer to someone's passing, thus honouring the deceased while avoiding the starkness of death-related vocabulary. Similarly, in Siswati, euphemistic expressions play a crucial role in upholding respect toward elders, modesty in sexual discourse, and the reinforcement of gender roles. Euphemisms such as *ubutfwa netibi* "he/she is very sick" to mean someone who is very sick, are common and reveal the community's cultural orientation toward reverence and symbolic expression.

Furthermore, euphemism in African languages

is not simply a feature of lexical substitution but often involves complex symbolic, metaphorical, and narrative strategies that reflect cultural wisdom and values Kizi (2021). According to Tursunovich (2024) euphemisms are often embedded within folktales and other oral genres that transmit knowledge from one generation to the next. In Siswati folktales, for example, animals are frequently used as allegorical figures to indirectly address human behaviour, with euphemistic language employed to guide, correct, or entertain. Rusero (2022) notes that folktales are an ideal medium for embedding euphemism because they provide a culturally accepted platform for discussing sensitive issues such as moral failure, sexual misconduct, or social deviance without directly confronting or shaming individuals. In this way, euphemism acts as both a cultural filter and a pedagogical tool.

The Ethnography of Communication, developed by Dell Hymes (1974), offers another powerful lens for understanding euphemism in African contexts. Hymes argued that language use must be studied within its full cultural context, emphasizing that communicative competence is not just about grammar, but also about knowing when, where, how, and to whom to speak (Celce-Murcia, M., 2007). His SPEAKING model Setting, Participants, Ends, Act sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genre provides a comprehensive framework for analysing language use in social settings. When applied to euphemism in Northern Sotho and Siswati folklore, Hymes' approach reveals that euphemistic language choices are governed by norms related to age, gender, status, and setting. For example, certain euphemisms may only be used in the presence of elders or during specific ritual performances. This sociolinguistic sensitivity ensures that communication remains appropriate and effective within the community's cultural framework (Syam, Seli and Abdu, 2023).

Despite the valuable contributions of previous research, there remains a significant research gap in comparative studies that specifically focus on euphemistic expressions in the folklore

of Northern Sotho and Siswati. Much of the existing literature either focuses on euphemism in everyday speech or treats each language in isolation. Very few studies have systematically compared how euphemism operates across multiple Bantu languages within the context of oral traditions. This is a gap the current study seeks to fill by conducting a comparative sociolinguistic analysis of euphemisms in Northern Sotho and Siswati folklore. By examining euphemistic expressions in selected folktales, the study aims to reveal how each language reflects cultural values, taboos, and social structures through indirect communication.

In summary, euphemism in African languages is a rich area of study that encompasses pragmatic, sociolinguistic, and cultural dimensions. It serves as a mechanism for politeness, a reflection of societal norms, and a vehicle for transmitting cultural knowledge. Through the lens of politeness theory and the ethnography of communication, this study explored how euphemistic expressions are constructed and interpreted in Northern Sotho and Siswati folklore. The findings will not only contribute to the understanding of euphemism as a linguistic phenomenon but also highlight its significance in preserving African oral traditions and cultural identity.

Methodology

To investigate euphemisms in Northern Sotho and Siswati, this study employed a qualitative research methodology and a variety of data sources. Three primary techniques were used to collect the data:

This involved looking for euphemism terms pertaining to taboo topics like death, sex, and illness in proverbs, folktales, and sayings in both languages (Holt 2023). To obtain firsthand reports of euphemistic usage in daily communication, semi-structured interviews were performed with local speakers of Siswati and Northern Sotho. Euphemistic terms were also examined in published materials, such as literature, folklore, and instructional texts (Olimat 2019).

Using a thematic approach to data analysis,

prevalent euphemism categories were identified and categorized based on their context and social purpose like death, sexuality, physiological functions, etc. Hymes' Ethnography of Communication served as the basis for the investigation, which concentrated on how euphemisms fit in with cultural norms and communicative standards.

Findings and Discussions

When discussing euphemisms in Northern Sotho and Siswati folklore narratives, it is critical to analyse how these linguistic choices mirror larger cultural structures, particularly those related to gender and power. Euphemisms frequently obscure or soften references to female sexuality, menstruation, and reproductive functions, reflecting cultural norms of modesty and subservience. In contrast, male-associated euphemisms may encourage concepts of strength, authority, and domination. Researchers can find implicit power dynamics in language by examining how euphemisms disguise or reveal these gendered realities. Such an approach indicates whether folklore reinforces patriarchal standards or allows for subtle opposition and reconfiguration of gender roles.

In Siswati culture, euphemisms are used to describe a woman's menstruation period. Rather than saying it explicitly, they say that a lady *usemalangeni*, which means "she is in her days."

In Northern Sotho culture, it is considered impolite to expressly state that a woman has huge buttocks. Instead, a euphemism is used: "*ke nku*", which translates as "she is like a sheep," implying that she has large buttocks.

In Northern Sotho societies, euphemisms are used to describe women who give birth regularly. Instead of saying it directly, the term "*noga ya gagwe e a utswa*" is used, which means "the snake is stealing." In this context, the snake symbolizes the fallopian tube, signifying continuing births in a culturally subtle and symbolic way.

Cultural Taboos and Euphemisms: An Ethnographic Viewpoint on Communication

The communication norms of Northern Sotho

and Siswati-speaking groups are firmly anchored in the usage of euphemisms to express culturally sensitive subjects like death and sexuality. Hymes' Speaking model is applied, and the following is noted:

Euphemisms for death, such as *go tšewa ke phiri* "to be no more" in Northern Sotho and *ku-khotsama* "to be no more" in Siswati, are frequently used to refer to the death of a king. Because of the seriousness of the situation, these contexts require a high degree of linguistic sensitivity (Fakude 2006).

When speaking to elders or when addressing taboo subjects in mixed-gender contexts, younger speakers frequently use euphemisms. Younger people in Northern Sotho and Siswati are expected to use indirect speech, such as "*tate o kgotshe*", which means "the father is drunk," *babe ubudlile/usutse/umnandzi* "father is drunk" to demonstrate their respect (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

A common cultural standard to preserve social harmony and respect is seen in the avoidance of direct language when talking about sexuality or death, showing how these euphemisms are instruments for preserving connections within the community (Ahmad 2024).

Politeness perspective Theory

The widespread use of euphemisms while talking about death is consistent with negative politeness techniques, in which presenters put the comfort and emotional distance of their listeners first (Ahmad 2024). For example, Siswati speakers employ *inkhosi imtsetse*, which means "to be taken away," and Northern Sotho is *o robetše* lessen the emotional impact of announcing someone has died rather than declaring it out loud. In emotionally heated situations, this tactic promotes social cohesion and reduces face-threatening acts (FTAs).

An Ethnography of Communication Perspective on Gendered Euphemisms

According to the analysis, euphemisms pertaining to sexuality and reproductive health are gendered and reflect larger responsibilities in society.

Northern Sotho euphemisms pertaining to women's sexuality, as *go ithwala or ke motho wa kgobe* "to be pregnant", are spoken in a tone

that suggests indirection and humility. Expressions like *kutitfwala* "to be pregnant" in Siswati demonstrate delicacy and restraint, which is consistent with traditional norms regarding women's conduct.

Different linguistic norms are required of male and female speakers. The impact of patriarchal systems on language use is demonstrated by the fact that women employ euphemisms to avoid being explicit while males tend to use more straightforward phrases.

Politeness perspective Theory

The gendered variations in euphemisms are consistent with positive politeness techniques, which aim to preserve group cohesiveness by following social norms. The use of euphemisms by women reinforces their inferior status in gender hierarchies by preventing confrontation and upholding their perceived role as moral guardians.

Social Hierarchies and Euphemism

An Ethnographic Viewpoint on Communication

In hierarchical interactions, euphemisms are essential for preserving respect.

Euphemistic terms are used in both languages to show greater respect for seniors. For instance, seniors are referred to in Northern Sotho using euphemisms for death, such as *o re tlogetše* which means "he has died or gone to the ancestors", "signifying their esteemed position. Similar to this, expressions like "to leave the world" *usishiyile* highlight the speaker's reverence in Siswati.

The purpose of using euphemisms in these situations is to protect the cultural values of the community and the dignity of the elderly.

A Viewpoint on Politeness Theory

Negative politeness tactics, which place a higher value on social distance and respect, are reflected in the usage of euphemisms in hierarchical settings. This is especially true when speaking to superiors or elders, as euphemisms protect their "face" by avoiding language that is too casual or straightforward (Allan 2016). This can be best shown in Siswati euphemistic

statements such as *inja yalapha ekhaya idle emacandza* commonly used when a boy has impregnated a girl.

Contemporary Euphemism Adaptations: An Ethnographic Viewpoint on Communication

According to the study, euphemisms have evolved to fit contemporary settings, mirroring shifts in communication styles and social conventions.

According to Fernández-Galeano (2024). New euphemisms have surfaced in digital and media communication to conform to worldwide political correctness trends. To prevent stigmatization, for instance, adjectives associated with poverty are softer; harsher descriptions are replaced with phrases like:

A cat sleeps on a fireplace Likati lilala etiko "there's extreme poverty".

"People with financial challenges" or batho ba ba tshehlana or ba dikobo di khuswane

According to Monashnenko (2021) Euphemisms are being utilized more and more in public speeches and on social media as a means of upholding political correctness, illustrating how language can be adjusted to meet modern demands.

A Viewpoint on Politeness Theory

Danilina, Kizyan, and Maksimova (2019) stated that: these days, euphemisms frequently combine negative and positive politeness techniques.

While negative politeness guarantees that delicate subjects are discussed without causing discomfort or social tension, positive politeness is demonstrated in attempts to foster unity and prevent hurting oppressed groups.

Key Contributions

By comparing euphemisms, the study sheds light on the sociolinguistic and cultural dynamics of Siswati-speaking and Northern Sotho populations. It illustrates how politeness theory and the ethnography of communication can be applied to comprehend the social and cultural aspects of language. The study adds to more general conversations about how language both reflects and perpetuates gender, power, and social norms in many cultural contexts.

Recommendations

Considering the results, the study offers a number of recommendations that euphemisms should be taught in language courses to assist students comprehend their cultural meaning and appropriate usage, as they are crucial for preserving societal harmony. Since euphemistic expressions are essential to preserving cultural identity, efforts should be taken to preserve and record them. To better understand how euphemisms adjust to novel social circumstances, more research is required on their evolving function in contemporary communication, especially in media and digital arenas.

Conclusion

By comparing euphemistic terms in Northern Sotho and Siswati, this study has shed light on their sociolinguistic and cultural relevance. Euphemisms are useful for expressing cultural values, avoiding social taboos, and preserving social harmony. Through a sociolinguistic analysis of these idioms, the study advances our knowledge of how language works in various cultural situations and emphasizes the importance of euphemisms in upholding social order.

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A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY'S INFLUENCE ON THE POLITICALLY DIGITALISED BEHAVIOURAL LANDSCAPE OF POST-COVID-19 SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

In traditional South African society, African philosophy played a central role in shaping social and political structures. Collective decision-making was the norm, often expressed through the rich use of poetry and idioms that embodied indigenous philosophical thought emphasizing a deep connection with nature as a source of originality and wisdom. However, the arrival of colonialism, and particularly the apartheid regime, silenced this philosophical voice. The situation worsened with the introduction of Western technology, which is rooted in the principles of individualism an ideology fundamentally misaligned with the communal orientation of South African society. This paper explores the suppression of African philosophical thought, imposed by colonial forces and the apartheid system, particularly in the period before 1994. It examines ways to revive and empower African philosophical voices, aiming to reestablish them as influential forces in shaping the behaviour of contemporary discourse. The paper also highlights the importance of Ubuntu in African philosophy as a tool and vehicle for communication and morality. Hence, the paper adopts a qualitative research methodology for critical analysis of the role of African philosophy in shaping South Africa's politically digitalized behavioural landscape in the post-covid-19 era. The findings suggest that technology shapes the behaviour of people in this highly politically digitalised landscape, especially in the post-covid-19 era where media is the first point of reference. Thus, the paper concludes that the adoption of Western-centric models and technologies has not only displaced traditional African values but also contributed to ongoing political behaviour and cultural crises in the post-covid-19 era.

Keywords: African philosophy, philosophy voice, digitalisation, post-covid-19 era, and political age.

Introduction and Background

Pre-colonial African societies were not embattled in discussing their issue and what they believed in. They were content that to solve a discord, the consensus was imperative based on voicing opinions and presenting facts and truth and articulation thereof, from that discussion arose a mutually beneficial decision which

would come with the way forward for the welfare and development of the society. This aligns with the view of Nelson Mandela (1994:29) who notes that "Democracy meant all men were to be heard, and a decision was taken together as a people. However, the majority rule was a foreign notion, in other means or words from poetry and idioms assisted in

this articulation and were the core of the African worldview and culture. It is interesting to note that during the deliberations examples of the totem, animals, plants, birds as well as the earth was used to concretise the discussion and bring full Meaning to it. African people related to nature as the impetus of originality and they based this on the premise that there existed God and ancestors who could be related and talked to through a voice. Therefore, it can be concluded that African philosophy forte is rooted in vocality.

When Africa was colonised, certain benefits, rights, and cultures changed dramatically. This change didn't leave the voice of the African people. The oppression of the voice rendered African philosophy voiceless and oppressed. When the voice is taken away automatically you are voiceless you cannot talk for yourselves, and people make decisions on your behalf. Importantly the voicelessness renders you ineffective and mutes you to the extent of extinction. This can be aligned with what Nhema-chena and Dzamavhu (2023) argue when illustrating the mute African philosophy.

He maintained that: *“In this regard, the paper argues that while colonial anthropologists dispossessed Africans of their voices, contemporary technologies, for scanning and uploading human minds onto the cloud systems and into technological substrates, similarly dispossess Africans of their minds which are transferred from the biological brains to the cloud or into technological substrates. In other words, with injected nanorobots set to scan human brains and then transfer the human brains from the biological bodies to the cloud, Africans are set to lose ownership and control over not only their voices but their minds as well.”*

From the above premise, the paper will highlight the voicelessness of the African philosophy as imprinted in their thinking by the colonisers and the regime, especially in South Africa pre-1994. It will further highlight how this can be resuscitated in making African philosophy a voice to be reckoned with in post-

COVID-19 in South Africa. The paper will further highlight the importance of ubuntu in African philosophy as a tool and vehicle for communication and morality.

According to Bhuda and Marumo (2022), Ubuntu is a philosophical framework, worldview, ethical approach, and way of understanding that originated in Africa. It offers a meaningful alternative to the individualistic and utilitarian ideologies dominant in the Western world. Ubuntu is best viewed as a social philosophy that highlights the deep interconnectedness of human beings, prioritizing care, collective values, harmony, friendliness, respect, and responsiveness. When applied to research involving indigenous communities, Ubuntu encourages adopting a social-ethical stance that is inclusive of all people, fostering positive relationships between researchers and indigenous groups. However, a challenge arises as many non-indigenous scholars tend to view Ubuntu from a Western perspective, which undermines its significance as a powerful tool among African indigenous communities for education, guidance, and promoting positive human interactions.

African Voice, Behaviour and South African Government

In South Africa in the 19th century, during the apartheid era, the then government realised that there was a need to mute the community especially the black one. That could only be done by silencing and placing an embargo on communication by banning some media houses and other influential people so that information becomes scarce. Communities would then live in fear of not knowing what was happening in their midst. The enforcement of this action was promulgated by the Terrorism Act and published in the government gazette (Current History, 1969).

The above is confirmed by Fourie (2002) in *Rethinking the Role of Media in South Africa*. Fourie outlines the historical background that led to the banning of media houses, especially those that were advocating for blacks and against the apartheid government regime. He makes mention of the events that led to the censorship of black media and how black reporters

were subjected to harassment and beating whenever they covered political events. According to Fourie, to intensify that black communities were ignorant of what was happening in their midst, there was a need to silence the source of the information, hence Newspaper Press Bill of 1977 was introduced and was followed by the Steyn Commission in 1980. The commission recommended that a mechanism be placed that would portray the South African government in a better light when viewed by their counterparts.

The aftermath of the Commission was the 1987 banning of the newspapers which were influential and disseminating information to the public to inform them accordingly. If that was not enough the political or civic movements were also banned to ensure that the voice was muted. In censoring the political parties, the influential people in the community were also a weapon dispatched towards ignoring the will of the people and rendering them ineffective and voiceless. Mention should be made that the embargo was also the vehicle to promote propaganda as realised during the Rhodie Information Scandal which rocked South Africa. If that was not enough, the Steyn Commission banned any meetings, political gatherings, or labour actions, and whoever was caught in those acts was detained without trial because he/she was labeled a terrorist and a promotor of sabotage who had to be silenced.

Nhemachena and Dzamavhu (2023) complement the above by drawing from other scholars like (Khoza, 2014; Gordimer, 1994 and Murrel, 1992; Baderoon, 2011; and De Oliveira et al, 2019) who noted that it has been argued that for colonialism to be considered a success, it was necessary to suppress African voices and render African societies silent. This was because colonial powers feared the authenticity of African voices, forcing Africans to express themselves only through colonial institutions and publish through colonial publishing houses that would censor, dilute, and neutralize their perspectives. For instance, during apartheid in South Africa, the government controlled what books and newspapers could be produced,

while also restricting the content taught by academics. Publications that violated censorship rules were banned, and scholars who defied these restrictions faced severe consequences, including being banned, having their passports confiscated, being deported, or losing their jobs. These implementations were the methodology of enforcing colonialisation in all African spheres of life.

African Voice and Education

According to Thobejane (2013:2), Bantu education refers to a substandard form of education designed to keep the majority racial group in a subordinate and marginalized position. While the most significant division was between the education systems for Black and White populations, there were also other intermediate levels of hierarchy within both the education system and broader society. Education was managed and regulated by separate departments for each ethnic and racial group. The apartheid regime recognized four racial groups: Black Africans, who were collectively labeled as "Bantu" by the nationalist government and later divided into ethnic groups such as Zulus, Pedis, Tswanas, Sothos, Shangaan, Venda, and Ndebele; while people of Indian and Asian descent were classified as "Indians."

The introduction of Bantu Education was recommended by the Eiselen Commission in 1951 according to Christie and Collins (1982). They further add that amongst many recommendations of the Commission, what was clear was that black education should be implemented as a way of streamlining their education and distorting their cultural heritage. This meant diluting the ethos of blacks changing their worldview towards themselves and making them a community without originality. The other purpose was to teach and inculcate in the black mentality inferior characteristics that would eventually create a submissive community reliance syndrome to white supremacy. There is also discrimination in formerly white schools, and curricula remain unrepresentative of black ethnic groups' cultures and epistemologies. The findings show that marginalized parents fight relentlessly to achieve social justice

in education for their children (Bekisizwe & Ndimande, 2013).

The aftermath of the Tomlinson Commission, established in 1955, aimed to institutionalize separate and unequal education in South Africa. Education administration was complex, involving the state, provincial officials, missionary societies, and the people. It promoted loyalty to Afrikaner state education and citizenship, while prioritizing higher education for Afrikaners over the majority Black population (Thobejane, 2013).

The other important aspect was that it was preparing blacks for minority duties politically, socially, and economically and rendering them no voice in the development of South Africa. It was a parallel and unequal type of education that also enforced Afrikaans as the media of communication that should be taught in schools, and used in public platforms as a passport for employment. The muting of blacks was a success until the 1976 riots erupted in South Africa which changed the history of education. Blacks were reduced to be servants, not leaders, and to follow leaders.

African voice and leadership

A good education, a non-submissive one, equips and empowers leaders to be effective in managing themselves and others and enabling them to communicate with other leaders in their respective domains. To frustrate the leadership process and ensure inferior leadership as well as inadequate, incompetent leaders who could not be equated to other countries' leaders, the South African leaders introduced the homeland policy which promotes "inland leaders" who are controlled from Pretoria. According to Moolman (1977) by establishing borders around the so-called "native reserves" that is, territories inhabited by tribes and prohibiting further white invasion, the 1913 legislation (Bantu Land Act No. 27 of 1913) attempted to stop this process. The Bantu Trust and Land Act, No. 18 of 1936, attempted to turn the process of encroachment and fragmentation inside out by reversing it into one of extension and consolidation. After being "released" from white control, some territories were added to

and combined with the reserves. In the Tswana region, these reserves made up about 1.3 million hectares in 1913; an additional 2.5 million hectares would have nearly tripled the territory's size. To purchase and combine these "released" regions with the national trust.

The creation of these homelands as stated was to produce and promote pseudo-leaders who would be imposed among people to give them a voice which in most cases was the false one not representing the masses. It further added to the muteness of the African thinking, culture, and social well-being because the leadership vacuum was evident and the leaders were parachuted by the central government to promote its interest and implement their laws, therefore the homelands served as conduits of oppression, and of being submissive. In clarifying the leadership vacuum Egero (1991:141) mentions that in the homelands the Trade Unions were abolished and the voice of the workers was muted, the other civic organisations who advocated for service delivery were also banned. The civil servants' movements were threatened by expulsion and the people were voiceless and no one will talk on their behalf because the picketing and strikes which was a way to express dissatisfaction were also abolished or the perpetrators were severely dealt with- e.g. being expelled from work or facing economical starvation by being blacklisted and the family will suffer.

In addition, the creation was to "produce" two classes namely, the rich, the bourgeoisie, and the proletariat who are poor as it was a practice in the Western culture. When this was in place, black communities would see themselves as rivals of white counterparts and see this "independence" as a status not as a tool for silencing. The calling of these homeland's independent states added the ideology of humanitarianism and the spirit of self-determination which was portrayed as an achievement, not oppression. Whereas in reality, the homelands were a token of deceit and muting. The voiceless Africans were now silent and happy. And living a seclusive life as individuals, not as a collective who dealt with matters as a consensus as a united

group. They were remote-controlled from Pretoria.

African Voice and Social Life

To enforce the "remote control," the South African government, according to the Malan government's initial attempt to further divide urban residential areas for Black and White residents, was the Group Areas Act of 1950. The legislation was a realisation of the apartheid principle that cultures should be permitted to flourish independently, as well as a carryover of previous segregation regulations. Numerous traditionally black urban neighborhoods were formally made white by the legislation. The Native Resettlement Act of 1954 gave the government the right to evict long-term inhabitants and demolish structures to create space for residences and enterprises held by White people. Under the power of this statute, entire neighborhoods were demolished. For instance, on February 9, 1955, Sophiatown, a bustling African neighborhood in the heart of Johannesburg, had 60,000 residents. Prime Minister Malan dispatched 2,000 police officers to remove them (South African History Online, 2019).

Abel (2016) contends that the Afrobarometer study results conducted between 2000 and 2010 reflect that there is also a greater level of trust between residents of these communities and those from other ethnic groups. Areas of former resettlement camps are more racially diverse, despite apartheid's aim of establishing ethnically homogeneous homelands (and inciting discord among Africans). According to other recent studies using comprehensive micro-economic data, even in situations where there may be short-term conflicts over resources, exposure to a more diverse set of people increases understanding and trust towards different groups. "Everyday racial crossings opened... spaces for political allegiances, solidarity, and friendship that would ultimately contribute critically to the (apartheid) regime's demise," according to a theory whose ramifications are of historic significance.

In complementing the above Martin (2020) resonates that the resettlement had an impact on the lives and ethical as well as cultural and

identification of the black communities in South Africa. He states that Between 1960 and 1980, almost 3.5 million black South Africans were relocated to resettlement camps (found inside their homelands) on the pretext of "separate development." Many were forced to migrate for a portion of the year to work as domestic servants or in the mining industry due to a lack of economic possibilities, which undermined the core family. There were aspects of competitive and cooperative life in the relocation camps. Conflict over limited resources was made worse by scarcity, but people also had to create new support systems to survive. As such, historical narratives document both "endemic violence" and gestures of solidarity among the displaced people.

The above discussion illustrates that socially and politically the African communities were disintegrated and there was a lack of unity and cohesion. The polarisation was evident through group area division. The culture was overshadowed by a new dimension of adopted Western culture which was inculcated in the minds of the Africans. The existing leadership vacuum was a political carnage and could not sustain the center. Leadership is dead and there is no one to give direction. Politically, the communities are just shum, with no voice.

African Voice and Political Digitalised World

Globalisation ushered new era of technology which without failure affected all, even the voiceless, African communities in the third world inclusive of South Africa. When it was introduced, blacks were underdogs who could not participate in technology least to say the international economics and local. Therefore, due to this fact, technology was imposed on them and their culture was obliterated to dust without any meaning or contributions to make. The digitalised world was a new phenomenon that needed strong political, social, and economic connections which were lacking in African communities' "leaders" who had to rely on their white counterparts to introduce them. They were negotiating from a low ebb with no advantage from their side. They have been made

to negate their culture and moved from their origins. Moving from that point meant they could not relate to their ancestors, worldview, and other aspects like communalism and consensus which made them a community or nation. The principles like ubuntu that were inherent in them were thwarted due to resettlement, political interference, and social- confusion that existed.

In the midst of that, Covid-19 visited the shores of South Africa, which was a pandemic that no one understood the cause even from a Western perspective. There were guesswork mechanisms that were practiced and nobody could get it right. It placed a burden on the political, social, and economic leaders, and South Africa was not spared from this impasse. In the process, the measures that were implemented as containment were hygienic and what was practiced from an African philosophy in the past. Marumo (2020) purports that a virus known as the coronavirus (COVID-19) is currently wreaking havoc around the globe. The source of this virus is unclear, according to research, but what is known is that it is a silent killer that only manifests as chills, shortness of breath, coughing, and other symptoms. The doctors know the symptoms, which are considered a corrective measure rather than the actual cure, but they are unable to track out the cause of the illness. Efforts are being made by governments worldwide to stop the disease from spreading, not curing the illness itself, and because of this, it is difficult to enforce corrective measures because of the precautions that must be taken. Certain policies have made intimacy and closeness extinct as prescripts of African philosophy.

On the other hand, Beaunoyer, *et al.*, (2020), The COVID-19 pandemic has led to rapid and unprecedented shifts in digital technology and media usage. Before the pandemic, internet access wasn't a priority for everyone, and many could manage without it. However, with the global lockdown disrupting social connections, virtual spaces shifted from a luxury to a necessity. During quarantine, technology such as Facebook, X, and Whatsapp became essential for

even basic tasks, and this increased reliance is likely to worsen existing digital inequalities.

Contrary to the above Mwambari, *et al* (2020) alluded that COVID-19 challenges the established boundaries in social sciences between ethics and epistemology, particularly the balance between "do no harm" and the need for thorough understanding to ensure scientific validity. While ethical discussions have flourished in fields like ethnography and anthropology, these disciplines emphasize that immersion in the field leads to deeper knowledge and valid research. However, the distance imposed by COVID-19 may undermine this deep understanding, leading to incomplete, imprecise, or inaccurate data.

However, according to Ufearah (2020:98), on the social aspect, the isolationist tendency of the pandemic poses great challenges to the social and economic life of the people. It imposes barriers or restrictions on free social interactions in African communities. This deepens the isolation tendencies and individualism already imposed by Western cultural and ideological influence as well as the advent of modern technology. The preceding condition highlights the question of individual freedom, especially as these restrictions cause economic hardship to many families. The confusion brought by the virus of misinformation - an infodemic - adds to the tension. Fortunately, the profuse use of hand sanitisers and mandatory hand washing make for improved hygiene and creates a culture of cleanliness. It is, therefore, not all gloomy. There is always a bright side to every situation. However, the focus of this research which is on the impact of COVID-19 on the African identity draws attention to an interesting issue to be explored.

According to Bhuda *et al.*, (2021), traditional leadership is a key aspect of African culture, where leaders are typically born into royal families or have familial ties and are expected to assume leadership when they come of age. During crises such as sickness or pandemics, the people turn to their king for solutions. As a result, a king must possess the wisdom to address the needs and concerns of his people.

With 59 million South Africans affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, indigenous communities were also impacted, and their people sought guidance from traditional leaders. Despite the South African government implementing policies to combat the virus, there is limited recognition of the role traditional leaders play in managing its spread within their communities. This underscores the marginalization of African leaders and the indigenous populations they represent in South Africa's social and political landscape.

Besides the voice of the traditional leaders, ubuntu has a voice to reckon with. Thence Mokhutso, *et al* (2023:21-22) maintain that "Ubuntu remains relevant to remedy the challenges Africans face; it remains an African solution because it discourages individualism and encourages community and considers the well-being of others. The fact is that, even if policies governing municipalities improve, more funds are given for the smooth running of all local municipalities in South Africa, or political parties change their way of doing things. These are futile without Ubuntu, generosity, selflessness, care, empathy, and respect for the other person. Ubuntu reminds us that we are not indispensable; we need others. Unfortunately, for political parties and leaders to hold any public office, they have done so because they were elected by the people."

An interesting example of the negative effects of the COVID-19 experience is the suppression and limited time to mourn which has suppressed Africans during burials, and that became problematic when expressing culture and rites during funerals. Bhuda (2023:8) highlights the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted many traditional practices around death, dying, and funerals, with restrictions on visits and attendance affecting rituals. African cultural views on funerals often conflicted with government regulations, and the study suggests that strict burial timelines hindered proper mourning. Despite variations in funeral rituals, all emphasize social interaction, offering a space to honor the deceased. Now that COVID-

19 restrictions have lifted in South Africa, people can return to their customary mourning practices, reflecting an African philosophy that values compassion, love, and the significance of mourning.

Even when the world is politically digitalised, African philosophy is capable of healing within the framework of Indigenous African technology and it can change things through its spirituality and faith rooted in Africanism. It can do miracles in changing situations when someone is ill or when there are things that need to be evoked to correct a situation. This voice of healing plays a paramount role in ensuring the sustainability of African culture and worldview. This can be attributed to what Bhuda, *et al* (2022) argue, traditional religion and healing are core aspects of African culture, with healing being a fundamental need for the population. Many Africans believe their healing methods effectively address both physical and spiritual health. These practices have proven successful in restoring health through trial and error. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been growing global interest in the potential of traditional healing methods as a treatment for the virus.

The African Medicinals were set aside and were never given a chance during COVID-19 to test their capabilities and strength in curing or containing COVID-19. Besides that, setting aside, the African Medicinals have proved their capacity and capability to play an important role in containing COVID-19. The research conducted has proven that these remedies assisted tremendously in the containment of the spread of COVID-19. Bhuda, *et al* (2022:19154-19155), resonates that according to African beliefs, religion, and healing, physical and spiritual illnesses can be viewed differently, and the healing process is not the same. Most illnesses are linked to beliefs and religion. For instance, Traditional therapies for mental disorders ranging from social stress, anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, and insanity best demonstrate how indigenous African beliefs represent practically all sorts of bodily and psychological disability as afflictions that must be

combated with all means required.”

The authors also emphasize that African indigenous and traditional healing practices have been in use for generations, serving as effective means for treating a wide range of illnesses. With the guidance of traditional health practitioners, African communities have historically managed complex and life-threatening medical conditions. In light of this, the inclusion of traditional herbalists in the fight against COVID-19, as proposed by scholars in this study, is worth serious consideration. It is essential to subject these traditional remedies to clinical trials in order to assess their effectiveness and potential side effects. This process would help inform the public about proper usage and associated risks.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis highlights that many of the challenges currently facing South Africa as well as other modern African societies stem from the marginalization or suppression of indigenous African knowledge systems and cultural practices within governance and societal structures. The adoption of foreign, Western-centric models and the technologies derived from them has not only displaced traditional African values but also contributed to ongoing socio-political and cultural crises.

This reveals further that the ills imposed on African societies by the advent of colonialism and the South African apartheid experience go deeper than is usually assumed. The ills are so deep that a change in the political structure of these societies without a foundational change in the cultural and philosophical ideologies that ground these political structures will be, at best, superficial. This partly explains the many inconsistencies and limitations that bedevil the deployment of technology in addressing local challenges, especially in the treatment and containment of the spread of COVID-19.

The necessity of restructuring South Africa's current social and political systems becomes clear based on the preceding discussion. This transformation is vital for effectively utilizing digital tools to tackle challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and the long-standing

impacts of colonialism. At the core of this transformation lies the need for a homegrown philosophical foundation that resonates with the lived realities and histories of Indigenous communities, enabling them to address their unique societal challenges. Ubuntu serves as such a philosophy, offering a framework deeply rooted in the collective heritage and historical experiences of South Africans. The shared legacy of ancestral traditions and the trauma of apartheid highlight the need to revisit and revive pre-apartheid values and ideologies as a basis for reconstructing modern society.

The rationale for embracing Ubuntu stems from the understanding that the subtle imposition of individualistic ideals during colonial rule significantly disrupted social cohesion in the digital age. This has contributed to ongoing fragmentation within society. Therefore, there is an urgent need to re-establish a sense of community and shared purpose grounded in South Africa's indigenous worldview. Ubuntu, which emphasizes that an individual's humanity is best realized through their relationships with others and reciprocally, that others recognize their own humanity in the individual supports a model in which all citizens bear mutual rights and responsibilities aimed at fostering both individual and societal well-being (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013: 92).

The adoption of Ubuntu as the ideological and philosophical foundation for the social and political organisation of South Africa helps to reverse the associated evils of colonialism and the apartheid regime. It will undo the evil of voicelessness of African Philosophy in the organisation of South Africa and it will lead to the grooming of African leaders who are truly representative of South Africa because they are attuned to the history and experiences of the South African people.

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gab.v23i2.39>**THE IMPACT OF MISUSE OF SUPRASEGMENTAL FEATURES IN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN SOUTH AFRICA: A CASE STUDY IN TSHIVENḌA****Nthambeleni Charles Netshisaulu**

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E-mail: Nthambeleni.Netshisaulu@univen.ac.za**Abstract**

TshivendḌa is one of the indigenous languages spoken in South Africa. TshivendḌa, is very close to many indigenous languages spoken in South Africa and Africa such as Kelobedu, Sepedi, isiZulu, Chishona, Kiswahili, and many other indigenous African languages not mentioned here. This article highlights the distortion of meaning made through misuse of suprasegmental features by TshivendḌa broadcasters in determining meanings of words, which look alike but differ in meaning. The main aim of this research is to investigate how the misuse of suprasegmental features disregards meanings of two or more words which are written the same but have different meanings from one another. The researcher will employ qualitative methodology whereby both primary and secondary methods will be used. Data will be collected from published journal articles, TshivendḌa grammar books and through listening TshivendḌa news when presented. A Phonological Theoretical Framework will be used as an underpin of this article. It is envisaged that this article will reveal the importance of taking suprasegmental features into cognizance in the TshivendḌa text.

Keywords: *Indigenous language, Suprasegmental features, tone, stress, length, and pitch.*

1. Introduction and background

TshivendḌa is one of the eleven (11 + 1) indigenous official languages spoken in South Africa and one of many indigenous African languages which were marginalised during the colonial and apartheid regimes such as Sepedi, Xitsonga, Setswana, isiXhosa, isiZulu, isiNdebele, Siswati, and others. TshivendḌa is one of the languages that are spoken in more than one country in Africa such as South Africa, Zimbabwe and Botswana, and is very close to some languages spoken in the eastern part of DRC, Zaire, and in Kenya, Zambia, and Malawi etc. TshivendḌa like many other African languages in South Africa was afforded **equal-platform** with other eight indigenous African languages in the dawn of democracy around 1994 when South Africa introduced a democratic constitution though the platform is just a lip-service. TshivendḌa is one of the indigenous African lan-

guages that uses suprasegmental features to differentiate and or determine meanings of two or more words which are written alike but different in meanings. It has become a common understanding that people in the broadcasting industry, particularly when reading the news, or generally broadcasting are found to disregard suprasegmental features. Ignoring these essential text features leads to the loss of the actual meanings of particular words and confusion to readers, the citizens and the speakers of the language at large. The coincidental use of suprasegmental features in TshivendḌa cannot be avoided since their omission may cause distortion and inaccuracy in meanings to the listeners and loving users of the language. One of these items is sacrificed on the advantage of the other, the entire sentence or words remain without being accurate or meaningful as per the context. Missing such essential text features

does not only lead to meaning loose of particular words but also confusion and inaccurate words and sentences. Mackay (1987:170) concurs with this statement when saying: "...the various suprasegmentals are used together in a complex interaction. Stress, emphasis, intonation, timing features, and even voice quality combined to communicate subtle shades of meaning". This shows that their coincidence complements each other to magnify and enlarge the meaning needed thereof. When these features are used coincidentally in Tshivenda, they become accurate in depicting and demonstrating the exactness and accuracy of meaning needed in both words and sentences. This is true because there is no stress without length, and no high tone without high pitch. While Katamba (1989: 5) takes suprasegmental features as prosodic features when he says: "Prosodic features such as tone and stress, which are usually associated with an entire syllable or word, are difficult to describe. Although their phonological relevance is clear, their phonetic properties are not easy to specify satisfactorily". From the above two scholars they are a bit different from each other because the characteristics which they highlighted on their definitions are not the same but are different in their terminology. Tone is the going up and down of the quality of voice which the speaker uses when articulating syllables that are different in tones while stress is the emphasis which is a weight of a voice that the speaker uses to differentiate when pronouncing similar words but with different meanings. The missing out of other elements by Mackay such as length and voice quality weakens his definition of what suprasegmental features is. In Tshivenda and other indigenous languages, suprasegmental features are coincidental signs which depict the intermittence of sounds either in words or in a sentence such as (tone), stress (emphasis), length (duration) and pitch (intonation) which are also known as prosodic elements.

2. Problem Statement

Problem statement is something that prompted

or provoked the researcher to do his or her research. Tshivenda is one of the most difficult languages when it comes to accurate writing and pronunciations since some words are supposed to be joined or disjointed, with or without diacritic signs or marks while some have accurate or inaccurate pronunciation. This is experienced due to the omission of the above coupled with suprasegmental features that are not written or marked on words or sentences. In this research what provoked the researcher is the omission of suprasegmental features which are vital in the accuracy of meanings made by Tshivenda broadcasters and the indigenous speakers of the language. As a result, the omission of these coincidental vital features affects the intermittent flow of the language whence the meaning is destroyed and confused. This article is aimed at encouraging users of Tshivenda to include suprasegmental features in their content.

3. Literature Review

This item is of fundamental importance because it is where the article writer gets a wide knowledge about his article from other scholars. When the writer writes his article he gets a lot of information from the other researchers. When Rañanga (2008:44) cites Leedy 1993 he says that: "A literature review literally involves looking again at the literature of a related area (an area not necessarily identical with but linked to one's own area of study)". The contextual framework involves literature-based claims on how problems are addressed by referring to various countries, cultural backgrounds, beliefs, moral values and organisational structures. The researcher will use the statements made by indigenous speakers of Tshivenda, the Tshivenda Broadcasters and other recorded data on books and articles.

3.1. Indigenous language

Indigenous language is an aboriginal language spoken by the original speakers. Per Huxtable (2023) "An indigenous language which is also known as autochthonous language, is a language that is native or inherent to a region and

spoken by its indigenous peoples. Indigenous languages are not necessarily national languages, but they can be. Chiblow, S, Meighan, P.J, and Human Geography 2022 – journals, sagepub.com say: Languages that have their heritage roots in Africa and that belong to the Southern Bantu language family, where “Bantu” is used purely as a linguistic term. An indigenous language is a language that is native to a region or country and spoken by indigenous people”.

Paul (2022) says: “To me, Indigenous languages and the land are one and the same. This symbiotic relationship encompasses so many levels: the mental, emotional, the spiritual, the physical. The relationship also goes beyond into some form of responsibility to the land and to living sustainably.

3.2. Suprasegmental features:

The term suprasegmental features refer to various phenomena that are encompassed together and happen coincidentally above words or sentences such features as tone, stress, length, and pitch. Per Richards, Platt, and Platt (1995: 366) say: “in PHONETICS and PHONOLOGY) a unit which extends over more than one sound in an utterance, e.g. STRESS and tone ...”. These features make speech sounds to have certain specific resources for conveying meaning that writing cannot represent perfectly at best. This is also supported by Mackay (1987:154) when saying: “The term suprasegmental indicates that these phenomena occur above (supra) the level of the segment (language being viewed as a hierarchy of levels). This depicts that even though they are not literally written they are there either above syllables, segments, words, or sentences. The main issue of these essential text features is that when applied either in words or sentences they do not appear alone, instead they complement each other. That is, when one applies stress it goes with emphasis, loudness and length while tone goes with emphasis which is the weight of a voice. It is also applied to length which goes with time between the two syllables. These elements underpin the coincidental of suprasegmental features.

3.2.1. Tone

Tone is defined as the going up and down of voice when one pronounces syllables, segments, words, or sentences as a means of differentiating two words that are written the same but with different meanings. In Tshivenda there are two types of tones, that is, low tone (ˊ) and high tone (ˋ) which help the language to determine the meaning of two or more words that are similar in spelling but different in their meanings. Katamba (1992:53) says: “In a TONE language those pitch differences are used phonetically either to differentiate between word meanings or to convey grammatical distinctions”. Mackay (1987:171) differentiates between tone languages and intonation languages when he says: “Tone occurs at the level of the word; intonation occurs at the level of the sentence”.

3.2.2. Stress

Stress may be defined as the eminence of the voice when pronouncing a specific syllable amongst others. The stress feature has three different types which are **primary stress, secondary stress, and tertiary stress**. Richards, Platt, and Platt (1995: 355) say: “Stress is the pronunciation (articulation) of a word or syllable with more force than the surrounding words or syllables. A stressed word or syllable is produced by using more air from the lungs”. Although Mackay (1987:154) displays that stress is of great importance he failed to give a clear definition of stress, instead he says that: “Simply stated, stress is an accentuation (emphasizing) of, or a giving of prominence to, one syllable (or more) of a polysyllabic word”. Katamba (1992:53) says: “Stress is an elusive concept. All stressed (or accented) syllables in a word are salient than their counterparts but the phonetic manifestation of stress varies”. Katamba displays that the reason for prominence on stressed syllables is due to an admixture of raised pitch, greater length, and increased intensity of the signal, which is perceived as loudness. For further emphasis, Katamba (Ibid: 221) says that: “Stress is primarily a matter of

greater AUDITORY PROMINENCE. An element that is stressed highlighted so that it becomes auditorily more salient than the rest of the elements in the string of which it is a part. Stressed syllables tend to have higher pitch and longer duration than their non-stressed counterparts”.

Stress is measured by using digits or numbers from 1 to 4 where 1 is the strongest and 4 the weakest. When one looks at Katamba’s definition one can say “stress” is richer because it includes or admixtures a lot of these essential text features such as striking, raised pitch, greater length, increased intensity of the signal and loudness.

3.1.3. Long – short vowels:

The term long - short vowels refers to the length or the duration that takes place between one syllable to the other or the length of a vowel from one syllable to the other syllable. Words are composed of syllables and such syllables are not tightened in such a way that they cannot be divided into syllables. Between syllables there are spaces that differ from one syllable to the other. Some syllables are long while other syllables are short. There are three types of syllables or vowels (or consonants) which are long vowels, long-short vowels and short vowels. In defining long – short Katamba (1992:62) says: “This feature refers to the duration of a sound”.

3.1.4. Pitch

Pitch is taken as one of the elements or ingredients of stress. Pitch becomes audible when there is high vibration of the vocal cords which are stretched. In defining pitch Katamba (1992: 186) says: “Pitch depends on the rate of the vocal cords. The tauter the vocal cords are, the faster they vibrate and the higher is the pitch of the perceived sound.”

4. Methodology

To achieve the aim of this article, the researcher will employ qualitative research methodology. Rahman, Mohammad, Rahim, and Noh (2018:47) explain the qualitative research method in this way “Qualitative method is a popular method that involved collecting and

analyzing textual data from a person, as well as a document which requires reflection of the part of the researcher during conducting its research process. It is a method that allows the researcher to explore a phenomenon with deep investigation in understanding concepts, opinions, experiences, and others”.

That means qualitative research study is a methodology that is common, which includes the gathering as well as the analyses of data that is collected from an individual and a letter that needs the intelligence of the researcher so that he can conclude his research. It is a way which allows the researcher to check and to verify points for the understanding of contents, ideas, experiences, and other things. The researcher will use primary research methods and secondary research methods.

4.1. Primary Research Method

The primary research method is a method in which information is gathered by the researcher himself by using different ways to gather information. The researcher may use different methods such as questionnaires, analysis as well as research from other authors.

When Kabir (2016:204) defines Primary Research Method says: “Primary data is the data that has been collected from first-hand experience”.

This means that the primary method is information or data collected through first-hand experience. Primary method plays a crucial role in generating new knowledge, enhancing understanding, and driving progress in various disciplines. It helps address gaps in existing knowledge by exploring new areas or providing more in-depth insights into previously studied topics.

4.2. Secondary Research Method

Secondary Research Method is a method where the researcher uses information or data that other writers have written. The gathering of information in this method is easy because the data is obtained from other authors' data that was previously collected.

The secondary research method has many ways in which a researcher may use to obtain data

that is related to his or her study such as books, articles, newspapers, internet, and others. This research methodology will be helpful in supporting research questions. Secondary research method can be conducted more quickly than primary research method, making it useful for projects with time constraints. It allows researcher to access existing data and literature. In this article the researcher is going to use both primary and secondary research methodologies in order to reinforce his research. In this article the researchers used phonetics books written by different scholars.

5. The Analysis of Data

Data analysis can be defined as a process of scientifically applying statistical and/or logical techniques to describe and exemplify, shorten and recap, and evaluate data. According to Seaman (1991:42): "Data analysis is a comprehensive method that involves inspecting, cleansing, transforming, and modelling data to discover useful information, make conclusions, and support decision-making. explains methods of collecting data as "Data collection instruments refer to devices used to collect data such as questionnaires, tests, structured interview, and checklist".

In this article, the researcher will collect data from the accurate and inaccurate words and statements made by various speakers of Tshivenda and Tshivenda Broadcasters.

The inaccurate use of coincidental suprasegmental features in various words and sentences distorts meaning in words and sentences that are written the same but with different meanings. The researcher is using primary and secondary research methods to collect data. In this article, the researcher uses words and sentences written the same but with different meanings and uses these determining signs in a correct manner and in a wrong manner to display how omission and inaccurate use of suprasegmental features distort meanings of words and sentences that are written alike but differ in their meanings.

6. Accuracy and inaccuracy use of coincidental suprasegmental signs

In this subsection high tone and low tone are going to be used simultaneously with long and short vowels in various pairs of similar words.

6.1. Word or syllable structure

6.1.1 Vhila: Still ambiguous

H H

a. Vhi:'la.' (look after)

H H

b. Vhi:'la.' (angry or annoyed)

c. Vhi:` la.` (ferment)

d. Vhi:` la.` (boil)

In these two cases the word "vhila" as used without tone signs in sentence 1.1. is ambiguous and is dangling without actual meaning. It may mean both look after or angry and or ferment or boil. After the installation of length and high tones in a and b, they are accurate and can be distinguished from c and d. The length and lower tones in c and d are also used correctly hence they are accurate and can be distinguished from a and b.

6.1.2. Thoho: Still ambiguous

L L

a. *Tho:'ho.` yawe i ya rema (His / her monkey is aching)

H H

b.* Tho:'ho.` yo fela dakani (The head died in the bush)

The shortage of tone signs and long or short signs makes this word ambiguous. Sentence 6.1.2.a and b with a star (*) show that they are grammatically correct but unacceptable. This occurs mainly when the speaker is not an indigenous speaker of the language when low tones and high tones are mixed henceforth the result in sentences (a) and b.

H H

c. Tho:'ho.` yawe i ya rema (His / her head is aching)

L L

d. Tho: 'ho.` yo fela dakani (Monkey died in the bush)

The use of both high and low tones properly in c and d, coupled with long and short vowels makes these two sentences accurate.

6.1.3. **Thanga:** Still ambiguous

H H

a. Tha: 'nga.' (roof)

L L

b. Tha: 'nga.` (reed)

The first word in 6.1.3, the meaning is still hanging waiting for the suprasegmentals to be applied. In (a) and (b) these two words with both relevant length and tones well applied makes it simple to have accurate meanings without battling.

6.1.4. **Thovho:** Still ambiguous

H H

a. Tho: 'vho.' (grass mat)

L L

b. Tho: 'vho.` (sandals)

In 6.1.4, the word is still ambiguous because it does not show any length and tones. The high and lower tones and length applied in sentence (a) and (b) are accurate hence the meanings are perfect.

6.1.5. **Tivha:** Still ambiguous

H H

a. Ti: 'vha.' (pool)

L L

b. Ti: 'vha.` (chop)

The word in 6.1.5 is still ambiguous because it does not show any length and tones. The high and lower tones and length applied in sentences (a) and (b) are accurate hence the meanings are perfect.

6.1.6. **Dana:** Still ambiguous

H H

a. Da: 'na.' (naughty child / derogatory meaning)

L L

b. Da: 'na.` (hundred)

The word **dana** in 6.1.6 has an ambiguous meaning because it lacks suprasegmental features that are supposed to determine the actual or intended meaning. This is displayed in a and b whence the actual meanings are determined. In item a, the meaning intended is derogatory which shows a naughty child but in b it refers to one hundred, as a number when one is counting.

6.1.7. **Gaga:** Still ambiguous

H H

a. Ga: 'ga.' (Not ripe)

L L

b. Ga: 'ga.` (Snuff)

The word **gaga** in 6.1.7 has an unclear meaning because it lacks suprasegmental features that are supposed to determine the actual or intended meaning. The intended meanings are found in items a and b, where each one of them has specific meanings. In item a, it has the meaning of not ripe or not ready to be eaten while in item b, the meaning intended is that of a snuff.

6.1.8. **Mbila:** Still ambiguous

a. Mbi: 'la.' (Rock hyrax)

b. Mbi: 'la.` (Zerophone)

6.2. Sentence structures

Every sentence needs suprasegmental features to avoid ambiguity hence the two sentences are written the same but have different meanings due to the accurate application of suprasegmental features. The same applies to sentences 6.2.1, 6.2.2, and 6.2.3.

6.2.1. **Ndi muthu:** Still ambiguous

H

a. Ndi' mu: 'thu'? (Am I a person?)

L L

b. Ndi' mu: 'thu.` (I am a person)

6.2.2. Ndi muthu n̄e: Still ambiguous

H H H H

a. Ndi' mu:'thu.' n:'ne.'? (When I am a person myself)

H H H H

b. Ndi' mu:'thu.' n:'ne.' (I am a person myself)

6.2.3. Ndi kha di vha muthu: Still ambiguous

H H H H H H H

a. Ndi' tshi' kha' di' vha' mu:'thu'. (When I was still a person)

The correct application of tone, short vowels, and long vowels makes this sentence (a) correct and accurate.

L L

b. Ndi' kha' di' vha' mu:'thu' (I am still a person)

The correct application of tone, short and long vowels makes this sentence (b) correct and accurate.

a. *Ndi' mu'li:'ndi.' wa yunivesithi. (I am the hole of the university)

Sentence (a) is grammatically correct but unacceptable since tone is not correctly applied hence the speaker portrayed himself or herself as a hole instead of a guard.

b. Ndi' mu'li:'ndi.' wa yunivesithi (I am the university guard)

The accuracy usage of suprasegmental features does not distort the actual meaning of syllables, segments, words, and or sentences.

L L L L

a. Ndi' mu'li:'ndi.' wa nowa (I am a snake guard)

In sentence a, tone and length are used accurately to mean that the person is guarding against the snakes.

H H H H

b. Ndi' mu'li:'ndi.' wa nowa (It is the snake hole)

AAAIn sentence b the researcher uses a high tone and long syllable, which is relevant and

accurate to depict the intended meaning. This, on their own demonstrate coincidental usage of both high tone and long syllable.

H H H H

c. *Ndi' mu'li:'ndi.' wa nowa (I am a hole of snake)

In sentence c, low tone is misused hence the sentence does not depict the intended meaning of saying "It is the hole of a snake". When such mistake is made it present a big confusion and not understandable and unacceptable sentence. This is what is always the case with the Tshivenda broadcasters hence this article is written to correct this mistake.

To start with is that the sentence is grammatically correct but not acceptable since no one can become a hole of snake. This is caused by misusing of high tones instead of lower tone whereby sentence c would mean "I am the guard of snake".

Conclusion

In the conclusion of this paper, one can say the usage of each suprasegmental feature without including other vital text features leads to the misuse and disregard of the meaning intended. It will be important for one to apply all vital text features that are necessary when writing words that are written alike but differ in meanings. In all tonal African languages, the application of tone must be taken care of, and if not the meanings intended will become ambiguous.

Recommendation

This paper recommends that suprasegmental features be employed in all Tshivenda texts to ensure the retention of the accurate meanings of words that are written the same but differ in their meanings. It is because when one essential feature is omitted the selected words lose the intended actual meanings.

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