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The *Journal of Cultural Heritage and Development* focuses on the nexus between culture, heritage and development. Its primary purpose is to publish original articles that relate to the safeguarding, preservation, promotion, and awareness of all forms of cultural heritage within a broad framework. It provides a platform for academics and other professionals interested in the fields of culture, heritage, and development who wish to contribute to this and related disciplines.

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Editorial

The Journal of Cultural Heritage and Development – Volume 1, Issue 2 Culture, Heritage, and Development: Reclaiming Roots, Shaping Futures — Indigenous Knowledge, Heritage, and Decolonial Praxis in Zimbabwe's Development Discourse

As we unveil this second issue of Volume 1 of the *Journal of Cultural Heritage and Development*, we are reminded that heritage is not static, nor is it a relic of the past that belongs to the dustbins of history and dark and dim memories. It is a living, often contested, but profoundly generative institution and pillar of humanity. The nine contributions that are featured in this issue collectively illuminate a central truth: sustainable development in postcolonial contexts like Zimbabwe cannot proceed without a profound reckoning with how knowledge is produced, whose knowledge counts, and how heritage is valued and safeguarded. These articles cut across diverse domains such as climate resilience, mental well-being, digital culture, education, linguistic identity, and archaeological governance. What features prominently is that these articles converge on a common and resonant theme: that Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKSs), cultural practices, and decolonial epistemologies are not vestiges of the past but are vital resources for navigating contemporary and future challenges.

From the Hwesa of Nyanga in Zimbabwe, whose time-tested agro-ecological and meteorological knowledge continues to bolster community resilience despite centuries of epistemic marginalisation (Article 1), to the Karanga's *nzveura*, a culturally embedded psychosocial ritual that embodies the Ubuntu principle "I am because we are" in times of grief (Article 2), we see the livingness of heritage functioning not as ornamentation but as intangible infrastructure for survival and meaning-making. These practices challenge dominant Western biomedical or technocratic paradigms, asserting instead the efficacy of communal, embodied, and spiritually attuned responses to crises.

At the same time, the articles in this issue do not romanticise tradition. There is critical engagement with tension: the masculinist logics structuring digital gaming spaces (Article 3) and the systemic gaps in Archaeological Impact Assessments that privilege development over dialogue with local custodians (Article 4). There are also competing claims on heritage sites in Masvingo that reveal divergent valuations that range from sacred memory to subsistence farming to mineral extraction (Article 5). These tensions underscore that heritage is always social, economic, political, and in the end, always negotiated.

Significantly, some of the contributions sound counsel about epistemic erosion and decay. The supremacy of English, as argued in Article 6, does more than displace Shona linguistically, it perpetuates and sustains culturecides through the corrosion of the philosophical bedrock of *Unhu/Ubuntu*, reshaping moral imagination and social relations. Similarly, Articles 7 and 9 compellingly advocate for the decolonisation of education, not as a symbolic gesture, but as an epistemic reorientation rooted in *Gade's* "narratives of return" and the *Sankofa* principle: learning from the past to forge contextually grounded, innovative, and self-determined futures.

Even toponymy, as demonstrated in the study of *Mulungushi* in Zambia (Article 8), emerges as a strategic site of history, memory and aspiration. It presents situations where naming becomes nation-building, where landscape inscribes ideology, and where the past is actively mobilised to inspire present-day economic and cultural regeneration.

This issue, thus, invites scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to take an odyssey beyond the false dichotomy of "tradition versus modernity" or "heritage versus development." Instead, we propose a third way: heritage-informed development, one that centres Indigenous agency, embraces epistemic pluralism, and recognises cultural continuity as a pillar of universal and plural sustainability.

In this issue we therefore entrench and sustain our vision and mission: the *Journal of Cultural Heritage and Development* remains committed to amplifying African voices, theories, and praxes. In doing so, we underwrite not only the local discourse, but also global conversations on justice, resilience, and what it means to build futures that are not only prosperous but deeply meaningful and beneficial to humanity and the broader environment.

Jacob Mapara & Josiline Chigwada

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Harnessing Indigenous Knowledge Systems for Climate Resilience: The Case of the Hwesa in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The beginning of the 21st Century has witnessed massive climate change, which in turn negatively affect the livelihoods of many agrarian communities. A century after the adoption of Western methods in weather-related paraphernalia, contemporary African societies have come to realise that indigenous knowledge systems play a critical role in climate adaptation and mitigation, particularly in disaster and risk management initiatives. It is upon this background that this paper investigates the role of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKSs) in enhancing climate resilience, for instance, among the Hwesa of Nyanga District in Manicaland Province, Zimbabwe. This study argues that despite centuries of colonial and postcolonial marginalisation of local epistemologies, Hwesa IKSs continue to play a vital role in climate adaptation and mitigation. It further argues that sole dependence of Western ideologies on climatic adaptation and mitigation is a misnomer, as IKSs has been filling that gap since time immemorial. This study is informed by the decolonial theory, which challenges the hegemony of Eurocentric knowledge by advocating for epistemic delinking, a process through which marginalised communities assert their right to produce knowledge on their own terms. Data were collected through qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis, with purposive and convenience sampling guiding participant selection. Findings reveal that Hwesa IKSs encompass indigenous farming practices, water management techniques, forest preservation, weather prediction, and communal resource sharing, all of which enhance resilience to climate change. The paper concludes that Hwesa IKSs, when recognised and integrated with Western scientific approaches, can contribute to sustainable and culturally grounded climate resilience strategies.

Keywords: Hwesa, Culture, Indigenous knowledge, Climate, Climate change, Resilience

Introduction

Climate change is increasingly recognised as one of the greatest existential threats of the twenty-first century, with its impacts being unevenly distributed across the globe. While industrialised nations possess the resources and technologies to buffer themselves against its harsh effects, rural communities in the Global South remain disproportionately vulnerable. Zimbabwe exemplifies this vulnerability, as its economy and food security are largely anchored in rain-fed agriculture that is highly sensitive to shifting climatic patterns (Moyo & Magadza, 2014). This reality has created a crisis of adaptation in rural areas, where extreme weather events, prolonged droughts, and erratic rainfall have become recurrent. In this context, the (re)turn to Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) as viable pathways for climate resilience has gained prominence. Yet, in both policy and academic discourse, IKSs continue to be undervalued and overshadowed by an overreliance on

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Western scientific models that do not always speak to the lived realities of rural African communities.

The Hwesa of Nyanga District in Manicaland Province in Zimbabwe provide a compelling case through which the significance of IKS can be interrogated. Residing in areas around Ruwangwe, Nyamahumba, Chifambe, Kazozo, Fombe, Mukunza, Kadzere, and Katerere, among other places, the Hwesa have historically depended on finely tuned ecological practices for survival, which has since ancient times, acted like a buffer zone towards weather-induced disasters (Chirimaunga, 2025). Their strategies encompass food production methods that maximise crop diversity, water harvesting techniques adapted to semi-arid conditions, soil conservation practices that preserve fertility and moisture, and weather forecasting informed by natural indicators. However, these practices are increasingly endangered by the combined effects of climate change and cultural erosion, driven by modernisation, urban migration, and the continued privileging of Western scientific paradigms. It is in this space of tension that questions arise regarding the sustainability of Hwesa IKSs, their adaptability to contemporary climatic shifts, and their recognition within national and global climate governance frameworks.

Grounded in decolonial theory, the study seeks to expose the epistemic hierarchies that consistently subordinate indigenous systems of knowing to Western scientific authority. Decoloniality allows us to recognise that Hwesa IKSs are not static, nor are they a vestige of the past; rather, they are a dynamic and evolving system that continues to generate effective adaptation strategies rooted in local contexts. This study positions Hwesa IKSs as an indispensable component of climate resilience, one that challenges the epistemic monopoly of Western science and affirms the value of pluriversality in knowledge production. Amplifying the voices of the Hwesa makes this study stress the urgency of reclaiming indigenous epistemologies as part of broader struggles for knowledge sovereignty, ecological justice, and the reconfiguration of climate governance in Zimbabwe and beyond.

Historical Background

The marginalisation of IKSs in Zimbabwe must be understood within the broader context of colonial domination and its systematic devaluation of African epistemologies. Colonial administrators and missionaries routinely dismissed indigenous knowledge as superstition or irrational belief, while positioning Western science as the only credible form of knowledge (Mawere, 2010). This epistemic violence was not confined to discourse but was reinforced through education, governance, and land management systems that undermined traditional authority and eroded confidence in local ways of knowing. In Manicaland Province, where the Hwesa people have long inhabited their ancestral lands, colonial rule imposed new agricultural and administrative models that disregarded indigenous ecological wisdom. Such interventions disrupted established systems of

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farming, water management, and forest stewardship that had for generations sustained both livelihoods and environmental balance. I argue that these colonial practices constituted a deliberate strategy of epistemic domination, an attempt to delegitimise land-based knowledge and replace it with externally defined scientific paradigms.

Despite the disruptions by the colonial rule, the Hwesa people retained crucial elements of their indigenous knowledge, particularly in agriculture and resource management. Practices such as rain-requesting ceremonies, rotational farming, sacred forest preservation, and reliance on natural indicators for weather prediction remained integral to community life. These systems persisted as subtle forms of resistance against the colonial imposition of Western knowledge systems. Yet, the establishment of mission schools and colonial curricula further entrenched Western epistemologies by elevating them as modern, scientific, and progressive, while framing indigenous ways of knowing as backward (wa Thiong'o, 1986). As a result, a generational gap emerged, whereby younger generations were socialised into distrusting or neglecting the very practices that had historically sustained their communities. In my view, this was a deliberate Western project of cultural alienation, intended to portray indigenous cultures and knowledge systems as primitive, uncivilised, and irrational, thereby legitimising Western science and religion as superior and fostering dependency on Western expertise.

As noted by Mawere (2010), the post-independence period in Zimbabwe opened possibilities for reclaiming indigenous practices through various cultural renaissance programmes, but these efforts were often piecemeal and rhetorical rather than transformative. National policy frameworks have continued to operate within global climate governance regimes, particularly those informed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), where Western scientific expertise remains dominant (Chikozho, 2010). This reflects the enduring coloniality of knowledge, where African epistemologies are acknowledged symbolically but rarely integrated into actionable policy frameworks. For the Hwesa, this has meant that while their knowledge systems are celebrated as part of cultural heritage, they remain excluded from formal climate resilience planning. I contend that this contradiction exposes the limits of post-independence reforms, which often reproduce colonial hierarchies of knowledge under the guise of modernisation and international alignment.

Crucially, the resilience of Hwesa IKSs in the face of these historical disruptions demonstrates their adaptability and continued relevance. Practices such as water harvesting, sacred forest protection, and soil conservation techniques are still actively deployed in Hwesaland. However, these practices operate largely at the margins of state recognition, surviving more through community agency than institutional support. The neglect of such systems is not only a loss of cultural identity but also a missed opportunity for building climate resilience that is locally grounded and sustainable. I argue that

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situating Hwesa IKSs within historical trajectories of dispossession, survival, and adaptation is essential for understanding both their current marginalisation and future potential. Without acknowledging this historical context, attempts to integrate IKSs into climate governance risk becoming superficial, tokenistic, and complicit in perpetuating epistemic injustice.

Theoretical Framework: Decolonial Theory

This study is grounded in the Decolonial theory. Decolonial theory provides a critical framework for interrogating the marginalisation of IKSs in Zimbabwe and, more specifically, in Hwesa communities of Nyanga District. Central to decolonial thought is the concept of coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000), which argues that even after formal decolonisation, colonial patterns of domination continue to shape knowledge production, cultural hierarchies, and social organisation. Western science has historically been constructed as universal and objective, while indigenous epistemologies were relegated to the realm of superstition or cultural heritage. This epistemic hierarchy has ensured that communities such as the Hwesa are systematically excluded from climate governance frameworks, despite the demonstrable resilience embedded in their practices. I contend that decolonial theory is indispensable in unpacking these power dynamics because it refuses to treat the subordination of indigenous knowledge as accidental or temporary, but rather as an entrenched structural reality requiring deliberate dismantling.

The decolonial turn in scholarship challenges the hegemony of Eurocentric knowledge by advocating for epistemic delinking (Mignolo, 2011), a process through which marginalised communities assert their right to produce knowledge on their own terms. For the Hwesa, this implies reclaiming their ecological wisdom not as a supplement to Western science but as a legitimate and autonomous body of knowledge. The idea of pluriversality, central to decoloniality, insists on the coexistence of multiple knowledge systems rather than the dominance of a single epistemology. In my view, this principle is particularly important in climate resilience discourse, where universalist approaches often fail to account for local variations in environment, culture, and history. When we situate Hwesa IKSs within a pluriversal frame, I argue that we move from tokenistic recognition to genuine integration that values indigenous practices as co-equal in shaping adaptation strategies.

A further contribution of decolonial theory is its focus on the coloniality of being (Maldonado-Torres, 2007), which highlights how colonial legacies affect not only systems of knowledge but also the dignity, identity, and agency of formerly colonised peoples. The marginalisation of Hwesa IKSs is not just an epistemic issue; it is also ontological, shaping how the Hwesa view themselves and their relationship to the environment. When their knowledge is consistently delegitimised by state and international actors, the community risks internalising the view that their practices are inferior. I argue that reclaiming Hwesa IKSs within decolonial thought is therefore both an intellectual and an existential project,

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aimed at restoring the community's agency and self-worth. Climate resilience cannot be achieved without addressing these deeper dimensions of colonial injury.

Building on this, scholars such as Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) have argued that decoloniality must be understood as a continuous struggle rather than a completed project. In the Hwesa context, this struggle entails resisting the continued dominance of Western scientific frameworks in national climate policies and advocating for the meaningful inclusion of IKSs. Decoloniality pushes us beyond mere acknowledgement of indigenous knowledge towards a radical rethinking of what counts as knowledge in the first place. My position is that unless we embrace decoloniality in both theory and practice, climate governance in Zimbabwe will remain complicit in perpetuating epistemic injustice. Hwesa IKSs should not be mobilised as symbolic add-ons but as substantive contributions capable of reshaping resilience strategies in ways that are contextually grounded, culturally sensitive, and environmentally sustainable.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design to investigate the role of IKSs in enhancing climate resilience among the Hwesa of Nyanga District, Manicaland Province in Zimbabwe. A qualitative approach was most appropriate because it prioritises depth over breadth, allowing for the exploration of lived experiences, practices, and beliefs that cannot be reduced to mere statistics (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The emphasis was on capturing the voices of community members who are custodians of ecological wisdom and whose practices continue to inform climate adaptation strategies. I contend that a quantitative-only approach would have risked abstracting away the finer details of Hwesa knowledge, thereby reproducing the very epistemic silencing that this research seeks to challenge. To strengthen the study, document analysis was also incorporated, enabling triangulation with primary data and enhancing validity.

Data were collected using three primary tools: semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted with thirty participants, including elders, traditional leaders, farmers, and women custodians of agricultural practices. These individuals were purposively selected because of their experiential knowledge of the Hwesa's ecological systems and their roles in sustaining indigenous practices (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Focus group discussions were held in Ruwangwe, Kadzere and Kazozo where community members collectively reflected on climate-related challenges and strategies. FGDs provided a dynamic platform for uncovering community consensus and intergenerational perspectives that may not emerge in individual interviews. Document analysis focused on government climate policy papers, NGO reports, and ethnographic records on Hwesa cultural practices, which were examined to assess the extent of recognition and integration of IKSs in formal climate

governance. This multi-pronged approach allowed the study to balance community perspectives with institutional narratives, thereby producing a more holistic account.

Sampling combined purposive and convenience strategies. Purposive sampling was used to deliberately select participants with specialised knowledge of Hwesa IKSs, while convenience sampling allowed access to broader community members who were available and willing to participate during field visits. This combination ensured diversity in representation while addressing practical challenges of accessibility in rural contexts. While critics may argue that non-probability sampling limits generalisability, I maintain that the objective of this study is not statistical generalisation but analytical depth and transferability of insights to similar contexts (Bryman, 2016). A sample size of fifty-five participants with thirty interviews and three FGDs (of 8-10 discussants) was considered adequate given the qualitative orientation, as data saturation was reached when no new themes were emerging.

Data analysis was conducted thematically, guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework of farmiliarisation, coding, identifying themes, defining and naming themes, reviewing themes, and synthesising patterns across the dataset. To ensure clarity and consistency in the analysis, interview participants were coded sequentially as INT1 through INT30, while focus group discussions were coded as FGD1 through FGD3. This coding system enabled the systematic organisation of responses and facilitated the identification of convergences and divergences in perspectives. Through this process, several themes emerged, notably indigenous weather forecasting, water harvesting and conservation, soil management and agricultural practices, sacred rituals and spiritual dimensions of resilience, and communal cooperation in decision-making processes. Through the use of this rigorous thematic approach, the study captured the depth of Hwesa IKSs while preserving participant anonymity and highlighting how climate resilience is locally understood and practised.

Ethical considerations were central to the research design. Participants were briefed about the purpose of the study and gave informed consent before interviews and FGDs commenced. Anonymity was guaranteed by using pseudonyms, and data were handled with confidentiality to respect participants' dignity and cultural sensitivities. Given the historical marginalisation of indigenous communities in research, particular care was taken to avoid extractive tendencies. Instead, the study sought to create a dialogic space where participants' knowledge was valued as legitimate and authoritative. This ethical stance is consistent with decolonial commitments to restoring agency to historically marginalised communities (Smith, 2012).

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Findings and discussion

The findings of this study reveal that the Hwesa of Nyanga District possess a rich repertoire of IKSs that directly contribute to climate resilience. Through interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis, it became discovered that Hwesa ecological knowledge is deeply embedded in local practices of weather forecasting, soil conservation, water management, and ritual observances. These practices are not static remnants of the past but living, adaptive strategies that continue to sustain communities in the face of climatic variability. The discussion that follows integrates empirical insights with the decolonial theory to illustrate how Hwesa knowledge both challenges the epistemic dominance of Western science and provides viable alternatives for climate adaptation. This section highlights the resilience, adaptability, and continued relevance of IKSs by examining thematic areas such as weather forecasting, water harvesting, soil management, and communal cooperation, while also interrogating the challenges of cultural erosion and policy neglect.

Indigenous Weather Forecasting and Environmental Indicators

The findings from interviews and FGDs show that the Hwesa possess a highly sophisticated system of weather forecasting that directly contributes to climate resilience. Through ecological observation, they are able to predict rainfall patterns, prepare their agricultural activities, and protect livelihoods against climate variability. For INT2, INT16, and INT24, vegetation is central in this system, as the abundance or scarcity of certain fruits and the flowering of trees act as reliable indicators of rainfall for the forthcoming season. For instance, plentiful yields of *nchenje* (Diospyros mespiliformis) and *mbumbu* (Lannea edulis) signify a favourable rainy season, whereas the abundance of *nheme* (Strychnos spinosa) is associated with drought or heatwaves locally termed *mhare*. Similarly, INT5, INT1, and INT15 said the flowering of *mikuhu* (Senegalia caffra), *mitondo* (Cordyla africana) *mikuyu* (Ficus gnaphalocarpa), and *minyenza* (Dalbergiaella nyasae), also known by the common name *Mane-pod*) trees or the sprouting of new leaves '*mpfumvudza*' signal a coming rainy season. Such detailed knowledge allows communities to plan crop cycles, allocate labour, and manage food reserves in advance. I argue that these observations demonstrate that the Hwesa do not merely endure climatic shocks but actively build resilience by embedding environmental indications into their adaptive strategies. This challenges Western meteorological models, which rely narrowly on instruments, often overlooking the embodied ecological intelligence that sustains communities at the margins.

FGD1, FGD2, and FGD3 all confirmed that animal, bird, and insect behaviour also provide crucial meteorological signals that strengthen community resilience. FGD3 highlighted that the arrival of migratory birds such as *khoche* (Limosa lapponica), guided by moisture-laden winds, announces imminent rains, a fact captured in the proverb *Urendo*

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hwaKhoche kutowera kuri kuyenda mhepo (The migration of the Khoche bird is seen by following the wind). The calls of frogs '*mitawa'* and the *nyamaroro* bird, as well as the presence of swallows and the *tsuramurowe* (stork), are equally seen as rain signals. For FGD1, insects such as the *nyenze* 'Christmas beetle', *mapfurepfure* 'large white butterflies', flying termites '*huruhumbi'*, and *zvimusawakuru* (spiders) are closely monitored to anticipate the timing and intensity of rains. It also emerged from INT23, INT6, INT7, and INT11 that the *songosongo* (Sunbird) not only signals the onset of the rainy season but also indicates the direction of incoming rain. The bird instinctively builds its nest with the entrance facing away from the prevailing wind and rain direction. This orientation prevents rainwater from entering the nest and thus serves as a reliable natural indicator of rainfall direction. Embedding such observations in proverbs, taboos, and storytelling enables the Hwesa to institutionalise the intergenerational transfer of climate knowledge, ensuring its continuity despite external disruptions. These practices reveal that Hwesa weather forecasting is both ecological and social, binding together environmental observation with cultural reproduction. I contend that this holistic practice embodies resilience more fully than fragmented Western science, which often isolates meteorology from social and cultural systems.

Cosmological readings further expand Hwesa resilience strategies by linking celestial and atmospheric phenomena to weather outcomes. INT18 and INT4 revealed that a halo around the moon (*thawara ramadzi*) is interpreted as a sign of heavy rains, while the transition between the birth and death of the moon is always associated with cleansing rains. According to INT26, INT19, INT27, as well as FGD3, a dark circle around the sun indicates destructive storms, while hazy skies *(umi)* warn of extreme heat requiring behavioural adjustments such as hydration or reduced exposure to the sun and heat. Moreover, FGD1 and FGD2 said that wind direction is equally significant: easterly winds (*Nyakatubu)* are considered an assurance of rainfall, while violent gusts are interpreted as suppressing precipitation. Grey storm 'cumulonimbus' clouds alert communities to imminent flooding, prompting protective measures such as driving livestock home. These observations reveal that Hwesa cosmology is not superstition, as colonial discourse often suggested (Mawere, 2010), but a dynamic epistemology grounded in centuries of empirical engagement with the environment. I argue that the exclusion of such systems from formal climate governance is a form of epistemic injustice that deprives Zimbabwe of effective resilience strategies. Incorporating Hwesa ecological forecasting into national frameworks would enrich climate adaptation by aligning modern meteorology with context-specific, time-tested knowledge systems.

Water Harvesting and Conservation Practices

This study has unearthed that water management has always been at the core of Hwesa resilience to climate variability. INT5, and INT12, as well as FGD1, FGD2, and FGD3, noted that traditional water sources such as *kaduduwa* or *mbiruwiru* (springs), *turudzi* (rivers and streams), *michera* (wells), *zvithabwira* (pools), makhuwi and *mathawara* (dams) have been maintained for generations as reliable supplies during dry spells. The Hwesa also rely on natural *makhuwi* (rock depressions) locally found on dwalas, known scientifically as gnammas, as in Manda Mountain, which serve as temporary reservoirs for harvesting and storing rainwater during wet seasons. These sources are not merely physical infrastructure but are embedded within a wider cultural framework of conservation and respect. For instance, taboos prevent the disturbance of *kamba* (tortoises) or *mitawa* (frogs) that use water sources as their habitat, as these creatures are considered guardians of the water and symbols of its permanence and cleanliness since there is life in it. I argue that these taboos are more than ritualistic beliefs; they are conservation mechanisms that safeguard fragile water ecosystems. Through the regulation of behaviour around water bodies, the Hwesa ensure that these resources remain viable for longer periods, particularly during recurrent droughts.

In addition to preserving natural water bodies, the Hwesa have historically employed indigenous methods of water storage and extraction. FGD1 and FGD3 highlighted that water is sometimes extracted from bulbous plants such as *matsongwa*, which provide supplementary sources during critical shortages. Similarly, the community recognises the importance of trees along riverbanks, forbidding their cutting because they help store groundwater and prevent erosion. Such practices reveal a sophisticated understanding of hydrology that Western models often overlook. The Hwesa also identify sacred water sources, known as *mathawara yanayera*, which are believed to be spiritually protected and therefore never run dry, as long as residents observe the dos and don'ts surrounding them. For example, sacred springs in Nyaman'ombe Mountain are considered a water source for *mhondoro* (spirit mediums), and their perpetual flow is tied to both ecological balance and spiritual observance. In my analysis, these practices illustrate how water conservation is embedded in spirituality, ecology, and social regulation, thereby ensuring resilience in an environment of uncertainty.

INT2, INT7, and FGD3 said the community also reinforces water availability through rituals such as *dendemaro*, a rain and water-invoking ceremony that seeks to replenish dwindling water sources. Evidence from fieldwork indicates that attempts to enclose or privatise fountains, as occurred in Mangezi area in 2012 led to their drying up, which locals interpret as punishment for violating IKSs principles. This demonstrates not only the fragility of these ecosystems but also the enduring authority of indigenous regulatory frameworks. To strengthen resilience, FGD1, FGD2, and FGD3, as well as all

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interviewees, revealed that the Hwesa also complement their water harvesting with short-season, drought-resistant crops such as *mhunga* 'pearl millet', *nyemba* (cowpeas), *nyimo* (roundnuts), and sorghum varieties such as *mashiya* (short white sorghum) and *chibuku* (short red sorghum). These crops require less water and mature quickly, making them a crucial adaptation strategy in seasons of erratic rainfall. When they combine ecological conservation with crop diversification, the Hwesa create a multi-layered resilience system that sustains food security even under extreme climatic stress.

Despite these adaptive strategies, the reliance on IKSs also exposes the neglect of rural water infrastructure by the state. The absence of functional boreholes, irrigation schemes, and modern dams in Hwesa areas means that communities remain heavily dependent on traditional systems. While these systems have proved resilient over generations, they are not infallible, especially under intensifying climate change. I contend that Hwesa practices should not be romanticised as timeless solutions but recognised as context-specific strategies that require support, and integration into broader climate governance frameworks. No form of validation is more compelling than knowledge sustained through intergenerational transmission and millennia of successful application. Ignoring them perpetuates epistemic injustice, while romanticising them risks overburdening local communities with the sole responsibility of resilience. Therefore, water harvesting in Hwesaland should be understood as both a testimony to indigenous ingenuity and a reminder of structural neglect by the state.

Soil Management and Agricultural Practices

The Hwesa community has cultivated agricultural strategies that are deeply intertwined with climate resilience, particularly in their management of soils. INT25 and INT29 said practices such as rotational farming, mixed cropping, and the use of organic fertilisers such as leaf organic manure (*murakwani*) and ash *(madotha)* are deliberately designed to sustain soil fertility and maintain food production in periods of climatic stress. INT2 and INT7 also said that through rotating crops, especially cereals with legumes, the Hwesa restore soil nutrients while minimising pest infestations and crop failure risks. Mixed-cropping ensures that if one crop fails due to erratic rainfall, another may survive, providing a safety net against food insecurity. FGD1 and FGD2 revealed that the application of organic fertilisers further strengthens soil health by improving water retention capacity, an essential factor during prolonged dry spells. The Hwesa consider that the use of chemical fertilisers, as making the soil 'sour' and not good for the crops. I argue that these practices represent proactive resilience-building measures, ensuring that Hwesa households are not entirely destabilised by the unpredictable rainfall patterns associated with climate change.

Equally significant is the Hwesa practice of terracing, particularly on Ruwangwe hilly terrain, where erosion is a constant threat. Through the construction of ridges, stone

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bunds, and other barriers, farmers slow down water runoff, reduce the risk of flooding, and preserve valuable topsoil. These measures make agricultural fields more resistant to heavy downpours, which are becoming increasingly frequent due to climate variability. Terracing also conserves soil moisture, making it possible to sustain crops during intermittent dry spells. I maintain that such practices reflect a sophisticated understanding of land management that directly enhances community resilience. They ensure continuity of farming activities even in seasons marked by climatic extremes, effectively acting as a buffer against environmental shocks that would otherwise devastate rural livelihoods.

According to INT13, INT18, INT21, and INT25 the incorporation of *pfumvudza*, locally known as *kugagadira*, further demonstrates the Hwesa people's capacity to adapt traditional knowledge to contemporary climatic challenges. This technique involves planting crops in small basins that conserve water and concentrate fertility, thereby maximising yields on limited land and under conditions of unreliable rainfall. While *pfumvudza/Intwasa* is often promoted nationally as a state-driven programme, among the Hwesa it is understood as part of a long tradition of water-conservation farming that has always been rooted in local practice. Adopting and refining *kugagadira* makes the Hwesa farmers actively build resilience against drought and food shortages, ensuring that even during seasons of low rainfall, some harvests can be secured. I contend that this practice illustrates how indigenous systems are not relics of the past but evolving adaptive mechanisms that directly respond to climate stressors.

Taken together, Hwesa soil management and agricultural practices reveal a holistic model of resilience. Through maintaining soil fertility, preventing erosion, and conserving water through locally grounded techniques, the community reduces its vulnerability to both drought and flooding. These strategies, as Mugambiwa (2018) notes, provide empirical evidence against the colonial stereotype that African agriculture is unscientific, showing instead that Hwesa practices embody ecological sustainability and adaptive intelligence. In the context of decolonial theory, recognising these methods is not only an act of validating indigenous knowledge but also an essential step in integrating plural systems of resilience into national and global climate policy. I argue that failure to acknowledge such contributions perpetuates epistemic injustice and risks undermining the very resilience that communities like Hwesa have carefully nurtured over generations.

Sacred Sites, Rituals, and Spiritual Dimensions of Resilience

Among the Hwesa, resilience to climate variability is not only anchored in agricultural and technical practices but also in the spiritual domain. As revealed in FGD1, FGD2, and FGD3, rainmaking ceremonies such as *kubzva mafuwe* (petitioning for rainfall) and *kujara nkhurumbi* (closing ill winds that block rainfall) remain central to ecological governance. These ceremonies, led by *mhondoro* (territorial spirit mediums), are not merely symbolic acts but interventions designed to restore harmony between people, land, and climate.

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They reaffirm the belief that environmental well-being is inseparable from social and spiritual order. As Bourdillon (1993) and Chavunduka (1994) have argued in the Zimbabwean context, spirit mediums serve as custodians of ecological morality by regulating relationships between humans and the environment. I argue that by integrating ecological concerns into spiritual rituals, the Hwesa create a holistic framework for climate resilience that links meteorological processes with community responsibility and collective morality. This holistic approach challenges Western secular frameworks that divorce climate science from cultural and spiritual dimensions (Mawere, 2010).

The preservation of sacred sites, such as forests, rivers, wells, ponds, and springs, also plays a significant role in sustaining resilience. INT8, INR14, and INT20 said taboos against cutting certain trees or desecrating sacred groves that effectively conserve biodiversity and water sources, ensuring ecological balance in times of scarcity. These sites are not only centres of worship but also critical ecological reserves that provide refuge for flora and fauna and preserve groundwater systems. Scholars such as Mapara (2009) and Sheridan and Nyamweru (2008) have demonstrated that sacred groves across Africa act as indigenous conservation zones where biodiversity is safeguarded through cultural prohibitions. For example, sacred forests serve as natural windbreaks and rain catchments, while sacred wells maintain water access during prolonged droughts. From a climate resilience perspective, these practices function as indigenous conservation strategies that safeguard ecological buffers. My argument here is that Hwesa taboos and spiritual practices are not superstitions, as colonial discourses once labelled them, but adaptive institutions that embed environmental protection within cultural norms (Gelfand, 1977; Mawere, 2010).

INT2, INT5, and INT13 believe that the observance of *chisi* (sacred day) and *mhinda* (phases of the new and old moon) further illustrates how spirituality regulates ecological rhythms. On *chisi*, no farming is carried out, allowing the land to rest, while *mhinda* ceremonies mark the cyclical transition of seasons that are believed to bring rainfall. Failure to respect these observances is thought to repel rain and other consequences such as pests and diseases for crops, while adherence invites ecological harmony. Similarly, the ritual of *kubzva janjahwe* (land cleansing) addresses both rainfall provision and the replenishment of groundwater. These practices echo Ranger's (1985) observations on the ritualisation of land use in Zimbabwe, where spirituality and ecology are intertwined to maintain balance. They ensure that agricultural and climatic activities are synchronised with spiritual cycles, thereby reducing uncertainty and enhancing resilience to drought and unpredictable rains. I contend that this integration of spirituality and ecology demonstrates that Hwesa knowledge is dynamic and purposeful in sustaining environmental stability (Hallen, 2009).

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Taken together, sacred sites and rituals represent more than religious practices; they are indigenous systems of climate governance. By linking community ethics with ecological conservation, the Hwesa embed climate adaptation within everyday life. These practices illustrate that resilience is not merely about technical interventions but also about sustaining relationships with the environment through spirituality. In my view, ignoring these dimensions in national and global climate frameworks constitutes a serious epistemic oversight. Decolonial theorists such as Santos (2014) and Mignolo (2011) remind us that pluriversality entails recognising spiritual epistemologies as legitimate forms of knowledge. For the Hwesa, sacred sites and rituals are not relics of the past but enduring institutions that safeguard ecological balance and strengthen community capacity to withstand climate variability.

Communal Cooperation and Collective Resilience

In Hwesa society, climate resilience is not only a matter of ecological practices but also of social organisation and collective action. Systems of communal labour-sharing, particularly *nhimbe*, embody this ethos. Respondent INT6, INT11, INT16 said under *nhimbe*, households pool labour to accomplish major agricultural tasks such as land preparation, planting, or harvesting. This ensures that vulnerable households, such as those headed by the elderly or widows, are not excluded from food production. Scholars such as Mawere (2010) argues that communal labour systems remain a cornerstone of African rural survival strategies because they enhance social capital while addressing resource scarcity. FGD1 also highlighted that by spreading the burden of labour, the Hwesa build resilience against climatic shocks, since timely planting and harvesting are critical in seasons of erratic rainfall. I argue that *nhimbe* represents an adaptive social safety net that cushions households against the worst effects of climate variability while simultaneously fostering solidarity and reciprocity within the community.

FGD2 and FGD3 observed that equally important is the practice of collective grain storage through *zunde ramambo* (the chief's granary). In this system, community members cultivate a field together and store the harvest under the custodianship of the chief. The grain is then distributed in times of drought, food shortages, or to vulnerable members of society. From a climate resilience perspective, *zunde ramambo* is a form of communal insurance against famine. As Chitongo (2019) observes, the practice embodies traditional mechanisms of disaster risk reduction that are far older and often more effective than externally imposed interventions. It ensures that food security is not left to individual households alone but is managed at a collective level, thus creating buffers against climate-induced crop failures. I maintain that this practice challenges the neoliberal tendency to individualise resilience (Davies, 2016) and instead demonstrates the strength of communal responsibility in sustaining livelihoods under environmental stress.

Intergenerational knowledge transmission further strengthens Hwesa resilience strategies. INT18, INT23, INT29, and FGD3 said elders play a pivotal role in teaching younger generations about weather patterns, soil conservation, rituals, and ecological taboos that safeguard the community. As Odora-Hoppers (2002) reminds us, the survival of Indigenous Knowledge Systems depends on such oral pedagogies, which resist epistemic erasure by passing ecological wisdom across generations. This process of knowledge transfer ensures continuity of adaptive practices and prevents the erosion of strategies critical for surviving climate shocks. I contend that this transmission of knowledge is itself a resilience mechanism, because it keeps the community equipped with a repertoire of adaptive strategies. Without such transmission, indigenous knowledge risks extinction under the pressures of globalisation and modernity (Battiste, 2013), leaving younger generations more vulnerable to climate disruptions.

Taken together, *nhimbe*, *zunde ramambo*, and intergenerational pedagogy highlight that Hwesa resilience is both ecological and social. These practices illustrate that adaptation to climate change is not only about conserving soils or predicting rainfall but also about building social cohesion and collective capacity. Scholars such as Manyena (2006) argue that resilience cannot be reduced to material resources but must also include cultural and social processes that sustain communities through crisis. I argue that in overlooking such social dimensions, mainstream climate adaptation policies often miss a critical resource that rural communities like the Hwesa continue to rely upon. By embedding resilience in social structures, the Hwesa demonstrate that survival under climate stress is best achieved through collective action, not isolated individual efforts.

Challenges to Hwesa IKSs

Although Hwesa IKSs continue to play a critical role in strengthening climate resilience, they face numerous challenges that threaten their vitality and sustainability. One of the most prominent threats is cultural erosion brought about by modernisation and missionary influence. Missionary teachings, which historically branded Hwesa rituals such as rain-requesting, sacred site observances, and taboos as "pagan" or "superstitious," undermined the legitimacy of these practices in the public sphere. As Mazrui (1986) notes, colonial and missionary ideologies framed African cosmologies as irrational, thereby accelerating the erosion of indigenous epistemologies. Consequently, many young people today associate IKS with backwardness, preferring Western models of knowledge that are portrayed as more "scientific" and "modern." This intergenerational disinterest poses a significant risk to the continuity of IKS, since the oral transmission of knowledge from elders to youth is being disrupted. Without deliberate safeguarding, much of this ecological wisdom risks disappearing within a generation, thereby potentially weakening the community's adaptive capacity to climate change.

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Another challenge is the impact of labour migration and urbanisation, which have fragmented Hwesa communities. Many economically active men and women migrate to towns and farms in search of employment, leaving behind the elderly and children who have limited capacity to maintain rituals, agricultural practices, and conservation rules. The erosion of communal cohesion means that cooperative systems such as *nhimbe* and *zunde ramambo* are increasingly difficult to sustain. As Manyena (2006) argues, resilience is not only ecological but also social, and when these social structures weaken, the adaptive strength of the entire community is undermined. This challenge is compounded by state and policy marginalisation, where national climate governance frameworks continue to privilege Western meteorological science while sidelining Indigenous knowledge (Chikozho, 2010). By failing to recognise Hwesa IKSs as legitimate bodies of climate knowledge, the state reinforces the coloniality of knowledge (Mignolo, 2011), perpetuating epistemic injustice (Santos, 2014) and diminishes the space for local agency in climate resilience strategies.

The tension between global climate policies and local realities reveals the urgency of safeguarding Hwesa IKSs. While global institutions emphasise technological solutions, the lived experiences of the Hwesa show that resilience must be grounded in cultural continuity, ecological stewardship, and collective solidarity. The danger lies in treating IKSs as expendable or secondary to Western scientific models, rather than recognising them as coequal systems of knowledge. Odora-Hoppers (2002) stresses that the integration of indigenous epistemologies into modern governance requires a philosophy of articulation rather than assimilation, where each system retains its integrity. I contend that climate resilience in Zimbabwe will remain fragile unless policy frameworks confront this epistemic imbalance and create platforms where Indigenous voices are not only heard but given authority in decision-making. Protecting Hwesa IKSs is therefore not simply about preserving culture but about ensuring the survival of effective, locally rooted strategies for confronting climate change.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that Hwesa Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) constitute a vital foundation for climate resilience in Zimbabwe. Anchored in agricultural practices, water harvesting, weather forecasting, sacred rituals, and communal solidarity, Hwesa knowledge illustrates a holistic approach to adaptation that is deeply embedded in local ecologies and cultural values. Yet, the continued marginalisation of these practices within state policies and global climate frameworks reveals the persistence of colonial epistemic hierarchies that privilege Western science while dismissing indigenous wisdom. By employing decolonial theory, this paper has argued for epistemic delinking and pluriversality, which allow multiple knowledge systems to coexist and complement one another. I contend that without deliberate recognition, protection, and promotion of

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Hwesa IKS, Zimbabwe's climate governance will remain incomplete and exclusionary. The way forward requires not only policy integration but also grassroots empowerment and scholarly advocacy to restore indigenous agency. In so doing, Hwesa IKS should be repositioned not as peripheral supplements to science but as central pillars of sustainable climate resilience.

Recommendations

To secure the sustainability and recognition of Hwesa IKSs, concerted action is required from key institutions including the Government of Zimbabwe, the Ministry of Environment, Climate and Wildlife, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, local traditional leadership, and higher education institutions. The following recommendations identify these actors and the roles they should play in strengthening climate resilience through Hwesa IKS.

- The Government of Zimbabwe, through the Ministry of Environment, Climate and Wildlife, should take the lead in integrating Hwesa IKS into national climate adaptation frameworks such as the National Climate Policy and the National Adaptation Plan. Hwesa ecological indicators and agricultural practices should be formally recognised as complementary to scientific models of resilience. The Meteorological Services Department should collaborate with Hwesa traditional experts to co-produce seasonal forecasts that combine indigenous and scientific methods. This would ensure that adaptation strategies are context-specific, inclusive, and grounded in lived experience rather than externally imposed models.

- The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, in partnership with local schools, community learning centres, and traditional leaders under Chief Katerere, should establish educational programmes for documenting and transmitting Hwesa ecological knowledge. Oral traditions, proverbs, and field-based practices should be integrated into environmental education curricula and community workshops. Such programmes would ensure that Hwesa youth inherit a repository of adaptive skills essential for future climate resilience. International partners such as UNESCO and UNDP could support this initiative through funding and capacity-building aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 13 on climate action.

- Universities and research institutions such as Midlands State University, the University of Zimbabwe, and Chinhoyi University of Technology should lead in developing hybrid knowledge systems that blend Hwesa indigenous weather forecasting with meteorological science. Researchers should work closely with local practitioners to validate traditional ecological indicators such as bird migration, tree flowering, and cosmological signs through participatory research.

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As Nyong, Adesina and Osman-Elasha (2007) suggest, integrating indigenous and scientific knowledge enhances trust and the practical applicability of climate adaptation interventions.

- Local government authorities, NGOs, and development agencies such as EMA (Environmental Management Agency), CARE International, and the Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund should support Hwesa communal resilience practices including *nhimbe* (labour-sharing) and *zunde ramambo* (chief's granary). These initiatives should receive technical and financial support as viable community-based adaptation strategies rather than cultural heritage projects. Funding could focus on strengthening communal grain banks, promoting drought-tolerant crops such as *mhunga* (pearl millet), *mashiya* (white sorghum), and *chibuku* (red sorghum), and facilitating access to water conservation technologies. Such interventions would enhance food security and strengthen household resilience during prolonged droughts.

- Finally, I recommend that academic and policy institutions prioritise indigenous climate research to counter epistemic erasure. Hwesa practices such as *kugagadira*, rain-requesting rituals, and the cultivation of short-season crops must be theorised not as primitive but as sophisticated resilience strategies. Universities should establish research programmes that document, validate, and disseminate these practices at national and international levels. This would not only affirm Hwesa IKSs as valid knowledge systems but also contribute to global discourses on pluriversality in climate governance (Santos, 2014). I contend that by repositioning Hwesa IKSs as coequal with Western science, Zimbabwe can move towards a climate adaptation model that is ecologically sustainable, socially inclusive, and epistemically just.

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Indigenous Practices, Bereavement and Stress Management: A Critical Review of Nzveura as a Socio-psychological Support among the Karanga Ethnic people

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Abstract

Death among most indigenous Africans is a reality that has adverse effects on mental health. Notably, indigenous ethnic groups, like the Karanga of Nyajena, have their ways of coping with such calamities. The article examines the role of nzveura in offering socio-psychological support to the bereaved family among the Jena sub-ethnic group. It is a qualitative study, grounded in the ubuntu theory. Six (6) interviews were done with elders who were purposively sampled from the Karanga people in Nyajena on the value of nzveura in stress management. This was complemented by observations of five (5) funerals done on the Karanga community. The study made several observations, chief among them being that the Karanga people are aware of the mental health challenges posed by the loss of a family member. As a result, they conduct a practice known as nzveura to manage stress among mourners and the bereaved family. They use nzveura as a mechanism to cope with anxiety, stress, and depression, and the possible negative impact on mental health. The study concludes that it is essential to embrace African models of stress management, such as nzveura. It recommends that indigenous practices, such as nzveura, which are part of the intangible cultural heritage of the Karanga, be safeguarded from possible extinction as they are anchored on empathy and the "I am because we are" principle in managing stress during bereavement.

Keywords: bereavement, *nzveura*, socio-psychological support, stress management, mental health

Background

Death brings significant socio-psychological challenges for family members and close relatives, as the loss of a loved one triggers a complex array of emotions, thoughts, and behaviours unlike any other life experience (Fulton & Metress, 1995). For this reason, psychological challenges associated with death and bereavement often include stress, shock, and panic for those who remain. In the aftermath of losing a loved one, individuals grieve, seek to understand the loss, and feel the need to reorganise their private worlds and meanings in entirely new ways (Richards, 2001). Consequently, many indigenous communities in Africa have developed bereavement practices that offer essential socio-psychological support during the mourning period. This is because death is a stressful rite of passage in human life that requires various methods for managing the resulting loss. Rituals are considered rites of passage (Littlewood, 1992), that provide "formal recognition of the transition

from one stage in the life cycle to another and the changed status that transition brings" (Fulton & Metress, 1995, p. 462).

Death is viewed as 'a tragic event but also a rite of passage' which can destabilise the family and community of which the deceased was a member (Selepe & Edwards, 2008). It is within this context that Africans utilise various ritual practices as a means of coping with the loss. Among the Chinese, for example, there is a condolence statement which relates to coping with death that says "save the tears and accept the change" (Chan et al., 2005, p. 924). In the same vein, Africans, particularly the Shona, believe that one should not shed tears because death is an ultimate reality and a rite of passage for everyone (Mbiti, 1969). The underlying idea is that people are capable of feeling the pain of the death of a family member, which can disturb the continuation of life. As a result, *nzveura* facilitates the healing process by ensuring that those remaining behind can cope with the loss (Makgahlela et al., 2019). African ritual practices offer ways of forgetting about the loss and concentrating on the legacy left by the deceased. This is because loss of the beloved one through death is assumed to be painful and traumatic (Bento, 1994). People who experience it try to find strategies to cope with its impact, while others may try to find ways to avoid its impact during bereavement.

Bereavement is defined as a state of having suffered a loss (Rando, 1985). It involves forceful and unwilling deprivation of someone we love, having something withheld unjustly and injuriously, and a stealing away of something valuable (Attig, 2001; Rando, 1985). Attig's and Rando's explanations imply that during bereavement, an individual suffers socially and psychologically due to the loss. The bereaved person experiences an unexpected loss that demands socio-psychological support. Such support can reflect physical and psychosocial support to those who are bereaved (Makgahlela et al., 2019). In other words, *nzveura* appears to be a Karanga means of stress management, which offers the support that is needed to those who are bereaved. Understanding such stress management practices depends on one's culture because different cultures have mechanisms of coping with stress that comes as a result of the death of a beloved one (Rosenblatt, 2001). As such, when Africans are mourning and bereaving, they utilise practices such as *nzveura* to cope with these situations (Muranda, 2018). This is considered heartbreaking and a threat to the psychological well-being of bereaved people, and coping with death implies a way of restoring the psychological well-being of the bereaved (Chan et al., 2005; Corr et al., 1997). As a result, Africans, specifically the Karanga of Nyajena, construct death in a manner that ensures that mourners are left in a good state of psychological well-being.

It should be noted that in Western cultures, they use tranquilisers, sleeping pills, or alcohol to escape grief during bereavement. Sanders (1992) avers that using drugs masks the pain and offers a temporary or anaesthetic relief. Traditional African

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communities, particularly the Karanga, have established methods for managing stress during periods of mourning. It is within this context that they utilise *nzveura*, which might offer true relief to these indigenous people. The Karanga ethnic group, in particular, employs *nzveura* to help mourners and close relatives navigate the effects of loss, including the trauma of losing a close relative or family member, which is integral to their bereavement rituals (Mwandayi, 2011; Muranda, 2018). However, many modern-day Karangas have abandoned these cultural practices due to Christianity and contemporary societal changes. Those who disregard traditional rituals often belong to churches or doctrines that strictly prohibit such practices (Rosenblatt & Nkosi, 2007). Resultantly, many Karanga individuals are increasingly vulnerable to various psychological challenges due to reliance on Western forms of socio-psychological support during times of loss, as they show deep sadness, numbness, and confusion, social withdrawal, loneliness, sleep disturbances, and anxiety. However, Western therapeutic strategies deal mainly with the affected individuals but not with how the relationship with a deceased person might influence their coping mechanisms (Radzilani, 2010). Consequently, *nzveura* is at risk of extinction despite its crucial role in alleviating stress during bereavement**.**

Research on Shona death and culture has been done by several scholars in the country, such as Aschwanden (1987), Banana (1991), Mwandayi (2011), and Shoko (2007), as well as earlier studies by Bourdillon (1976) and Gelfand (1963). However, research on bereavement and stress management from a socio-psychological perspective among the Karanga, who are a sub-ethnic group of the Shona, is scant. As such, there is a lack of information on *nzveura* as a bereavement and stress management practice, which could create more socio-psychological challenges. As a result, existing literature on bereavement and stress management predominantly focuses on other African cultures, often neglecting the Karanga (Radzilani, 2010; Rosenblatt & Nkosi, 2007) and promoting Western approaches to coping with death from a socio-psychological perspective (Chan et al., 2005; Corr et al., 1997; Lalande & Bonanno, 2006). This oversight may lead to the assumption that the Karanga construct the meanings of death, bereavement rituals, and stress coping mechanisms in the same manner as other African cultures.

The Karanga People

There are several ethnic groups in Zimbabwe, including the Kalanga, Nambya, Ndau, Ndebele, Shangani, Shona, Tonga and Venda, each with unique cultural identities. Among these, the Karanga people are primarily found in Masvingo and certain parts of the Midlands Province. They represent both an ethnic identity and a dialect within the Shona group of people, who as a whole account for approximately three-quarters of the country's population, with groups such as the Karanga in the south, Zezuru in the central regions, Korekore in the north, and Ndau and Manyika in the east (Chitakure, 2019). According to Shoko (2007), they make up about 30% of

the Shona population in Zimbabwe. This study focuses on the Karanga of the Nyajena communal area, a group that emerged from migrations and political alignments of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries (Ranger, 2004). Nyajena is located 75km southeast of Masvingo, covering approximately 136,000 acres, and borders Zaka to the east, Chiredzi to the south, Chivi to the west, and Mushawasha to the north (Chitakure, 2019). The inhabitants of Nyajena are mainly identified with the Moyo (cow heart) totem and possess a rich cultural heritage centred on ancestor intercession. They believe that death is a rite of passage that facilitates the transition to ancestorhood. Although the *nzveura* practice has diminished, it plays a significant role in coping with grief during the bereavement period. In recent years, *nzveura* has become part of an "ethnification" process which seeks to reclaim forgotten identities amidst social change and cultural instability (Schreiter, 1997). This study examines the role of *nzveura* in managing stress during bereavement among the Karanga of Nyajena. As part of the culture and religion of the Karanga people, *nzveura* is integral to their death rituals and overall religious life (Gittins, 2015).

The *Nzveura* "imitation" ritual practice

Nzveura is an imitation ritual that runs through the mourning period, continuing until the *kurova guva* ceremony concludes. Indeed, most post-burial rituals are marked by the performance of *nzveura*. The participants depend on the gender of the deceased. If a man has died, the *nzveura* is carried out by his wives (*vakadzi*), including the wives of his brothers (*vanamaiguru*) and the wives of his uncle (*vanambuya vakadzi vanasekuru hanzvadzi dzamai*). Conversely, if the deceased is a woman, the ritual is performed by her sisters-in-law (*varoora, vakadzi vehanvzadzi dzemufi*) and the wives of her maternal uncles (*vakadzi vanasarekuru kwakazvarwa mai vake*). According to Zivave (2021), daughters-in-law (*varoora*) have the liberty to dramatise anything peculiar to or outstanding about the deceased's way of life. However, among the Zezuru people, the *nzveura* is performed by an intimate friend (*sahwira*) of the deceased. After the body has lain in state, the daughters-in-law are responsible for performing a dry bath on the corpse. As the body is taken to the burial place, the daughters-in-law sweep the house where the body lay in state, and also sweep the yard.

During the *nzveura*, participants imitate the deceased's mannerisms, speech, and daily activities. Those imitating the deceased are permitted to wear the clothes of the departed, humorously mimicking her/him to ensure that the mourning period is interspersed with laughter and fond remembrance of the late's positive qualities. Thus, for Omoregie (2008), *nzveura* serves to lighten the sad and sombre atmosphere usually associated with death. Furthermore, during the *nzveura* practice, the imitators clear the path leading to the graveyard. These imitators are compensated by the sons, daughters, brothers, and sisters of the deceased when they perform this ritual. In the case of a deceased woman, the sons, brothers, sisters and wives of the brother of the departed provide the required payment. The money

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given to performers of *nzveura* is used to purchase essential goods for funeral assistance (Zivave, 2021). Omoregie (2008) believes that *nzveura* is a way of financially sustaining the ceremonies, since anybody approached by the daughters-in-law, "*varoora,*" has to pay a certain amount. They are then given the forequarter of a beast (*bandauko*) to cook and provide food for the bereaved family members.

Problem statement

Death is said to be now a frequent tragedy among the Karanga community as compared to the past, and it has resulted in several socio-psychological challenges. However, Western ways of dealing with stress management do not resonate with African moral philosophy in offering socio-psychological and economic support that is relevant to the Karanga cultural needs. The *unhu* moral principle that is embedded in *nzveura* is often neglected in preference to professional counselling offered using Western paradigms. This article thus also aims to explore the role of the *nzveura* in developing effective stress management skills which are culturally responsive.

Research question

The question is:

How does *nzveura* practice offer socio-psychological support during bereavement among the Karanga ethnic group?

Research objectives

In view of this question, the study was guided by the following objectives which were to:

1. Determine the effects of death among the Karanga people.
2. Identify the Karanga ways of coping with stress during bereavement.
3. Critique how *nzveura* provides socio-psychological support during bereavement.

Justification of the study

In light of the above research questions, the role of *nzveura* ritual in stress management during bereavement has emerged as a crucial topic within the broader fields of Religious Studies and mental health. This study contributes to the ongoing mental health discourses, focusing specifically on the Karanga ethnic group of Masvingo in Zimbabwe. The choice of the Karanga is particularly significant due to the limited ethnographic research conducted on the relationship between *nzveura* and stress management during bereavement within this ethnic group. By analysing this ritual practice in relation to stress management during bereavement, the research seeks to highlight the value of *nzveura* in contemporary socio-psychological

discourse during bereavement, ultimately contributing to culturally relevant methods of addressing stress and promoting mental health during and after bereavement.

Theoretical framework

Death prevalence in the Zimbabwean context is very high due to a collapsed health system and the proliferation of many diseases, some that are lifestyle linked. It is in this context that an emotional and psychological support mechanism for bereaved indigenous people need to embrace Afrocentred methods like *nzveura,* because there is a shortage of professional social workers in the country. This study is premised on the African *unhu/ubuntu* theoretical framework as a model for stress management that corresponds with the African culture. *Unhu/Ubuntu* needs to be embraced within the world's knowledge systems. *Unhu/Ubuntu* is an African moral philosophy applied in sub-Saharan Africa to deal with a lot of challenges. *Unhu/Ubuntu* also refers to a pattern of interconnectedness between people through a worldview or philosophy of oneness (Van Breda, 2014). Thus, *Unhu/Ubuntu* is the worldview of the Black Bantu (people) of Africa from which they derive relational, communal, societal, environmental, and spiritual knowledge, values, and practices (Mugumbate et al., 2023). It is summarised in the adage *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu / munhu munhu navanhu*, which means a person is somebody through others (Mugumbate et al, 2023). Hence, the African worldview is premised on the understanding that 'an individual exists only because others exist' (Mbiti, 1975). It is, thus, important to utilise this African philosophy during bereavement. It provides bereaved Africans with mechanisms that ease grief and pain even in the absence of professionally trained individuals using Western practices. This theory was developed as a way of having empathy and sympathy for others. The Karanga people need to treat each other during bereavement grounded in *unhu/ubuntu*. *Nzveura* creates oneness of humankind, leading to effective stress management.

Literature review

This section provides data on the psycho-social support needed during bereavement and explores African ways of stress management and the role of *nzveura* in alleviating pain and grief during the mourning period. It aims to assess the existing information and misinformation on indigenous ways of managing stress caused by bereavement while sifting through appropriate data related to the discussion**.** Literature confirms that when a loved one dies, bereaved survivors need psycho-social support from family, friends, professional psychologists, and even morticians (Beckera et al., 2022). However, some scholars advocate for the return to traditional funeral rituals as a means of supporting bereaved families (De Stefano et al., 2021; Beckera et al., 2022). This is because funeral rituals can offer positive psycho-social health and stability.

It is widely believed that during the first hours after a loved one passes, it leaves the survivors with deep impressions and memories (Beckera et al., 2022). The indigenous people resort to family and relatives for empathy. This is done through rituals, which help survivors to overcome these critical moments, lowering their risk of developing complicated grief (Cardoso et al., 2020). Bereaved families in indigenous society appreciate the role of family members and friends in alleviating stress through practices like *nzveura* during funeral attendance. *Nzveura* helps mourners to come to terms with the death of their loved ones. It reduces stress and anxiety during the time of loss. Imitating the deceased appears to lighten the stress among mourners. It contributes to the acceptance of death as a reality and a rite of passage for all. *Nzveura* reduces pain and stress among most mourners.

Most societies have rituals such as prayers and memorial services that serve as a public acknowledgement that a death has occurred (Cook & Oltjenbruns, 1989; Selepe & Edwards, 2008). Studies in Japan (Taniyama & Becker, 2014) and Hawai'i (Ando et al., 2015) have shown that rituals reduce grief for bereaved caregivers and families. Japanese chants to Amida (the Buddha who welcomes the departed to the next world) can be powerful salutary rituals, individually as well as collectively (Gillson, 2019). While the vast majority of the bereaved perform some sort of individual rituals, more than half also engage in collective rites; both are considered helpful to the bereaved (Mitima-Verloop et al., 2021). Conversely, the prohibition of mourning rituals like funeral ceremonies or cemetery visits may worsen the bereaved survivors' complicated or prolonged grief (De Stefano et al., 2021). Research also shows that bereaved individuals with tendencies to depression or complicated grief show more interest in using memorial websites or subsequent bereavement support services (Mowll et al., 2016). A major scoping review found that rituals allow expressions of grief to be controlled and packaged, and help participants to feel grounded and interconnected in their cultural traditions (Wojtkowiak et al., 2021).

The African worldview interprets death and stress associated with bereavement to emotional, psychological, and spiritual domains. Stress management is embodied in African culture, which is reflected in their religion and social life. Diverse cultures in Africa have different understandings of bereavement and stress management. According to Myerhoff (1982), African societies believe that there are many ways of stress management, which should be understood from a cultural context. These ways include ritual practice, rites of passage, and social life. Studies in Africa indicate that rituals are how the bereaved can express the prescribed and acceptable emotions that are considered to ease their pain (Myerhoff, 1982). In performing the rituals, the bereaved also call for community support and the acknowledgement of the process of mourning. These traditional bereavement practices allow friends and neighbours to express their condolences, while they also help the bereaved to come to terms with the reality of the loss. Rituals, therefore,

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allow supportive interpersonal interactions to occur (Corr et al., 1997). Some bereavement rituals are silent, spontaneous, symbolic statements that represent unique feelings related to the deceased. Conley (1987) believes that the tucking of sealed letters underneath the casket pillow, a farewell salute, or, in Western culture, placing a single rose on the casket are some of the ritual practices that show bereavement. For the Karanga, *nzveura* is used to relieve pain and stress associated with the loss. It is within this context that *nzveura* plays a crucial role in offering a socio-psychological support to the bereaved among the Karanga. Van der Hart (1983) maintains that rituals provide healing, continuity, and balance if the griever believes there is meaning in them. However, at this point, one cannot ignore the role of *nzveura* in stress management during bereavement. This is because it offers healing or recovery during the time of the loss. One of the socio-psychological supports of *nzveura* is that it is embedded in the socio-cultural practices of the Karanga people. The role of *nzveura*, given its nebulous nature in stress management among the Karanga, is to provide comfort and support to the bereaved family.

Studies in Zimbabwe have shown that stress resulting from the death of a loved one is rising, largely due to the decline of traditional ritual practices that help indigenous communities cope with grief and loss (Mwandayi, 2011). During mourning, bereaved individuals often remain at the home of the deceased, where women may express their grief through crying, wailing, singing, and dancing, while men typically gather outside around a fire (Swift, 1989). Grief is openly expressed, with emotions and verbal sentiments shared among the mourners. Women, in most cases, are affected when the body is carried to the grave site. In this context, *nzveura* is performed by a family friend, referred to as "sahwira" or by daughters-in-law (*varoora*), depending on cultural practices to lighten the atmosphere and alleviate tension (Zivave, 2021). There is engagement in humorous antics, sometimes imitating the deceased in clever and witty ways (Swift, 1989). This laughter serves as a powerful antidote to the heavy and sombre atmosphere that can arise during a burial. Swift (1989) notes that the release of tension through laughter helps balance the mood and provides mourners with renewed energy to complete the burial process. *Nzveura* can also be performed alongside singing during the procession to the graveyard.

Be that as it may, *nzveura* studies in connection with stress management during bereavement are scanty in the Zimbabwean context. This suggests that there are significant gaps and challenges in stress management during bereavement in Africa and, in particular, in Zimbabwe. There is an overreliance on Western mechanisms at the expense of African ways. Stress management during bereavement is often Europeanised, making it distant from African culture for individuals in rural communities. Additionally, Zimbabwe has very few professionals who can deal with stress during the bereavement period. Borrowing from Makgahlela, Sodi, Nkoana,

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and Mokwena (2019), who conceive that bereavement rituals are related to psychosocial significance in an African cultural setting, I also note that *nzveura* among the Karanga has therapeutic benefits during bereavement. The practice is sensitive and respectful of the Karanga culture.

Research methodology

The study is an ethnographic one. It employed cultural interviews to generate data from Karanga experiences on stress management during bereavement. Marshall and Rossman (1995, p. 82) assert that culture interviewers elicit the meanings the people give to events and behaviours, to generate a cultural classification. This inquiry focused on descriptions and the significance of *nzveura* on stress management during bereavement among the Karanga of Nyajena as understood by some interviewees. This means that the study is qualitative because it utilised interviews and observations in understanding the role of *nzveura* in offering socio-psychological support during the bereavement period. It utilised ethnographic interviews with six Karanga elders who were purposively sampled because their expertise and experiences in stress management from the indigenous perspective are greatly affirmed, valued, and appreciated. There are numerous ways used by the Karanga to deal with stress during the bereavement period. The researcher planned and was guided by open-ended questions. This was in line with Merriam and Tisdell's (2016, p. 120) encouragement to researchers to use open-ended questions, which they claim to yield more descriptive data and stories about the phenomenon under scrutiny. Even though the researcher had key guiding questions, which all the interviewees were encouraged to answer, responding to all the interview questions was not obligatory. More questions were produced as discussions progressed with interviewees. The researcher attended five Karanga funerals in the Nyajena communal areas to gain reliable insights into participants' actions during rituals, rather than relying on their verbal accounts. The funerals attended by the researcher included those of the family as well as those in the community in Nyajena. This is because the researcher is a native of Nyajena, where s/he was born and is familiar with the topography, demography, context (social, political, and historical), and mentality of the people (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 44). Moreover, the area of research was relatively manageable and almost similar in terms of cultural practice. It was during these funerals that the researcher paid particular attention to the *nzveura* ritual, and video recordings were made. Explanations on the role of *nzveura* in offering socio-psychological support were sought through interviews with the old funeral attendees during the funeral or at times well after the funeral itself. Desktop research was further done to substantiate the data obtained through interviews.

Findings and Discussion

From the analysed data, *nzveura* is a bereavement ritual practice performed among the Karanga in the Nyajena community, which is associated with psychosocial

factors, and its implications for stress management were extracted. Data from the six elders are presented as E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, and E6, respectively. Furthermore, data from the five funerals is coded as F1, F2, F3, F4, and F5.

Death and its effects

In the Karanga ontology, death is considered a transition from the physical world to the spiritual world. According to E1, "*MuchiKaranga tinoti waenda kwete, kuti munhu afa nekuti munhu anoenda kunyikadzimu*" (In Karanga tradition, we say someone has gone and not he or she is dead because dying is a journey to the spirit world). E2 also underscored that death is an event that marks the journey to the spiritual world. It does not mark the end of being, but catapults one into another state of being, which is spiritual. It is in line with Gundani (1988), who says that death is a natural transition from the visible to the invisible or spiritual ontology, where the spirit, the essence of the person, is not destroyed but moves to live in the spirit ancestors' realm. Death in an African culture, therefore, involves not just the physical loss of life of a person but the transition of that person into the non-physical realm of existence (Zivave, 2021). The above meaning attached to death among the Karanga is therefore consistent with the Africans' cultural and religious conceptions of the afterlife. The views of death in the Karanga are based on their religious worldviews.

When the participants were asked about the effects of death, they expressed various sentiments. E2 lamented that death is a sad reality that affects the family dynamics because it affects family harmony and its organisation. A family is left without its head and provider, destroying its organisation. This suggests that death can distort the family structure by creating a vacuum. In support of this, Fisher (1998, p. 95) contends that the disruption brought about by death makes it an evil that interrupts the harmony of family life. E3 and E4 shared the same view as they underscored that death is not a family affair but a community event. This means that death affects the community by creating a leadership vacuum if one is the village head, headman or chief. This suggests that death can affect the community governance system and the indigenous practices, which are transferred from one generation to another through oral transmission. Thus, death affects the cultural continuity of the Karanga community, and it has a social effect. Mbiti (1969) rightly observes that death disrupts the orderly flow of life in society. Gundani (1998, p. 198) shares the same sentiments that death terrifies both the family and the community, and it "destroys relationships that hold the family or clan together as well as its stability."

E1 underscored that death causes one to be afraid, stressed, and suffer from psychological imbalance. This emphasises the psychological effects of death among the Karanga as a result of the loss that comes through death. Death is bad for the Karanga because it whisks away the treasured family members and friends without any notice. Chitakure (2020) believes that although the Karanga people believe that the human soul continues to live in a spiritual form after death, it is difficult to

embrace the thought of dying because of the mysteries surrounding it, and the lack of indubitable knowledge of what happens after (Chivaura, 1965, pp.12-13). As a result, the loss of a loved one causes grief and ultimately stress to those remaining behind.

Karanga ways of coping with socio-psychological challenges during the time of bereavement

When the participants were asked about the Karanga ways of coping with stress during mourning, various views came out. They identified venting of emotions through wailing, music, dance, drinking beer, talking, and the most affected is always accompanied by someone close to him or her, as well as *nzveura*. Firstly, E1 stated, "*Kupangura mhere inzira inoshandiswa nevanhukadzi kuti vasanyanyoshungurudzika. Saka kuridza mhere kunodzora kurwadziwa kunoita kuti vafirwa vasashungurudzika*" (Women wail to cope with stress. Wailing reduces the pain that causes stress). The participants view women as the most affected by death, and in indigenous funerals, they are expected to vent their emotions through wailing. This is believed to help them cope with the stress caused by the loss of a beloved one. This was observed during all funerals that women wail and engage in emotional antics. It was also observed that men do not generally wail. Most men just shake their heads with some sobbing, particularly during burials. This finding aligns with Swift's (1989) observations which concluded that women among the Shona typically express their grief through crying, wailing, singing, and dancing, while men are generally not involved in these forms of expression of grief.

Furthermore, E2 indicated that indigenous people play music and dance so that those who mourn are relieved of their pain. Songs like "Tipeiwo nguva yekuchema gamba redu" (Give us time to mourn our hero) are critical in giving solace to the mourners. This was also observed in all funerals, that singing, drum beating and dancing are done mainly by the young people, like *varoora* (daughters-in-law), children, and other people from the community throughout the funeral proceedings. This suggests that music and dance have therapeutic value in managing stress caused by the loss of a beloved one. According to Banda (2014), the Shona people, in terms of experience and knowledge, subtly, through songs, believe and accept the sad reality of death. The songs and dances are done throughout the night until the burial. The playing of songs and dances allows people to reflect on the legacy left by the deceased as he or she transitions into the spiritual journey. Some of the songs depict an accepted belief among Karanga people that death is inevitable. This is in line with the findings by Muranda (2018), which reveal that singing about death brings solace and comfort to those experiencing grief and pain. The Karanga songs that are sung during the night vigil help mourners to understand and accept the reality of death.

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Drinking beer and smoking cannabis

E3 underscored, "*Varume vazhinji tinomwa doro nekusvuta mbanje kuti tisanyanyogwadziwa nekurasikirwa nehama neshamwari. Asi kushandisa zvinhu izvi kudzivirira kurwadziwa nekushungurudzika kune mhosho yekuti kana usisina kudhakwa unogona kuzonyanyofungisisa.*" (Most of us men take beer and cannabis to cope with the death of relatives and friends. But using intoxicants such as beer and cannabis has shortcomings in that when you are sober, you will always think about the loss in a way that is dangerous to your health). The participants revealed that drinking beer and smoking dagga can be used as a coping mechanism for death-induced grief and in dealing cases of sudden or traumatic loss. It was also observed during funerals 2, 3, and 5 that condolence money was used to buy beer for men who would be doing tasks like cooking and digging the grave of the deceased. This is in line with findings in some Western countries, where Pilling Konkolÿ, Demetrovics, and Kopp (2012) concluded that alcohol use is higher in men who are bereaved than in women. While alcohol and substance use may offer a temporary sense of relief, they are associated with socio-psychological challenges. In this respect, Drabwell et al. (2020) believe that bereavement is associated with an increased risk of psychiatric morbidity and all-cause mortality, particularly in younger people and after unnatural deaths.

Humor

The study through E4 further revealed that, "*Kutuara nemunemo inzira yakajairika kusunungura vanhu vari kuchema mufi. Izvi zvinoitirwa kuti vanhu vasashungurudzika. Shamwari yemufi ndiyo inoita madawo nemunemo kurerutsa kurwadziwa kunenge kuri muvanhu,*" (Talking and joking are common ways used to ease the tension of people who are bereaving. This is done to cope with stress, and humour is led by the family friend). These words suggest that indigenous people utilise family friends in engaging in humour to cope with stress caused by death. This was corroborated by the observations made from F1 that the *muzukuru* (nephew) engages in humorous acts. The study found that in this culture, talking, joking, and light-hearted interactions are common practices to comfort those grieving. These actions, often initiated by a family friend, aim to alleviate stress and emotional pain. This aligns with research in Zimbabwe (Moyo, 2013), which highlights the *sahwira's* role in uplifting the bereaved through joyful moments and ensuring a smooth funeral process to lessen grief. More broadly, these findings resonate with cross-cultural studies (Warren & McGraw, 2016) recognising humour as a vital social tool for stress reduction and emotional support during bereavement. As Swift (1989) notes, the *sahwira* often leads mourning ceremonies with lighthearted antics to encourage acceptance of the loss. Moyo (2013) further argues that humour during funerals helps ease tension and sorrow, allowing mourners to temporarily set aside their grief and celebrate the deceased's life.

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The study also revealed through E6 that "*Mai vemufi kana mukadzi wemufi kana kuti murume wemufi, semuenzaniso, vanosungirwa kuwana chitsama chevanhu vanovarinda vachivanyaradza nekuita kuti vasashungurudzika.*" (The bereaved is always in the company of elders who can control and manage stress by talking to him or her, always showing the bereaved that death is the passage for all). This was also observed in Funerals 1 and 3 that the people close to the wife of the deceased sat with her in the hut throughout the morning period. This means that the Karanga allow the accompaniment of the most affected person as a way of coping with stress. The widow or children of the deceased are the most affected, and the Karanga ensure that these bereaved people are always in the company of a group of people for socio-psychological support. This support is offered by community members, family, or friends and can help individuals cope with grief so that they navigate the changes associated with widowhood or orphanhood easily. They offer counselling and advice related to loss. These people are mostly close people and friends who offer the socio-psychological support needed by the widow and orphans left by the deceased. The support given through accompaniment creates a sense of community and belonging among the affected members of the society.

Lastly, all the participants highlighted that *nzveura* is a way of coping with stress. E5 raised an important view by saying that nzveura is important in addressing the traumatic experiences associated with death. This finding confirms that *nzveura* is a method of coping with stress during bereavement among the Karanga (Zivave, 2021). *Nzveura* allows the Karanga people to engage in humorous antics, imitating the deceased in clever and witty ways (Swift, 1989). Thus, *nzveura* serves as a powerful mechanism of uplifting the heavy and sombre atmosphere through laughter during bereavement.

Nzveura

When the participants were asked about the role of *nzveura* as a Karanga way of providing socio-psychological support, the informants highlighted several views. E1 observed that *nzveura* makes one accept that death is a reality, and this is achieved by the support that is given to the bereaved through the ritual practice. When one imitates what the deceased was doing humorously, it is a form of psychological support which encourages those bereaved to accept death as a reality. This suggests that *nzveura* offers psychological support as those left behind are made to accept death as a reality and the need to move on through humour. The Karanga use *nzveura* to take care of the bereaved and make them accept death as an inevitable event. Alao et al. (2010) observe that people may use humour to help themselves deal with difficult and stressful situations. In the same context, Paneru (2024) asserts that death rituals are a form of psychosocial therapy during bereavement. This means that *nzveura* offers a socio-psychological therapy to the

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bereaved. This is cemented by the observation made on Funeral 2, where the humour and joyful interactions that happened between daughters-in-law and the mourners assisted the bereaved in experiencing feelings of restoration and hope. Hence, *nzveura* offers support when the bereaved reacts to the loss of a loved one by assisting them to overcome or lessen particular emotional, mental, or social difficulties associated with the sudden loss.

The other psychological function of *nzveura* lies in the reduction of mental stress associated with death. From E3, it emerged that *nzveura* eases mental tension when people imitate the deceased with some fun associated with it, it has a psychological role. This means that *nzveura* reduces psychological tension and provides psychological support to the bereaved ones to accept loss and make them ready to continue with life without overthinking. *Nzveura* is thus essential to aid recovery and adjustment after the loss of a beloved one. Chandran (2020) argues that humour during funerals provides crucial opportunities for releasing emotional tensions, which aligns with the principles of the dual process model. Paneru (2024) in his study rightly observed that rituals are cultural tools that help maintain social order and give insight into the complex and contradictory features of human existence in a particular socio-cultural setting. On the other hand, rituals reduce negative grief reactions, which may result in the bereaved person suffering physical or psychological ill-health (Alao et al., 2010).

E5 underscored that when bereaved members start to reflect on the legacy of the deceased, there are chances of reducing nightmares that may be associated with the loss of the beloved one. This suggests that nightmares are a form of psychological instability which can be mitigated by *nzveura*. If *nzveura* is not performed, it can increase anxiety, depression, sadness, despair, anger, guilt, loneliness, exhaustion, hallucinations, apathy and disorganisation (Worden, 1995). After the loss, the bereaved may suffer from sleepless nights, anxiety, fear, and a general sense of being out of control. *Nzveura* assists mourners to be active and helps the bereaved to have a sense of normalcy because it assists in reducing psychological stress temporarily. Thus, there is a form of psychological support that is offered by *nzveura,* which comes through the reflection of what the deceased did, which will be mirrored by the *nzveura* ritual.

E4 also underscored that *nzveura* offers social support by saying that it promotes social inclusion by making the bereaved family part of society. This is because the contributions of the family friend or daughters-in-law during bereavement make death be viewed as a community event, which offers social support to those who are grieving. They cook food that they source with the money they generate from the ritual performance. Zivave (2021) attests that they are given the forequarter of a beast "*bandauko*", which they cook for the bereaved members of the family. It is in this context that Thuen (1997) suggests that people in various stages of

bereavement receive emotional and social support largely from family and friends. This is in line with the observation of Worden (1991), which concluded that social support reduces stress and stimulates the development of coping strategies and thus contributes to recovery and healthy well-being. This was supported by observations from the five funerals, where soon after the announcement of death, family members, villagers, and members of the chiefdom gathered at the homestead of the deceased, and the varoora began to run around to assist during bereavement. This suggests that *nzveura* creates a contextual platform for friends and the bereaved family to exchange emotive tightness through humour and imitation, which helps the bereaved manage their affective state. *Nzveura* is, therefore, a means of dealing with powerful feelings about the loss. Thus, the moments of laughter during mourning are needed as a means of recovering from death-related illness. Thus, it is used to explain the social existence and power of religious concepts, which were based on either emotional experience, pseudoscientific reasons or the mythical (Bell, 1992).

The E3 findings reveal that during funerals, daughters-in-law (*varoora*) engage in humour as part of the nzveura ritual, which plays a crucial role in managing stress and anxiety for bereaved families. This practice allows for a balance between sorrow and joy, providing temporary relief from the pain of loss. Alao (2010) emphasises that a healthy grieving process involves oscillating between these emotions, and *nzveura* facilitates this transition. Observations from multiple funerals indicate that humour helps the bereaved process their grief and fosters emotional release, supporting claims by Swift (1989) that it aids physical relaxation. *Nzveura* also serves a practical function; daughters-in-law raise funds during this ritual to alleviate the economic burden of bereavement. Contributions from family members such as *vazukuru* (nephews and grandsons) and *vakuwasha* help provide food and refreshments for mourners, addressing the financial strain of death. Tarusarira (2018) notes that these funds not only offer social but also economic support, reducing distress for the bereaved family. The humour shared during mourning strengthens bonds among mourners, fostering a supportive environment. This social connection enhances psychological well-being, promoting resilience and optimism amid grief, as highlighted by E1. This aligns with Kaguda (2012), who found that the interplay of humour and sorrow aids in emotional balance. Thus, *nzveura* is essential for facilitating healing and coping with the emotions associated with loss, underscoring its importance in the grieving process.

Some Important Insights

This study explored the role of *nzveura* in offering the socio-psychological and economic support during bereavement within the Karanga ethnic group through data collected through interviews with Karanga elders and observations of five funerals. It

focused on three main aspects: (1) the effects of death among the Karanga people, 2) the Karanga ways of coping with stress during bereavement. 3) The role of *nzveura* in providing socio-psychological and economic support during bereavement.

Although death is not the end of life, but is a new beginning in another state. It results in grief, stress, and psychological imbalances. Death is a natural event, but it has many psychological effects. This results in fear, stress, and suffering among the bereaved. While the Karanga family is glued around strong family dynamics, death distorts these dynamics because it affects household harmony and its organisation. Many families are left without their head and provider. This means that death affects the family and the community at large by creating a leadership void. It is for this reason that death is viewed as an enemy of harmony because it takes away family members and friends. As a result, death breeds grief and stress for those remaining behind.

There are several Karanga ways of coping with stress during bereavement, such as wailing, music, dance, and social interaction. There is the importance of the cultural context in stress management, particularly within Karanga societies during bereavement (Tamara, 2022).

The study findings align closely with previous research on bereavement, particularly the work of Lunds, Edvardsson, and Nilsson (2008), who examined the experiences of recently widowed individuals in the United States and concluded that humour significantly influenced the grief of mourners during the bereavement period by offering a strong socio-psychological support system. This means that humour helps the bereaved realise that life goes on and brings closure to grief. In the context of this study, there is a strong connection between humour, laughter, and positive grief adjustments during and after the Karanga mourning practices. The humour employed by *varoora* during funerals alleviates tension and sorrow among the bereaved. This is also consistent with Yule et al. (2017), who noted that humour during funeral rites allows mourners to temporarily set aside their grief and celebrate the deceased's life. Thus, integrating humour and joy during Karanga funerals serves as a therapeutic approach in overcoming grief.

The significant role of *nzveura* in providing the socio-psychological support among the Karanga during bereavement cannot be underestimated. The findings reveal that *nzveura's* primary function is to elevate the spirits of the bereaved family members by introducing moments of joy.

Conclusion

This article has discussed the significant role of *nzveura* in helping the bereaved to cope with stress and other socio-psychological challenges that emanate from the death of a beloved one. Death is viewed as a painful event that results in the transition of the deceased from the human world to the spirit world. The Karanga believe that death leaves a trail of negative effects that affect the social and psychological well-being of the deceased. As a mechanism of coping with grief and managing stress, the Karanga have many ways of dealing with stress, which include wailing, music, dance, drinking beer and smoking cannabis, humour, and *nzveura*. *Nzveura* is a notable *rite de passage* that is done during bereavement by the Karanga. *Nzveura* is a practice that is done by the Karanga by a family friend, which brings laughter and lightens the tense atmosphere. Through *nzveura,* family members, relatives, neighbours, and friends can provide support and comfort to those affected by death during times of grief. The humour that characterises *nzveura* eases the tension that will arise among the bereaved and mourners. It helps to divert attention from sorrow and pain to acceptance, laughter, and comfort. It offers socio-psychological support to the Jena-Karanga during bereavement before the burial of the deceased because it offers emotional, practical, and informational support to help people cope with the heartbreaking, social, and psychological challenges associated with death and loss. The support is necessary in ensuring that there are emotional and social tools for the bereaved to cope with the loss. *Nzveura* is thus a Karanga practice that is beneficial for people struggling with a stressful loss of a dear and loved one.

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Masculinity influences on Massively Multiplayer Online Role-*Playing* Games (MMORPGs) among students from selected State Universities in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of masculinity on student participation and experiences in Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs) among selected students at state universities in Zimbabwe, with a specific focus on League of Legends. *Through a mixed-methods study of 750 students across three universities, the research demonstrates that hegemonic masculinity plays an influential role in male students' gaming preferences, player character choices, and social behaviours. The results suggest that online gaming spaces in Zimbabwe are characterised by hyper-masculinity and are hyper-male environments, which see masculine stereotypes and behaviours both reinforced by the structure of game design and social interactions within them. Typical social norms and hegemonic masculine profiles are reproduced in gameplay, where female players are more likely to choose a role of a gender neutral or fluid character who becomes subjected to marginalisation. Connell's use of theory, constructed as hegemonic masculinity, reveals the extent to which gaming practices are structured by culture and how gender norms in media perpetuate inequities across digital spaces. The findings underscore the need for initiatives to counter hegemonic masculinity and the creation of gendered meanings in gaming by designing game interventions that promote inclusiveness and diversity, thereby fostering more equitable gaming communities. These contributions can further our understanding of virtual gender dynamics in Africa and shed light on potential measures to promote the development of inclusive e-gaming environments.*

Keywords: masculinity; massively multiplayer online role-playing games; state university students; Zimbabwe

Introduction

This study examines the role of masculinities in massively multiplayer online role-playing games amongst selected Zimbabwean university students. The research critically explores and problematizes the subtle and complex relationship between game playing and participation, as well as the relationship between game playing, participation, and hegemonic masculinity in Zimbabwe. The *League of Legends* game was purposively sampled as a case study, focusing on how randomly selected students from the University of Zimbabwe, Midlands State University, and Chinhoyi University of Technology participate in and relate to online role-playing games (Baah Acheamfour, 2024; Stratton, 2024). Masculinities refers to patterns of social practice associated with the position of men in any society's set of gender relations (Connell & Wood, 2005; SaThierbach et al., 2015; Sipungu, 2023). As Blackburn and Scharrer (2019) indicate, masculinity manifests in different forms as it intersects with race,

class, sexual orientation, and other aspects of identity. On the other hand, Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs) refer to web-based games that allow gamers from different locations to choose from various roles to play.

This study argues that gaming, as a medium, is among the most important contemporary cultural carriers that may reinforce salient hegemonic masculinity in participation and structure among selected Zimbabwean university students. Giaccardi et al. (2017) assert that the conventional media have been accused of (re)producing toxic masculinity and exerting pressure on men. Likewise, Tian et al. (2023) and Wilska et al. (2023) have indicated that sports and pop culture are more accessible to young people through social media. The study submits that these online platforms are characterised by hegemonic masculinity traits predominantly where 'real men' are recognised. This notion is supported by Siregar (2022), who argues that online new media justifies the notion that males are dominant over women in all aspects of life. However, the place of masculinities in MMORPGs among Zimbabwean university students remains understudied in the academic arena. Some studies (Chen, 2023; Cross et al., 2024) suggest that video games can perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes that promote male dominance by featuring hyper-masculine male characters and objectifying female ones. However, in contrast, Amory and Molomo (2012), whose study investigated preferences and attitudes of young South Africans who play computer video games, found that young South African males and females like similar games and identify with game characters, and similarly rate their competitiveness.

Literature review

Game synopsis

League of Legends is a multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) game developed by Riot Games. Two squads, each consisting of five players, who play on a virtually integrated battlefield called the Summoner's Rift, play the game. The game aims to destroy the enemy team's Nexus, located in their base. Players form a team and choose a champion to play, each champion has unique abilities and characteristics. Players contest and fight against their enemy team for control of the map. They gain gold and experience to level up and become more powerful. *League of Legends* boasts a large and active community, comprising millions of players worldwide. The game also has a competitive e-sports scene, with professional players and teams competing in major tournaments and leagues, such as the *League of Legends* World Championship (Griffiths et al., 2011).

Trends, Gaming Cultures in Africa

This section examines the existing literature on gaming trends in Africa. The section submits that African gaming culture is diverse and evolving rapidly, with mobile gaming, e-sports, and game development emerging as key trends. Bitanihirwe et al.

(2022) argue that the gaming industry in Africa has experienced significant growth in recent years, driven by increased internet access and technological advancements. Likewise, in Zimbabwe, this growth is attributed to the increasing number of young people who are playing mobile games.

As the continent continues to gain access to affordable technology and infrastructure, it is expected that the gaming culture in Africa will continue to grow and evolve in exciting new ways. There is, however, a scarcity of studies exploring the intersections of online gaming and gender issues, particularly in Zimbabwe. The gaming culture in Africa is a complex and rapidly evolving landscape that reflects the continent's diverse cultures and demographics. While gaming has historically been seen as a niche hobby for a select group of enthusiasts, Block and Haack (2021) argue that gaming is rapidly gaining popularity across the continent as more people gain access to affordable internet and mobile devices. Likewise, Zimbabwe is not exempt from the rapid growth of gaming in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). One of the key drivers of gaming in Africa is the rise of mobile gaming, which is particularly prevalent in areas where console and computer gaming are less accessible due to higher costs and lower availability (Block & Haack, 2021).

E-sports events and competitions are becoming more common across the continent, with African countries such as Egypt, Kenya and South Africa hosting international gaming tournaments. However, in dire socio-economic economies like Zimbabwe, e-sports are considered a luxury (Mann et al., 2018). It is against this background that the present study aims to expand on such studies to investigate the influences on gaming cultures among Zimbabwean university students. E-sports have led to the rise of professional African gamers and teams who earn money and recognition from their gaming skills. Pitroso (2023) submits that the gaming culture in Africa is also reflective of the continent's exceptional cultural heritage, with many games incorporating traditional African themes and motifs. For example, the award-winning mobile game, *Brothers: A Tale of Two Sons*, a game that combines puzzle-solving mechanics with strong storytelling, was developed by Blink Works, a South African gaming studio. The game draws on Afrocentric folklore and features an Indigenous soundtrack. Gaming culture in Africa is marked by a burgeoning interest in game development.

Theoretical framework

This paper is situated within the framework of hegemonic masculinity. The theory is an analytical tool to identify attitudes and practices among men that perpetuate gender inequalities (Connell & Wood, 2005). The theory is largely influenced by Gramsci's (1971) notion of hegemony as a philosophical underpinning that legitimises, sustains, and reinforces the interests of domination in society within particular historical periods (Balakrishnan, 2015; Chantal Mouffe, 1979). Hegemonic masculinity, in Connell's terms, constitutes the most powerful and most socially prized form of masculinity available to men. The present study argues that masculinity is evident in online

gaming, where young university women subconsciously reinforce the notion of domination on their preferred gaming characters. Since time immemorial, games have been physical activities that have been played by both adults and children. Scholars Burnett and Hollander (2004), Moloi et al. (2021), and Nyota and Mapara (2008) argue that, in Africa, games have been instrumental in reinforcing unity, providing entertainment, promoting physical training, and facilitating education, as well as serving recreational purposes.

Several games have been played by Africans; the Shona people of Zimbabwe play *tsoro, nhodo*, etc. (Tatira, 2014). According to Tatira (2014) games like *nhodo* (A game where children fork out small objects from a small hole and returning an object at a time)*, matakanana* (playhouse) and *pada* are more feminine in nature and have been popular amongst girls, whereas *tsoro* (a game in the family of draft) and *pakasungwa neutare* (It is strongly bound by unbreakable metallic bonds) (A game in which children attempt to break a human shield) are mainly identified as muscular games which are mostly played by males. The present study arose from a realisation that the identification of masculinity in modern online gaming has been largely overlooked in academia. Masculinity in gaming has been a topic of discussion for a long time.

There is a limited amount of research on the influence of masculinity in gaming in Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwean cultures, traditional gender roles assert that men should be dominant, assertive, and competitive while women are expected to be submissive, cooperative, and nurturing (Riley, 2011). This study examined how expectations are reflected in the choices made when selecting and playing the *League of Legends* online game by Zimbabwean university students. While there is limited research on the influence of masculinity in gaming in Zimbabwe, the present study assumed that traditional gender roles and expectations impact how gaming is played and perceived by selected young university men and women.

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods to investigate the role of masculinity on participation in MMORPGs by university students in Zimbabwe. A mixed-methods design was chosen because quantitative analysis data provided statistical projections on gaming behaviour and demographic antecedents, whilst qualitative analysis (Putri et al., 2021), gave depth to insight into perception, experience and social cues about masculinity versus gaming culture. The study population consisted of undergraduate students from three purposively selected state universities in Zimbabwe: the University of Zimbabwe, Midlands State University, and Chinhoyi University of Technology. A stratified random sampling technique was used to include heterogeneity of the student body for their representativeness (Ghanad, 2023). University and academic discipline also stratified the population. The sample was diverse and included students from disciplines that differed in terms of gaming behaviours and attitudes towards

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masculinity (e.g., students enrolled in biological sciences, humanities, health sciences, and engineering).

In terms of the sample size, a total of 750 students were aimed for, with 250 from each of the three selected universities for sampling. This number was calculated using Cochran's (1977) formula for estimating sample size at a 95% level of confidence and a margin of error of plus or minus 5% to represent the proportion of students in each university, based on figures provided by Qing and Valliant (2025). The target was to recruit 83 students per faculty at each university, with a proportional allocation across faculties, to enable meaningful subgroup analyses.

The data was collected through the structured online questionnaire on Google Forms. Items in the questionnaire were closed-ended and included questions related to demographics (age, gender, field of study, year of study), gaming habits (number of hours spent playing MMORPGs per week; main champions played; styles adopted), and perceptions about masculinity and male-female game behaviour.

The quantitative data were complemented with qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and open-ended survey questions (Muzari et al., 2022). In-depth interviews with 30 students (10 from each university) selected purposely to reflect diversity in gender, field of study, and amount of computer gaming experience were conducted. The interviews encouraged personal reflections (e.g., experience, masculinity in gaming) and social interactions within online groups in gaming.

The qualitative data were subjected to thematic coding, a common method used to detect, analyse and report systematically the patterns found in the textual data (Lochmiller, 2021). All transcripts and open-ended response texts were transcribed verbatim; initial coding followed to classify data into preliminary themes under names which included masculinity, gender stereotypes, digital contacts, and cultural norms. These codes were subsequently revised from a trial-and-error approach, resulting in the narrowing down of similar codes to broader themes. Data was analyzed in SPSS. Before data analysis, the data were tested for normality using the Shapiro-Wilk test and were found to conform to the normality assumptions. The Kruskal-Wallis test was performed to investigate the associations between various demographic parameters and gaming behaviours of students. In addition, we performed a one-way ANOVA at a five (5) per cent significance level to test for the variation in gaming cultures across the three selected universities. Data confidentiality was protected by de-identifying participants' responses and securely storing digital files, which were accessed only by the research team (Lochmiller, 2021). This methodological process enabled a thorough investigation of how masculinity influences MMORPG participation among Zimbabwean university students, ultimately combining strong quantitative analysis with nuanced qualitative findings.

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Results

Respondents' distribution by gender
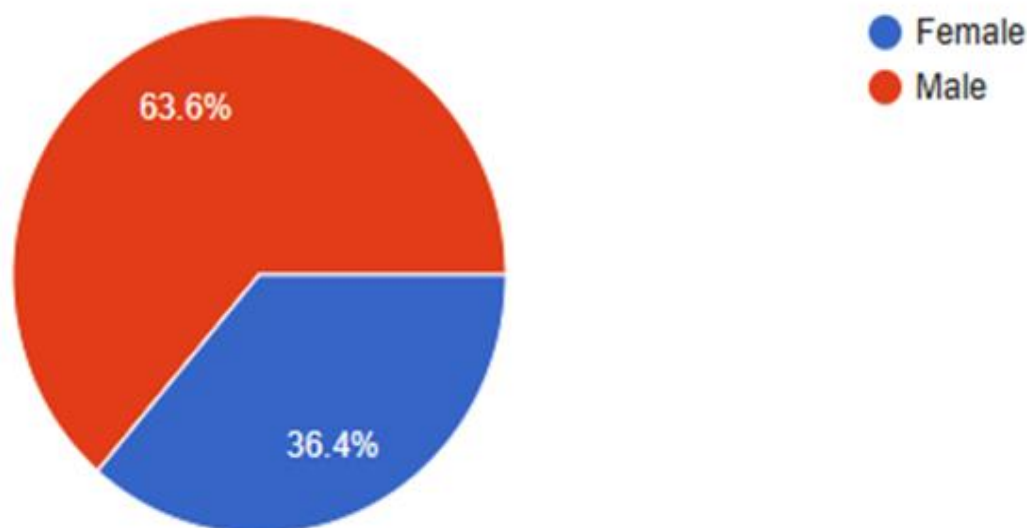
Figure 1: Distribution of respondents by gender.

The study found that male students in Zimbabwe exhibited a higher interest and engagement in the *League of Legends* game than their female peers. This is evidenced by the fact that the proportion of male respondents in the study was significantly higher, at 63.6 per cent, compared to 36.4 per cent of female students, as shown in Figure 1. The gender disparity in online gaming participation may be attributed to several factors, such as gender socialisation, cultural norms, and societal expectations. For example, males may be encouraged to engage in more technology-related activities, while females are steered towards activities deemed more feminine (Blackburn & Scharrer, 2019; Chen, 2023; Fu, 2025). The study noted that online gaming, particularly *League of Legends*, is perceived as a male-dominated activity, thereby discouraging female participation. It was established that there is a strong relationship between masculinity and the choice to play the *League of Legends* online game among male students. The more masculine a student was, the more likely they were to play this game. This was attributed to the fact that the *League of Legends* offers a platform where male players can engage in activities that enhance their masculinity, such as fighting, hunting, and exploring dangerous territories. The study underscores how participants' gender identity is reflected in the game and how they use the *League of Legends* game to engage in displays of masculinity. The research shows that the majority of male players adopt masculine avatars, which allows them to perform hyper-masculine behaviours and activities that might not be acceptable in their real-life settings.

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The study also reveals the impact of gendered interaction on the *League of Legends* games, where female players tend to avoid gender stereotypes and instead opt for neutral or gender-fluid champions, such as Varus, Zoe, Xayah, Neeko, Taliyah, and Rakan. Neeko, for instance, is a chameleon-like creature that can change its appearance to look like anyone in the game. Zoe is a naughty childlike champion who does not conform to traditional gender roles, and male respondents showed reservations in associating with such characters. Female players in the *League of Legends* tend to distance themselves from traditional gender stereotypes when they choose champions who are neutral or gender fluid, which has all been proven by their playing behaviour, as the study revealed. This phenomenon can be understood using the hegemonic masculinity theory, which explains how cultural practices and societal norms contribute to dominant versions of masculinity that are built based upon the marginalisation or devaluation of femininity as well as non-normative gender identities (Connell 1987, 1995). Within the realm of online gaming, hegemonic masculinity has been linked to the prevalence and valorisation of dominant, aggressive and hyper-masculine behaviour that reiterates itself in game design and character as well as player interactions (Mahalik et al., 2003).

While it is more subtle, in what could almost be considered a form of hegemonic femininity, female players express their games through playing champions like Neeko, who can shapeshift and embody multiple identities themselves in opposition to the rigid gender binary that colours gaming spaces. By slotting into these roles, they challenge the gendered associations with traditional support roles and become powerful figures that many female players may find empowering or even just fun to play, as opposed to the alternative of fulfilling a role as an emblematic guest character of the game that is suitably monogendered for its chosen demographic.

Notably, male participants were more hesitant to endorse these characters and behaviours as fathers in their responses, again shedding light on the role of hegemonic masculinity in shaping ideas about proper perceptions of gender related conduct and selection choices. Such hesitations could result from cultural norms that depict men as strong, in control, and stoic, attributes that are often encouraged in the game through its hyper-masculine champions and aggressive play type (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Men's reluctance to accept characters that deviate from traditional portrayals of (masculine) power and control likely reflects some level of internalised hegemonic norms relating masculinity with these benefits, which collectively inhibit their acceptance of characters who proudly live gender fluid or non-conforming gender expressions (Mahalik et al., 2003).

Respondents' distribution by age

Figure 2 below shows the study on masculinity influences on the *League of Legends* game among students from selected state universities in Zimbabwe had a majority of study participants in the age category 21-23 years (36.4 percent), followed by those in

the age categories (18-20 & 24-26 years) (27.3 percent), while a small proportion was above 30 years (9 percent). This age distribution can be attributed to the fact that the study participants were all university students, and thus, most of them fell within the 18-26 years age bracket. Furthermore, this age group is known to be highly interested in online games such as the *League of Legends*, which could explain why they were more likely to participate in the study. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have shown that young adults are more likely to be actively engaged in playing video games (Alwhaibi et al., 2024).
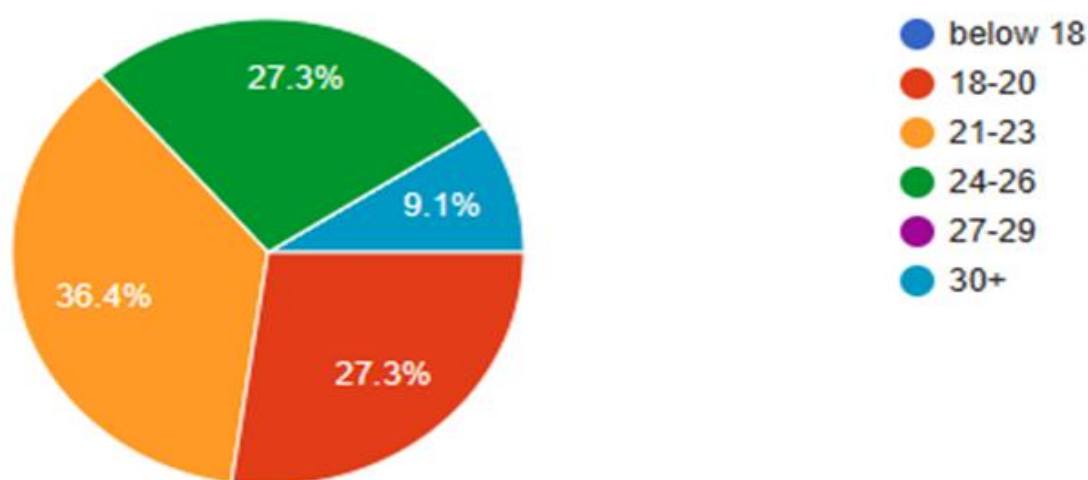
Figure 2: Respondents' distribution by age.

Respondents' distribution by university

Results showed that the majority of the study participants were enrolled with the Midlands State University (36 per cent), followed by the University of Zimbabwe (33 per cent), and lastly Chinhoyi University of Technology (31 per cent). The disparity in participation from different university students was, however, insignificant.

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Respondents distribution by University

31%

33%

36%

■ University of Zimbabwe

■ Midlands State University

■ Chinhoyi University of Technology
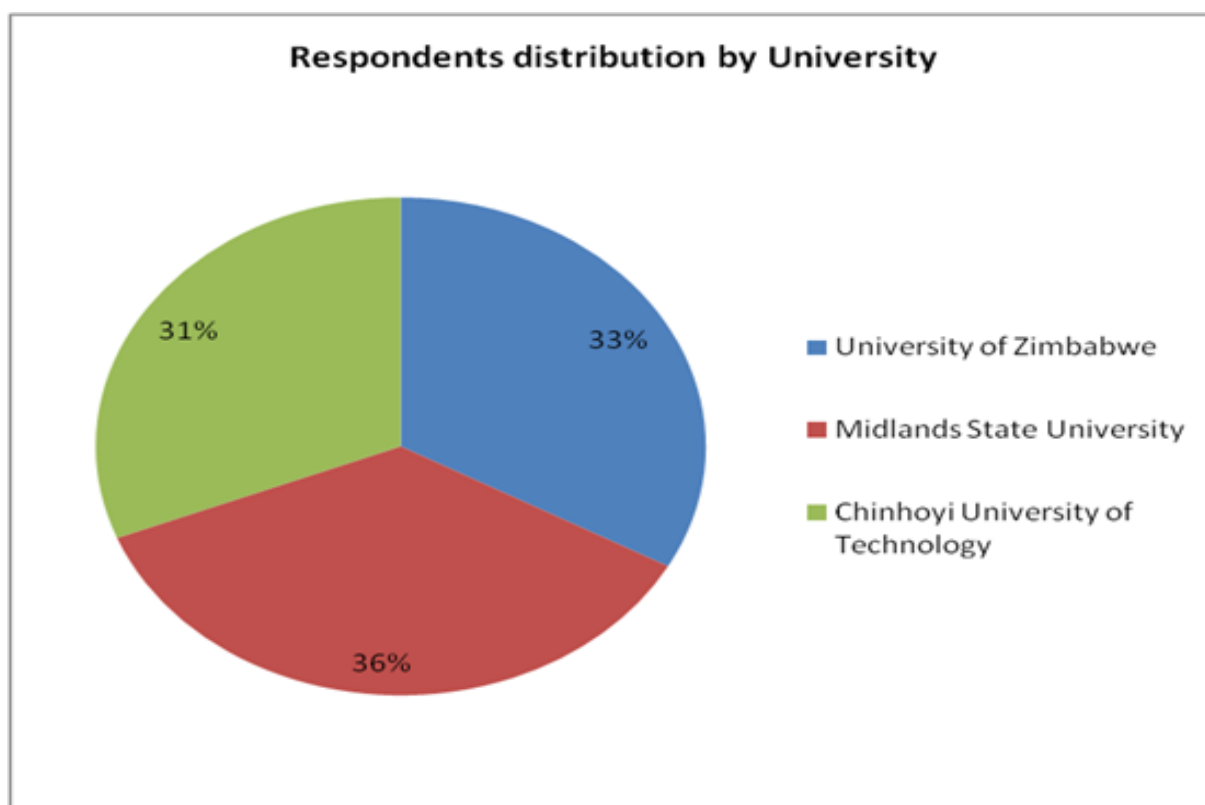
Figure 3: Respondents' distribution by university

Field of study

The data analysis conducted shows that there is a significant association between the field of study and player activity in online game play among students. The *chi*-square test result ($\chi 2 = 8.4$) indicates that there is a significant difference in the proportion of students across different fields of study who engage in online game play. The degree of freedom (*d.f* = 5) suggests that there were six categories of field of study being compared. The p-value (*p*< 0.001) indicates that the results obtained from the analysis are statistically significant and not due to chance. The majority of the study participants were in the biological sciences field (26 per cent), followed by those in the humanities (22 per cent). Students studying in the health sciences field had the least representation among the study participants (8 per cent), as illustrated in Figure 4 below.

The results of this analysis suggest that there are differences in the extent of engagement in online game play among students from different fields of study. Further exploration of these differences can provide insight into the possible reasons why students from different fields of study have different levels of engagement in online game play. Our findings corroborate those of Meyer et al. (2019), who argue that individuals who major in science tend to score higher in openness to experience, which is characterized by a desire for novelty, variety, and intellectual curiosity. Online gaming, in this case, with its vast array of game genres and complex gameplay

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mechanics that require strategic planning and problem-solving skills, may appeal to the curiosity and adaptability of science students (Block & Haack, 2021).

Another factor we noted that may contribute to the higher participation rate of biological sciences students in online gaming is time management. Fountaine et al. (2011) argue that college students who major in science tend to engage in more sedentary behaviours, such as doing homework, studying, and computer use. Due to the nature of biological sciences coursework, students often have to spend long hours in laboratories and library research, making it more convenient to engage in leisure activities that are available online, such as gaming (Morris et al., 2013). The study established that the field of study often influences the nature of gameplay, and the interests and preferences of individuals participating in the *League of Legends*. The high number of participants from the biological sciences field implies that the students from these faculties might be technologically active compared to their counterparts in the other disciplines. The study investigated the influence of masculinity on gameplay, which could potentially uncover valuable insight into gaming behaviour and preferences related to gender. However, the research also considered exploring the intersectionality of gender and field of study, as this gave more insight into how different demographic factors can influence gameplay.
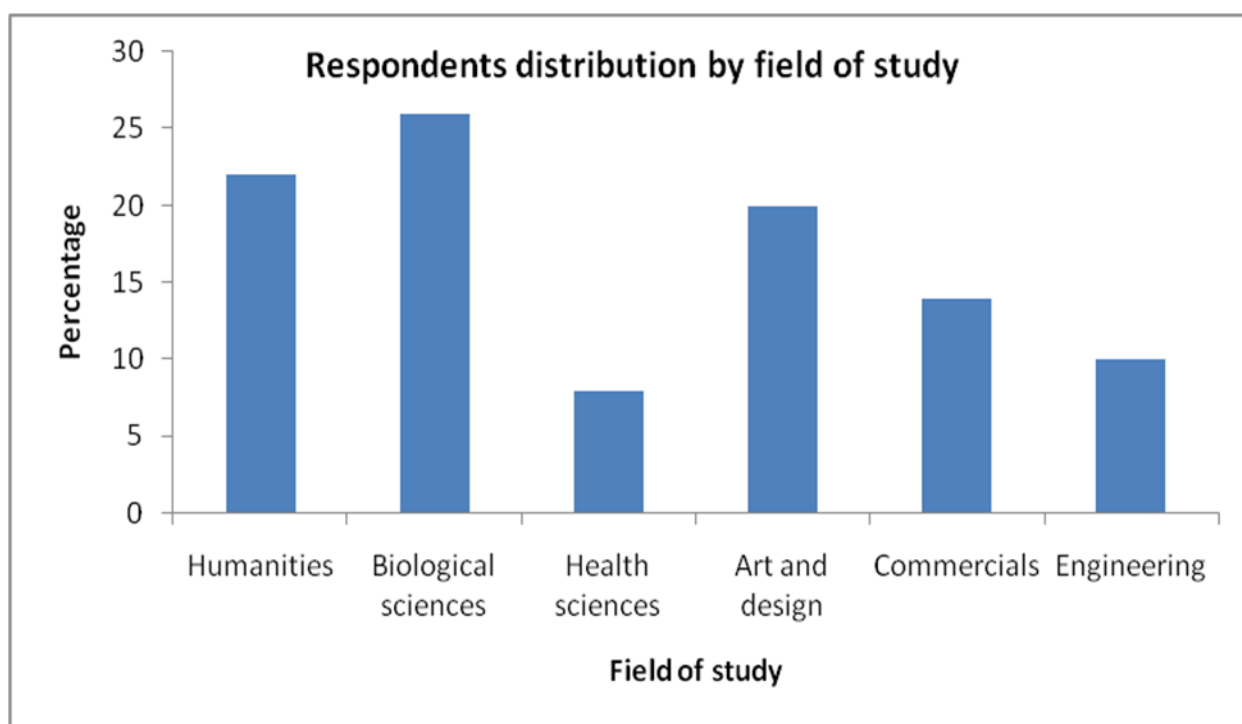
Figure 4: Respondents' distribution by field of study.

Socio-demographic influences on game cultures in universities

Results showed that gender plays an important role in influencing online gaming decisions. The majority of female students (82 per cent) interviewed during the study

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indicated that they do not play the *League of Legends* online game. This is in contrast to male students, where 86 per cent agreed that they play the *League of Legends* game. In addition, there was no significant difference in students` participation in playing the *League of Legends* multiplayer games across the three state universities ($KW\chi2$ = 11.138; *df* = 2; *p*< 0.05). We noted a significant ($\chi2$ = 8.4, *d.f* = 5, *p*< 0.001 association between field of study and player activity in online game play among the students. We established several variables that may have an impact on how gender can influence gaming decisions in the *League of Legends*.

Firstly, the findings of this study reveal that the community of the *League of Legends* is predominantly male. Male students may have more access to online gaming due to societal norms and expectations. We argue that male students have more opportunities to play the *League of Legends* and hone their skills. We argue that hegemonic masculinity present in the *League of Legends* gaming community results in female gamers being subject to harassment, discrimination, and exclusion from the gaming community.

Based on the statistical analysis above, the results established that women may feel pressured to conform to male norms and behaviors while playing. This can lead to women avoiding certain champions or roles in the game due to stereotypes or fear of judgment.

The analysis also revealed that the representation of women in the game's artwork, design, and characters was not as diverse, which led to female students feeling less connected to and less interested in the game compared to their male counterparts. It was established that some players criticised the game for sexualizing or objectifying its female characters through their outfit designs, body proportions, and suggestive poses. For example, some female champions, such as Lux, Miss Fortune, Morgana (see Figure 5), and Kai'Sa, have their cleavage and legs exposed; the revealing clothing and exaggerated physical features emphasise their sex appeal rather than their abilities or personalities. These portrayals can reinforce the societal expectations of femininity and create dissatisfaction among female players who do not conform to these ideals. Female players may experience pressure to conform to these gender expectations to fit in with the dominant male gaming culture and avoid being excluded from the community, as Morris et al. (2013) alluded to.
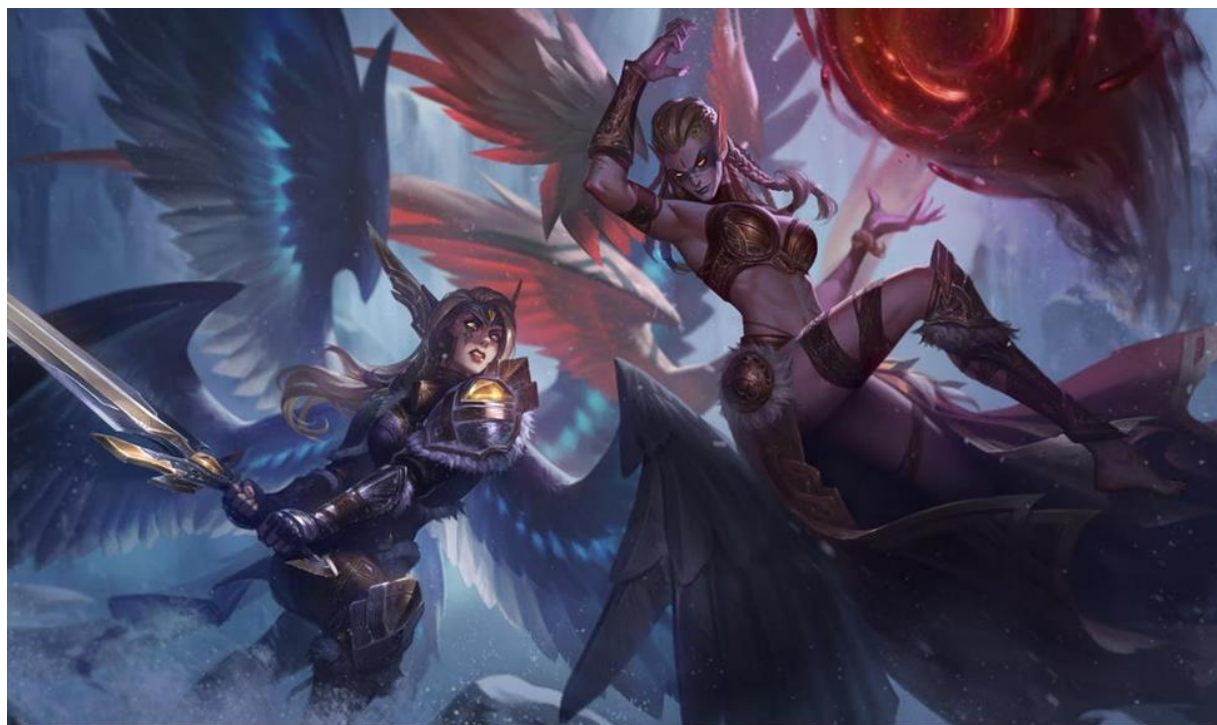
Figure 5: Morgana *- League of Legends*

Female respondents have accused the *League of Legends* of having a toxic culture. Female students indicated that they experience gender-*based* harassment while playing. This has led to female participants avoiding communication or playing more defensively, affecting their overall gaming decision-making.

Locating Masculinities in The *League of Legends:* An Overview

The *League of Legends* is an online multiplayer game where two teams of five formidable champions compete to overthrow an opponent's base, relying on economic resources and information. As participants engage in this ultimate warfare experience featuring up to 154 distinct types of ultra-warriors, they craft strategic manoeuvres, eliminate opponents, and destroy opposing towers from their bases. Each participant selects a character, known as a champion within gaming terminology. A total of 154 champions is available, each endowed with four abilities. Players may also purchase items from in-game shops to further enhance their champions. The game offers an abundance of exciting battles and competitive opportunities.

As discovered in this study, among the 154 champions, 94 are male, 56 are female, and four (4) can be called male or female based on their pronouns. As Leo (2021) noted, champions like Cho'Gath and Nocturne are first-person plurals without gender specific pronouns. The case of Kindred is interesting. This character is made up entirely of a canid, known as *he,* represented by a wolf, and another, *she*, represented by a sheep. This gender breakdown of champions reflects underlying social norms and stereotypes. Each champion has its main role, and many have secondary roles.

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The six roles assigned to champions are assassin, fighter, mage, marksman, support, and tank. The gender issue does not end there.

In the game, male characters are predominantly portrayed as robust and resilient figures who serve a protective role. Conversely, female characters are more frequently depicted as support figures (something that is also reflected in most standing armies of today), exemplifying traits of care and nurturing. Additionally, women are increasingly represented as marksmen, aligning with traditional stereotypes of women as skilled archers or proficient spell casters. The majority of fighters are male. These patterns reinforce gender roles, which are quite strictly defined in this largely heteronormative situation where hegemonic masculinity and femininity are very much in evidence.

Hegemonic masculinity, from Connell (1995), refers to the dominant form of masculinity privileged and identified as essential within a particular social setting. Within Zimbabwe, traditional attitudes towards manhood are defined by qualities like strength, dominance, competitiveness, and cruelty, a trait that is given traction and sustained by phallocentricism (Macleod, 2007). Phallocentricism sustains hegemonic masculinity by metaphorically equating the phallus (male sexual organ) with power, rationality, and authority. It thus reinforces an inflexible gender hierarchy that privileges dominant, heteronormative masculinities while marginalizing femininities and non-conforming masculinities through cultural, institutional, and psychological mechanisms.

In online gaming, hegemonic masculinity is based on the dominance or strong preference for villainous characters, male champions for the most part associated with resistance and aggression. But the study also found that norms of dominant masculinity are built into the gaming community through social and cultural practices. Male champions embodying aggression and dominance are a favorite thing for those playing the game. Aggressive behaviors during gameplay are not discouraged and condemned, as in most traditional sedentary forms of interactive entertainment. This continues to affirm certain images of masculinity, those of power, control, and violence, while marginalising other forms that do not harmonise with these values. The overrepresentation of hyper-masculine heroes and behaviours in the *League of Legends* is understandable when considering forces that support the idea that both aggression and competitiveness are quintessential traits of masculinity in society (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), traits that in Zimbabwean politics were immortalized by the late Robert Mugabe's '*amadoda sibili*' (real men) statement (Mpofu, 2022). Thus, male players are often rewarded or acknowledged for projecting such images, and this further reinforces the hegemonic masculinity circle. Fewer women who play the *League of Legends* often are abused, are objectified, and shut out. This not only affects their game enjoyment but also represents the dominance of hegemonic masculinity in the gaming environment. Practices like these confirm that physical violence and dominance are a male prerogative; by contrast, femininity is scorned and

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spat on. When women are harassed and objectified, their experience is in line with findings that hegemonic masculinity perpetuates gender imbalances while supporting a toxic culture predisposed against females (Downs & Smith, 2010).

The research also illustrates that traditional gender roles persist in Zimbabwean universities. Men are expected to be aggressive, competitive, and dominant traits reinforced by champion selections leaning towards the aggressive and strong, while women see themselves as nurturing and caring. Historically, African traditional games serve as another example of these gendered divisions. For example, the games *tsoro* and *nhodo*, are associated with male and female, respectively (Nyota & Mapara, 2008; Tatira, 2014). These cultural patterns continue to exert a strong influence on contemporary behaviour, including online gaming, where gendered expectations dictate how characters are chosen and how they interact. In this way, online performance both supports and reflects mainstream computer game culture. By the same token, games played through specific platforms like Nintendo's Wii or the PlayStation Network cannot help but mirror their parent institution's norms.

Conclusion

The study shows that in Zimbabwe's online gaming culture as portrayed by Zimbabwean university students, there is hegemonic masculinity to be found everywhere, especially in the *League of Legends*. It appears through the domination of aggressive and violent characters, the promotion of toxic behaviours becomes normal, and women are marginalised. Societal expectations of masculinity create a dominant ideal that informs how players should behave and interact, leading to the repression of those who do not conform. Viewing these dynamics in terms of hegemonic masculinity provides a valuable tool for analysing the persistent gender inequalities in Zimbabwe's game communities and orders urgent action to create more inclusive, fair gaming environments. Understanding these dynamics from the perspective of hegemonic masculinity can help unlock insights into why Zimbabwe's gaming communities maintain stubborn gender biases. It also shows which primary interventions are needed to change the gaming atmosphere. And if no one takes action, the neoliberal environment will only continue on its current course, forever increasing the exclusion of women and gamers who do not conform. This paper contributes to the literature of participation, gender, masculinities, and gender relations in African virtual gaming communities, in general, and particularly Zimbabwean online gamers. The study established that online games in Zimbabwe are male-dominated. This assertion is argued in this study as being influenced by salient, subtle production and reproduction of hegemonic masculinities in patriarchal establishments. The game itself was constructed in this study as a gendered game. Its establishments of champions have been explored, and the majority of its main characters were noted to be male. This could also point to why female players avoid participating in the game. This gender imbalance in the *League of Legends* gaming participation highlights the

need for strategies and interventions aimed at promoting gender equality and diversity in the gaming industry.

Recommendations

The findings of this study underscore the pervasive influence of hegemonic masculinity within Zimbabwean university students' online gaming communities, particularly in the context of the *League of Legends.* To foster a more inclusive and equitable gaming environment, targeted actions must be taken by key stakeholders across educational, governmental, and industry sectors. These recommendations aim to challenge entrenched gender stereotypes, promote diversity, and create safe spaces where all students can participate meaningfully in digital gaming cultures.

- University administrations and student affairs departments should develop and implement gender-inclusive policies and programs within campus gaming communities and e-sports initiatives. Establishing dedicated clubs or forums that promote safe, respectful, and inclusive gaming environments will encourage broader participation from female students and those who do not conform to traditional masculine norms. Such initiatives can serve as platforms for raising awareness about the detrimental effects of toxic masculinity and fostering healthier social interactions among gamers.

- There is a pressing need to collaborate with game developers and industry stakeholders to create or adapt game content that reflects diversity and counters stereotypes. Promoting gender-responsive game design featuring characters and narratives that challenge hegemonic masculinity can positively influence player perceptions and behaviours. Locally developed games incorporating African cultural motifs and diverse gender representations can serve as powerful tools for reshaping gaming norms. These efforts should be supported by policymakers and industry leaders to ensure the proliferation of culturally relevant and inclusive gaming content.

Targeted awareness campaigns are essential to counteract toxic and hyper-masculine cultures prevalent in many online gaming spaces.

- Partnering with student organisations, gender advocacy groups, and civil society organisations can facilitate campaigns that highlight the harmful effects of gender-based harassment, objectification, and exclusion.

- Utilising social media platforms, university events, and peer education models can effectively reach students and instil more respectful gaming behaviours.

- Supporting ongoing research and data collection on gender dynamics in African gaming spaces is also crucial. Such initiatives can deepen understanding of the cultural, social, and psychological factors that influence gaming behaviours among Zimbabwean youth. Findings from these studies can inform policy development and intervention strategies, ensuring they are grounded in local contexts and realities.

- The creation of African-designed, gender-diverse games can catalyze broader cultural change.

- Encouraging investment and support for Indigenous game development that reflects local cultures and promotes gender equality can challenge stereotypes embedded in mainstream gaming.

- Governments, cultural ministries, and private sector investors should prioritise funding and capacity-building programs to empower local developers in this endeavour.

- Likewise, encouraging the production and dissemination of African-designed games that advocate society's diversity can make the gaming landscape more representative (Kiwa et al., 2021). Such initiatives may also shake hegemonic masculinity in gaming spaces and promote a more inclusive atmosphere among players. Encouraging more equitable participation in online gaming among male and female students may ultimately lead to the development of a more inclusive and representative gaming community.

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Development versus Heritage: Evaluating the effectiveness of Archaeological Impact Assessments in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

In Zimbabwe, archaeological heritage is facing increasing threats from infrastructure development such as mining, agriculture, and climate change. Archaeological Impact Assessments play a crucial role in managing these threats by verifying that development projects take into account cultural heritage before they disturb the ground. Despite this, the impact of AIAs in Zimbabwe is still being studied, with a focus on their implementation, enforcement, and long-term sustainability. This research examines the success of AIA projects in Zimbabwe, exploring their potential to safeguard cultural heritage while also accommodating socio-economic development demands. The research takes a qualitative research approach utilising surveys and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders including archaeologists, heritage managers, Environmental Management Agency personnel and developers. Recent AIAs involving mining concessions, road expansion, dam construction, or other projects are case-studied to determine compliance levels and stakeholder engagement. Additionally, the success of mitigation is evaluated through these factors. The research reveals that while AIAs are legally obligated, the execution is not consistent as certain projects are fully in compliance with heritage protection regulations, while others proceed with little or no oversight and result in irreversible damage. The study also highlights the challenge of ensuring sustainable cultural heritage management in areas where sites are often overlooked. The research reveals that indigenous knowledge's potential for site interpretation and preservation in Zimbabwe is hindered by limited community involvement in Archaeological Impact Assessments, underscoring the need for more inclusive approaches that leverage local expertise and promote community-driven initiatives. The study suggests that enhancing AIA frameworks can improve preservation of heritage without impeding development. Some suggestions include incorporating AIAs earlier in project planning, using digital documentation techniques and encouraging multi-stakeholder cooperation. By critically examining Zimbabwe's AIA system, this research contributes to international debates on sustainable heritage governance and provides practical strategies for harmonizing cultural preservation with national development goals.

Keywords: Archaeological Impact Assessments; sustainable development; sustainable heritage governance, compliance, stakeholder engagement, Zimbabwe

Introduction

Archaeological heritage, which is a finite and non-renewable resource of crucial importance to economic sustainability and cultural identity, is naturally in conflict with the need for development projects brought about by population growth and technological advancement.   (Nijkamp, 2012; Steibing, 1994; Castells, 1986). Population growth has resulted in the expansion of cities, sanitation facilities, and roads, among other things. In the face of these developments that are likely to disturb or remove both known and yet to be discovered archaeological remains, it is important that pre-development assessments in the form of Archaeological Impact Assessments (AIAs) are carried out. AIAs have, for over half a century worldwide, been implemented as a mandatory policy for mediating this contradiction as the pre-eminent mechanism for realizing the philosophy of sustainable development (Patiwael, Groote & Vanclay, 2019). Issues of sustainable development are emphasised in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly under SDG 11.4, which calls for strengthening efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage through the embedding of heritage protection within the planning process (UNESCO, 2015). However, the global impact of AIAs is spasmodic, and in Zimbabwe their use is heavily undermined by a cluster of unresolved challenges, with a great gap between policy intention and actual realization (Tapfuma, 2011). This study, therefore, seeks to identify the specific institutional, regulatory, and operational factors undermining AIAs in Zimbabwe, with the objectives of evaluating the adequacy of the existing legal framework, review of the stakeholders' roles, and identification of the key hindrances to their success. In the process, the study transcends its national interest to contribute to broader heritage management debates in the Global South, examining critically why lofty theoretical integration of culture into sustainable development collapses on the ground and propounding a better framework through which AIAs can truly safeguard irreplaceable heritage from the allure of progress.

Background to the implementation of AIAs

AIAs are a fundamental heritage management tool. Morgan (2018) defined AIAs as the systematic investigation of a development area with the aim to identify archaeological resources and evaluate a project's potential impacts upon them. The development of AIAs as an organized practice is a direct response to the widespread destruction of archaeological heritage by post-Second World War redevelopment and heightened industrialization in the mid-20th century (Diefendorf, 1989). This worldwide crisis triggered a paradigm shift from rescue reactiveness to preservation proactiveness,

entrenched in milestone instruments such as the UNESCO 1968 Recommendations and the 1990 ICOMOS Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage (Tapfuma, 2011). These instruments legalized the overarching principle that archaeological heritage is a fragile, non-renewable resource, and that developers are to bear the cost of pre-development impact studies.

The United States' National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 was a landmark example, codifying the "polluter-pays" principle and encouraging the growth of a professional contract archaeology industry to keep pace with development (Berggren & Hodder, 2003). This example, with its emphasis on regulatory mandate and developer responsibility, has been replicated and adapted widely. In Africa, nations like Botswana and South Africa have integrated these principles into robust legal frameworks, such as South Africa's National Heritage Resources Act (1999) and the Monuments Relics Act of (2001), demonstrating a functional pathway to aligning development with heritage preservation (Deacon, 1996; Van Warden, 1996; Mitchell, 2002; Mmatle 2009, Moroka & Dichaba, 2010). It is against this global backdrop of established best practices that Zimbabwe's own implementation of AIAs must be critically examined. While the country has theoretically adopted the international model through its local law, the continuing implementation difficulties attest to a grave disconnect (Tapfuma, 2011; Musindo, 2010). The well-documented international trajectory, from recognition of an issue to the entrenchment of effective legal and commercial mechanisms, serves not as a model which Zimbabwe has followed, but as a benchmark against which its specific implementation successes and failures may be analysed. This background, therefore, establishes an international standard of practice to place the general research problem: the causes of the failure of this world-renowned system to work properly under the specific socio-economic and governance circumstances of Zimbabwe.

The Legal and Operational Framework for Archaeological Impact Assessments in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, the jurisdiction for Archaeological Impact Assessments lies in the Environmental Management Act (EMA) of 2002, which is prescriptive and states the environment comprehensively to encompass "places of cultural importance." This legislative framing has a profound meaning in that it places heritage protection within the process of environmental impact assessment (EIA), and thus makes AIAs a mandatory component for many development projects. Operationally, this creates a twin-governance regime. The master EIA process is monitored by the Environmental Management Agency (EMA), while the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ) has the technical mandate to evaluate the AIA component.

Crucially, no development permit is issued without the agreement of the NMMZ Executive Director, a power derived from the NMMZ Act that prohibits destruction of heritage without its consent (NMMZ Act 25:11, section 26). However, the system is itself undercut by an absolutely crucial legislative gap. The original NMMZ Act itself does not proactively demand AIAs but only has a reactive provision to penalize destruction. This shortcoming forces NMMZ to operate in a legal weakness, depending on the EMA for its proactive authority. To cover this gap, in 2015, NMMZ revised its act to a new National Museums and Heritage Bill (2015) that is specific in AIA provisions (The National Museums and Heritage Bill, 2015, p. 26). However, the bill might take years to finalise. Meanwhile, NMMZ practices under the 1998 non-binding AIA guidelines. This practice of relying on guidelines rather than firm law can be argued to be the source of Zimbabwe's implementation challenges. While the guidelines outline a technically proper, three-stage process (desktop study, field survey, and mitigation) and properly assign costs to the developer, they are not binding and therefore cannot be enforced as such. The procedural devices, while professionally constructed, operate in a context of statutory ambiguity. The conflict between a well-designed procedural ideal and a weak legal mandate provides a fertile ground for the practical concerns that this study investigates such as non-compliance, contentious financial demands, and differential application of mitigation actions. Consequently, the same system put in place to protect Zimbabwe's archaeological heritage is itself structurally blocked from being able to do so efficiently, revealing a governance flaw at the heart of the development versus conservation tension.

Conceptual framework

The research is informed by the concept of sustainable development, the concept of environment and the principal of preservation. These interconnected concepts provide a framework for analyzing the role of Archaeological Impact Assessments (AIAs) in Zimbabwe. Far from being isolated, these concepts form a rational sequence that explains the ideal, the mechanism, and the practical reality of managing heritage for development. Firstly, the notion of sustainable development provides the normative ideal. It contends that development must meet existing needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own (Robert et al., 2005; United Nations, 1992), officially making cultural heritage emphasized by SDG 11.4 a part of resources to be conserved. This research uses this concept not so much as a definition but as a criterion by which to measure the sustainability outcome of Zimbabwe's AIA process. It raises the critical question: Does the current system, in practice, ensure the

intergenerational equity that sustainable development promises, or does it permit the irreversible loss of heritage for short-term gain?

Second, Zimbabwe's specific concept of environment, as legally defined in the Environmental Management Act (EMA) of 2002, represents the operational mechanism. By expressly placing "places of cultural significance" within the scope of the "environment," the legislation creates a statutory overpass to connect the wide ideal of sustainability with the real-world governance of archaeological resources. This model will be analyzed to assess its effectiveness. It is to be evaluated whether such structuring of legislation duly empowers the protection of heritage, or rather it subjects cultural interests to biophysical environmental concerns under the EIA process thereby creating a governance contradiction between the EMA and the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ).

Finally, the doctrine of preservation comprises the utilitarian middle ground at the heart of AIAs. International charters among them the UNESCO 1968 and ICOMOS 1990 define a hierarchy of conservation, giving precedence to in-situ conservation but allowing record preservation (excavation and documentation) as an unavoidable compromise where development is unavoidable. It is the principle to be applied in this study to evaluate critically the effectiveness of AIAs in Zimbabwe. It is to be seen whether the choice between in-situ preservation and preservation by record is decided on strict archaeological importance, or is controlled by political pressure, financial need, and the weak legal mandate described above. The continued recourse to mere recording, with the lack of strong legal backing for in-situ preservation, runs the risk of converting a principle of accommodation into one of deliberate loss. Synthesizing this framework, the research is thus able to move from the ideal international (sustainable development) to the national instrument (concept of environment), and finally to on-the-ground practice (preservation as compromise). It provides a rational framework with which to examine whether AIAs in Zimbabwe constitute a genuine attempt at reconciling heritage and development, or if the governance loopholes available render such reconciliation a chimera, finally compromising the vision of sustainable development.

Data collection

Data collection is an essential component of conducting research. For this study, data were collected through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, personal observations, and consultation of both primary (reports, memos) and secondary documents (published research articles, books). Consultation of both published and

unpublished sources was important because insight into ways in which past AIAs as well as EIAs were conducted were useful in influencing the recommendations that were provided. Apart from providing information on the topic being discussed, both primary and secondary sources shaped the nature of this research as they revealed areas that had not been tackled by previous researchers, as seen in the literature review. Questionnaires were used to collect data from developers and environmental consultancy companies, while semi-structured interviews were conducted with heritage practitioners and EMA personnel. The developers were interviewed to gain an insight into their understanding of AIAs and their attitude towards sponsoring them. On the other hand, consultant companies are the ones that are carrying out EIAs for developers. Thus, there was a need to establish whether they are aware of archaeological heritage as well as considering it when conducting EIAs. Interviews were conducted amongst heritage practitioners who have carried out AIAs in Zimbabwe with the aim of gathering the manner in which they are awarded contracts and the problems that they faced in negotiating for contracts and undertaking AIAs. Problems faced have a bearing on the quality of the assessment carried out and the final report produced. Lastly, EMA personnel who are directly involved with the whole process of EIAs were interviewed with the intention of gathering whether they are making an effort to notify developers to carry out AIAs.

Successes and Failures in Zimbabwe's Archaeological Impact Assessments (AIAs)

Archaeological Impact Assessments are a major regulatory tool which is designed to reconcile the competing interests of development and protection of cultural heritage. AIAs have in Zimbabwe had irregular application, with both exceptional practice and pronounced failure. The section reviews a series of case studies in order to tease apart the variables upon which AIAs succeed or fail. Through the comparative cases, the proactive rescue in Tokwe-Mukosi Dam, the Khami regulatory failure, the politicized planning at Great Zimbabwe University, and the narrowly averted crisis in Hwange, we can identify a common thread that robust legal frameworks are only effective in the presence of sustained enforcement, institutional coordination, and genuine effort to mainstream heritage into the development agenda. The construction of Zimbabwe's largest inland reservoir, the Tokwe-Mukosi Dam, posed a risk to a dense archaeological landscape (Mutangi & Mutari, 2014). This case is Zimbabwe's strongest example of an effective, albeit challenging, AIA process. The National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe initiated extensive pre-construction surveys, which revealed over 20 significant archaeological sites in the upcoming inundation area, predominantly dating

from the Late Iron Age (c. 900-1450 AD) (Pwiti & Ndoro, 1999). The surveys also documented significant rock art sites that attest to earlier hunter-gatherer occupation (NMMZ Report, 2014). Once high-priority sites had been identified in the initial surveys, NMMZ organized rescue archaeology campaigns to recover as much information as possible before inundation. The intervention was successful on two fronts. It did so in the first instance by combining intensive archaeological salvage with innovative community outreach. Rescue excavations uncovered intact pottery, ironwork, and houses that offered fresh information on early Shona settlements. Of greater importance, the incorporation of ethnographic studies identified intangible heritage (rain-asking shrines, ancestral graves, and other spiritually significant sites) which would otherwise have been archaeologically invisible. In a documented case, rituals were done to ritually "close" a sacred rain-asking shrine prior to flooding, according to guidelines provided by elders in the community (Fontein, 2006). Despite a number of challenges noted (see Ndoro 2005), the Tokwe-Mukosi project establishes that heritage mitigation is feasible. Its success depended on early action, correct data gathering, and holistic integration of both intangible and tangible heritage, and this provides an essential precedent for future major infrastructure projects.

On the other hand, the tragedy of the Khami National Monument, World Heritage Site teaches us the catastrophic results of ignoring AIA guidelines. Even when it is a national and international heritage monument, Khami's buffer zone, which is a crucial zone prescribed to protect the setting and integrity of the site, has been consistently violated since the early 2010s (UNESCO, 2019). The setbacks are two-pronged. Illicit residential and commercial construction has expanded, destroying archaeological deposits and compromising the visual character and Outstanding Universal Value of the site (NMMZ Report, 2019). Equally devastating have been the officially approved infrastructural initiatives such as road works and quarrying activities between 2015 and 2020 (NMMZ Report, 2019). The report clearly states that these activities were simply approved by local governments without the requisite AIAs. These earthworks irretrievably disrupted stratified levels of archaeology, destroying potential information regarding the Torwa State whose capital was at Khami.

The Khami case study has some valuable lessons for heritage management in Zimbabwe and globally. First, it illustrates that legal protection alone without real enforcement is insufficient. Second, it highlights the importance of conducting AIAs as mandatory prerequisites for any development within the vicinity of heritage locations. Third, it highlights the importance of enhancing coordination among government departments and local people for heritage management. Finally, it illustrates how

neglect in protecting heritage properties may have broader ramifications, including loss of global reputation and lost economic benefits.

The proposed construction of the Great Zimbabwe University (GZU) campus alongside the renowned Great Zimbabwe World Heritage Site presents a more complex problem, one of juxtaposed educational progress against sheer cultural significance. The controversy was not about wholesale opposition to development, but about critical flaws in the AIA process itself. The government and university promoted the project as an education and tourism windfall. However, an Environmental Impact Assessment, in which an AIA was included, was only done for the first stage of construction; the Convocation Hall (Great Zimbabwe University, 2016). This was the failure of the project. Reviewing, both NMMZ and UNESCO suspended the project due to the grounds that the assessment was too narrow. A complete EIA/AIA for all five phases proposed was necessary in order to understand the cumulative impact of the project upon the hydrology, visual environment, and archaeological integrity of the World Heritage Site. The controversy over the GZU highlights a fundamental contradiction of sustainable development; how to accommodate necessary development with irreplaceable cultural heritage. The example shows that even philanthropic projects require the highest standards of examination. The move by the heritage authorities forced a reconsideration, emphasizing that for locations of global significance, AIAs must be integral, inclusive, and bound by international conservation practices, and not chopped and changed to suit a developer's agenda.

The 2020 proposal to grant Chinese operators coal exploration licenses within Hwange National Park unleashed a huge outcry from the public, but the row was almost only framed in environmental and wildlife conservation terms even though the Park is extremely rich in archaeological resources, including the monumental stone buildings of the Zimbabwe culture (see McGregor 2005; Hwange National Park Management Plan, 2016-2026; Sagiya; 2019). The public outcry and concerted campaigns eventually led to a ban on mining in national parks and the subsequent cancellation of the Hwange permits (Nyoka, 2020). The Mines and Minerals Act (Chapter 21:05) authorises the Zimbabwean government to issue special mining grants. These grants permit companies, including foreign investors, to explore and extract minerals in designated areas, sometimes even in protected zones such as national parks. In some cases, the special grants are awarded with either no or minimal consultation as in the case of the Hwange one, which was granted without input from environmental agencies, local communities, or tourism stakeholders. The Zimbabwe's special mining grants allow the government to fast-track mining projects, often at the expense of environmental and

social safeguards. Although the projects were eventually stopped, the case reveals a critical blind spot in Zimbabwe's conservation story, which is the persistent neglect of archaeological heritage in natural landscapes.

The Hwange case is an important near-miss that exposes a siloing of heritage at the disciplinary and institutional levels. It indicates that the public and government mind involves a narrow perception of "conservation" to mean protecting nature, where cultural heritage has to be a secondary consideration. A good AIA regime requires that archaeological assessments are needed not just for building proposals, but for any operation that disturbs land, such as mining in protected areas, in order to have a coordinated policy of resource management.

Factors affecting the implementation and success of AIAs in Zimbabwe

The success of Archaeological Impact Assessments in Zimbabwe is not hindered by the lack of law but by a cluster of intertwined systemic deficiencies. These are obstacles that can be categorized under four general areas that are disintegration of institutions, financial and attitudinal disincentives, deficiency in critical capacity, and an inadequate legal system. An examination of these reveals that the potential of AIAs is consistently thwarted by governance and resource shortfalls.

The most significant impediment to AIA enforcement is political isolation between the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe and the Environmental Management Agency. Although national EIA policy refers to archaeological sites as sensitive areas that require consultation with stakeholders, EMA frequently issues development permits without NMMZ's approval. It is highly probable that EMA bypasses NMMZ because the pressure for economic development is high, while the consequences for neglecting cultural heritage are low. This failure of coordination among agencies has led to the loss of significant heritage. Notable examples include the erection of base stations at Cross Kopje (Marymount Teachers College, Mutare), a memorial site for soldiers who fought in World War I, and on Chiurwi and Gombe Mountains in Buhera (holds material that is indicative of an industrial metallurgical complex for smelting iron), highlighting the need for improved oversight and protection of cultural heritage sites (Chipunza, 2010). This conflict is accompanied by a blame game cycle. EMA blames NMMZ for not providing adequate information, such as the 1998 AIA guidelines, and argues that its overall environmental mandate causes complexities in prioritizing unseen archaeological resources. Conversely, NMMZ blames EMA for disregarding heritage concerns. This blame-shifting masks an even deeper failure in governance. As noted by Nhamo (2007),

EMA has operated in contempt of the international heritage conventions that Zimbabwe has ratified, reflecting a serious communication failure for which NMMZ, being the coordinating heritage organization, is also culpable. Reflecting on EMA's recruitment strategy, physical scientist, ecologists, economists, engineers, and social scientists are all employed by EMA permanently. Even though archaeologists are known worldwide as part of social scientists, EMA seems to have ignored that since social workers, sociologists, and psychologists are EMA's social scientists. These professionals have been helping with the evaluation of EIA reports and environmental auditing. However, a heritage practitioner has never been employed by EMA, even on a part-time basis. Instead, it appears convenient for EMA to send AIA reports to NMMZ. Effective application of AIA requires proactive communications by NMMZ to other levels of government, such as town planning authorities and EMA, in order to incorporate heritage consideration into all land-use decisions.

Profit-driven extractors' attitudes are also a significant market-based constraint. AIAs are generally viewed by most private proponents as being costly, profit-eating hurdles with no tangible financial advantage. This is in addition to enforcement frailties. Although some developers are evading EIAs because of financial implications, it is possible that some are deliberately ignoring them. The reason for ignoring EIAs might be a shortage of human resources at EMA to evaluate EIA reports and award permits delays project implementation. At the end developers prefer to be fined when caught as long as their project is not suspended. Even though EMA fines can be considered prohibitive, there are sometimes a drop in the ocean in comparison with profits that are likely to be accrued from the project. This is indicative of a key weakness; when law enforcement is lax and punishment is not a deterrent, the economic incentive stops being towards preservation and becomes towards destruction.

NMMZ is burdened by a critical shortage of qualified staff, which affects all stages of the AIA process. There are not enough archaeologists to conduct assessments, evaluate reports, and inspect compliance nationwide. The shortfall results in a reliance on ineffective and often imprecise desktop surveys since budgetary constraints limit visits to sites. Consequently, previously unvisited sites are assumed to be empty, leading to skewed conclusions and missing unrecorded sites. Moreover, the internal governance of NMMZ is compromised in the sense that the same individual (mostly the Chief Curator) is often assigned to evaluate and audit reports despite the fact that he is also an AIA consultant; an overt conflict of interest that violates NMMZ's own policies and EMA's best practices upholding transparency principles. Such a systemic defect contaminates the legitimacy of the entire AIA system.

The current NMMZ Act is a weak enforcement tool. It relies almost exclusively on Section 25 which makes intentional destruction without authorization illegal, but this reactive section has failed to drive proactive assessment. In most cases, NMMZ only invokes the intervention of EMA once heritage is lost, demonstrating the Act's failure as a preventative measure. Relative examination to counterparts in the region underscores Zimbabwe's legislative failure. South Africa's National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA) mandatorily seeks heritage authority approval for any development impacting a heritage resource, pending a thorough impact assessment (Warnich-Stemmet 2010). Botswana's Monuments and Relics Act (2001) likewise allocates a section to AIAs and integrates them into the approval process for development permits, creating a compulsory milestone (Moroka and Dichaba, 2010). Zimbabwe's proposed legislative revision must move beyond prohibitive clauses to establish clear, mandatory AIA triggers and seamless integration with other development approvals. To these legal loopholes is superimposed an underlying public ignorance. Consultancies and developers are not cognizant of the AIA guidelines and the NMMZ Act, and they have not been adequately disseminated. This indicates a breakdown of NMMZ's public information mandate to turn heritage conservation into an obscure legal regulation rather than a mainstream national interest.

The obstacles to effective AIAs in Zimbabwe are not standing alone but reinforcing. Institutional fragmentation leads to poor enforcement, and this creates economic incentives for developers to circumvent the system. This is further aggravated by insufficient capacity in NMMZ to monitor development and a reactive and not proactive legal system. In the future, reform must be holistic. There is a need for the redrafting of the NMMZ Act to capture the proactive and integrated approaches similar to those of Botswana and South Africa. There is also a need to address internal governance and capacity problems in NMMZ through, for instance, launching a continuous public awareness campaign and establishing coordination processes with EMA and other planning authorities like those in local government. Without this structural intervention, AIAs will remain a theoretical construct instead of an operative tool for preserving Zimbabwe's cultural heritage.

Conclusion

This analysis has demonstrated that the inability to effectively implement effective Archaeological Impact Assessments in Zimbabwe is not a failing of the tool, but rather a reflection of deeper, more systemic botches of administration. Institutional analysis and

case studies exhibit the same: there is a good legal and methodological framework for protection of the heritage, but it is repeatedly undermined by institutional fragmentation, perverse economic incentives, and a severe lack of enforcement capacity. The recurring disconnects between NMMZ and EMA is more than administrative squabbling. It reflects a fundamental misalignment of national policy that keeps cultural heritage separate from, and subordinate to, environmental and economic goals.

This study makes a contribution in being analytical about naming these interlocking barriers, moving beyond merely listing oversights to uncovering the underlying system of governance that permits them. This study adds to the scholarly debate on heritage management by proving that very well-meaning legislation is ineffectual in the absence of requisite political will, cooperation among institutions, and economic funding for its enforcement. It emphasizes that sustainable development is a hollow premise where a nation's irreplaceable cultural heritage is sacrificed for fleeting profit. The study also revealed that the price of doing nothing is catastrophic. Aside from the immediate archaeological loss, the continued deterioration of a site like Khami and Great Zimbabwe puts Zimbabwe in trouble with UNESCO, jeopardizing the World Heritage status that translates into tourist dollars and national dignity. The wanton destruction of sites significant to ancient societies and the liberation struggle, like at Chiurwi Mountain, sever tangible links to the past, eroding cultural identity and historical memory.

Overall, AIAs are a potent preservation tool, but their potential in Zimbabwe is unrealized. The country is at a turning point; it can keep going down its present course, where uncontrolled development gradually wipes its cultural heritage from the map, or it can implement the needed systemic changes to adopt heritage conservation completely into its development agenda. The choice will determine not only what archaeological sites are preserved for future generations but also what kind of development, truly sustainable or fundamentally destructive, will define Zimbabwe's future.

Recommendations

So, the path forward is precise, pragmatic reforms. With regards to legislative reforms, the NMMZ through the Ministry of Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage should prioritise the amendment of the NMMZ Act. It should follow the model of the progressive governments of Botswana and South Africa, directly mandating AIAs as a not optional prerequisite to the grant of development permits and clearly detailing the duty of the developer to pay for and carry them out. Moving forward, institutional integration must be facilitated by a formal Memorandum of Understanding between NMMZ and EMA.

This must allow for a shared digital platform for development proposals and mandate NMMZ approval of any project in mandated sensitive areas, making heritage not an afterthought but an integral consideration in environmental licensing. Furthermore, NMMZ will be required to take responsibility for its in-house governance by establishing an independent, multi-member committee for AIA evaluation and audit to ensure there is no conflict of interest. Concurrently, a coordinated public campaign among developers, municipal planners, and consultancies must be organized to redefine heritage as not a restriction, but a valuable national asset that is a critical component of sustainable development.

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Conflicting Values and the Preservation of Heritage Sites: Case Studies from Masvingo, Zimbabwe.

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Abstract

This paper examines how conflicting values surrounding heritage sites compromise heritage preservation efforts. Focusing on the Masvingo Provincial Heroes Acre, Musimbira National Monument, Old Fort Victoria, and the Providential Pass in Masvingo, Zimbabwe, this paper explores how different actors are using the sites, the impact of the use on their preservation and the various ways in which actors can collaborate to preserve the sites. To gain a deeper understanding of the conflicting values associated with heritage sites, site visits, archival research, and semi-structured interviews were employed. The sites were visited in three different years. Archival research involved the use of journal articles and textbooks. A total of thirteen research participants were selected for the study using a purposive sampling method. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with staff from the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ), small-scale miners, and farmers with maize fields at Masvingo Provincial Heroes Acre, as well as local communities surrounding Musimbira National Monument. The results of the research indicate that a heritage site can be utilised differently by many people, and this compromises the conservation of the site. The Masvingo Provincial Heroes Acre, Musimbira National Monument, Old Fort Victoria, and the Providential Pass were affected in many ways due to the various activities happening around them. The study also found that little effort is being made to protect the sites from damage. The paper argues that the preservation of heritage sites is of importance, depending on how the sites are valued. The research is essential in that it reflects the various purposes a heritage site serves and the impact on its preservation.

Keywords: heritage sites; conflicting values; community participation; preservation; vandalism

Introduction

The paper explores how the conflicting values attached to Masvingo Provincial Heroes Acre, Musimbira National Monument, The Providential Pass, and the Old Fort Victoria by various players contribute to the preservation of these sites. It notes that there is often a belief that heritage sites hold the same meaning for all people. Nevertheless, the paper posits that the sites can be viewed in different ways by various people. A single heritage site can have economic, historic, political, social, scientific, aesthetic, and educational values, and these multiple values bring confusion in the preservation of the site. The study investigates the ways the heritage sites in question are used and valued by different players. The several ways in which they are used determine how the sites are preserved. Given the multiple values and uses the sites have, the research explores how the usages

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of the site compromise their preservation. The study also highlights the importance of raising awareness about the significance of the sites.

The National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ) is a government department responsible for preserving the country's cultural heritage sites. The NMMZ categorises its heritage in different forms, namely archaeological sites, historic buildings, liberation heritage, and historic sites. Masvingo Provincial Heroes Acre is categorised under liberation heritage. The Providential Pass and the Old Fort Victoria are classified as colonial heritage or historic sites. Musimbira National Monument is an archaeological site or a dry-stone-walled structure. The National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe categorises its monuments as follows: there are Class One (1) monuments, which are the most visited; Class Two (2) ones, which receive fewer tourists when compared to Class One and Class Three (3) memorial sites are the least visited. Masvingo Provincial Heroes Acre and Musimbira National Monument are classified as Class Two (2) monuments. The Providential Pass and the Old Fort Victoria are Class Three (3) monuments.

Sites that are classified as class two or three are more vulnerable to vandalism. This is because the sites receive less attention in terms of their preservation because they do not attract many tourists. Such is the case with sites like the Old Fort Victoria, Providential Pass, and Musimbira National Monument. These sites, therefore, are considered less valuable and are prone to vandalism. The way the heritage sites are categorised also determines the way they are preserved. Old Fort Victoria and the Providential Pass, for example, are colonial heritage sites, and because of their association with colonialism, they receive less attention in terms of their preservation. The socio-economic situation in the country also triggers the vandalism of the sites, as various players see economic potential in the sites. The sites are often exploited for economic reasons through the search for resources such as firewood, minerals, and grass for thatching houses, and through utilising open spaces for farming purposes.

Masvingo Provincial Heroes Acre, Musimbira National Monument, Old Fort Victoria, and the Providential Pass were 'vandalised' because of the different values that people attach to them. The Masvingo Provincial Heroes Acre has been encroached upon by local communities who farm within the landscape. To the neighbouring communities of the Provincial Heroes Acre, the space within the monument is a farming area. At Musimbira Monument, the dry-stone structures were removed by some members of the local community, who used the stone blocks to build their houses. At Old Fort Victoria, some members of the Johanne Marange eChishanu church once turned a section of the monument into a place of worship, which they refer to as '*sowe*' or '*masowe*'. The perimeter fence of the site was also stolen. The Providential Pass was vandalised by people seeking gold at the site and also by those constructing the Masvingo-Beitbridge highway. These activities at these sites reflect the multiple values that the sites have.

There has been little research on the effects of heritage sites having multiple values. This study explores this gap by first examining how various players use the sites in different ways. It then explores how the sites' preservation is in a deplorable state as a result of many people using them in different ways. Having realised the challenges the sites face, the paper highlights the importance of actors working together for the betterment of heritage sites.

Literature Review

Colonial Heritage Controversy

Soon after acquiring majority rule, many Southern African countries, including South Africa, Zambia, Namibia, and Zimbabwe, began advocating for the removal of colonial monuments (Magadzike, 2024). This was seen as a way of erasing the painful experiences that people went through during the colonial era. In South Africa, there was a call to remove Mahatma Gandhi's statue because of his association with the segregation of Black people (Qwatekana et al., 2021). A "Rhodes Must Fall" movement also called for the removal of Cecil John Rhodes' statue at the University of Cape Town (Qwatekana et al., 2021). The call for the removal of Cecil Rhodes' and Mahatma Gandhi's statues is a reflection of controversies surrounding colonial heritage. The once colonised society does not find colonial heritage as valuable. In Zimbabwe, the focus was on removing colonial statues and renaming towns and cities. For instance, the Cecil John Rhodes statue was removed from the City of Bulawayo and dumped in the backyard of the Natural History Museum (Magadzike, 2024). Names of towns and cities were changed, for example, Fort Victoria to Masvingo, Salisbury to Harare, Gwelo to Gweru, and Marandellas to Marondera. At a later stage in 2023, the focus shifted to the renaming of streets in most cities across the country. Destroying colonial monuments, therefore, was a deliberate move. It is something that was triggered by the memories of colonialism. There is a possibility that almost everyone in the country agreed with their removal. This is a situation that differs today, where monuments are given various meanings.

While other colonial monuments were destroyed, some were left intact. The ones that were left include forts and graves, such as Rhodes' grave and the Allan Wilson Memorial at Matobo World Heritage site. The monuments continue to be protected under the National Museums and Monuments (NMMZ) Act, Chapter 25:11, and their removal is considered an offence. Colonial heritage is not readily accepted in society, as alluded to by Nyambiya and Mutyandaedza (2019). Therefore, some people feel that it has to be demolished to erase the memory of colonisation. Rhodes' grave generates revenue; therefore, it is well-maintained and well-protected. The issue is not about valuing the grave, but rather what it brings to the country. Colonial heritage is received with mixed feelings in Zimbabwe. Some believe that the heritage needs to be preserved like other

heritage sites in the country, while others argue that the heritage is endowed with painful memories and that heritage practitioners should remove it (Nyambiya & Mutyandaedza, 2019). Nevertheless, colonisation of the country is part and parcel of the country's history, and the heritage left during the colonial period needs to be preserved. Preserving colonial heritage may not necessarily mean praising the colonisers, but it will serve as evidence of the country's colonisation.

Vandalism Drivers

Vandalism of monuments is not peculiar to Zimbabwe. Vandalism of heritage sites comes in various forms, namely graffiti, defacement, deliberate removal of monuments and objects, and negligence by authorities (Raiˇc & Jelinˇciˊc, 2025; Dominic, 2024). In Western countries, the vandalism of monuments is often caused by tourist activities, but in cases where graffiti or defacement is observed, the act is attributed to a psychological disorder on the part of the offender (Dominic, 2024). Qwatekana et al. (2021) note that vandalism of heritage sites in South Africa is intentional. Cases of vandalism on monuments occur mainly in towns (Qwatekana et al., 2021). In Tanzania, the rock art sites in the Iringa region were vandalised by people who set fire close to the paintings (Itambu & Bushozi, 2021).

Vandalism of monuments is rampant in Zimbabwe, but it is mostly carried out by local communities surrounding the heritage sites. This normally happens when the community feels that it has been excluded from the management of the heritage site. Such cases happened at Domboshava and at KwaVaMuzenda National Monuments. At Domboshava, the rock paintings were sprayed with paint (Mukuya et al., 2025). At KwaVaMuzenda National Monument, the exhibition was vandalised and the gate to the monument was removed by the local communities around Mucheke suburb in the City of Masvingo. The Mucheke community was angered by the fact that the monument was erected without their engagement or consultation. They were also not pleased with the fact that the road, which they usually use, had been closed.

Vandalism of monuments in Zimbabwe is not taken seriously by the NMMZ, but the extent to which sites such as Great Zimbabwe are vandalised remains to be evaluated. Sites like Domboshava Rock Art at KwaVaMuzenda National Monument, as earlier mentioned, were vandalised by local communities, but NMMZ took no action to penalise the wrongdoers. As a way of avoiding confrontations, NMMZ engaged the local communities in the management of the sites. This has been regarded as the most effective way to address vandalism of monuments. While dialogue with local communities has proven to be an ideal solution in heritage management, there are certain situations where communities may not be cooperative. For instance, communities may view heritage in diverse ways and may not advocate for its preservation. In such cases where

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controversies arise over the preservation of heritage, heritage practitioners can find innovative ways of engagement and awareness raising.

Vandalism may not always be executed deliberately, but can be triggered by socio-economic circumstances. Dominic (2024) notes that the economic situation in a country plays a role in having sites being vandalised. Giving an example of Khami, Makuvaza and Makuvaza (2013) highlight that the site is affected by people who fetch firewood and poach wildlife within the monument. People fetch firewood at Khami because there are electrical power shortages in the country. They also poach wildlife because they will be looking for meat to eat or sell. Similarly, at the heritage monuments in Kerala, India, vandalism occurs due to poverty and unemployment (Dominic, 2024). In such socio-economic circumstances, heritage sites are often at risk of destruction. It is likely that in such situations, no value is given to the heritage; rather, people view it as an unutilised space.

Community Participation

Many communities might not have links with the heritage site (Thodhlana et al., 2023), hence they pay less attention to the conservation of the sites. Communities that lack direct connections to heritage often fail to appreciate its original value. That is the reason why some of them end up vandalising heritage. The issue of community participation in heritage management is emphasised in existing literature, such as Mensah (2021) and Thodhlana et al. (2023). Mensah (2021) emphasises that communities need to be incorporated in the management of heritage sites. The challenge that is realised with the involvement of the local community is that they feel entitled to the heritage sites and think that they can override the heritage laws. There are situations where communities may not have an interest in managing the site, but they will still have an interest in using the site in ways they consider suitable. This can be realised at the Providential Pass, Musimbira, Masvingo Provincial Heroes Acre, and the Old Fort Victoria, where communities use these sites for various reasons.

Lack of interest in heritage management in Zimbabwe has been attributed to the influence of colonial history (Sinamai, 2021), where people were alienated from their heritage through the Land Apportionment Act of 1930. Through the Land Apportionment Act, many people were displaced from their heritage, and their communities were replaced by new individuals with no connection to the heritage (Thondlana et al., 2023). Makuvaza and Makuvaza (2013) argue that displaced people developed a negative attitude towards their heritage as they became separated from it. Nevertheless, people need to develop a positive attitude towards their heritage despite the way they were divorced from it during the colonial period. Lessons can be learnt from what Zimbabwean nationalists did with the Great Zimbabwe Monuments. With Great Zimbabwe, nationalists had to counter the

colonialists' narratives about the site by replacing them with their own, thereby making the site a symbol of the nation (Thondlana et al., 2021). The site is well-preserved due to its value in the country.

Heritage sites evolve in meaning over time. They can end up being used for purposes other than the initial ones. Sinamai (2021) highlights that site like Great Zimbabwe underwent a change in meaning, initially used for strictly private ritual purposes, but later became publicly accessible to common people. Changes in values for heritage sites can impact their conservation, as the sites often end up being exploited. This paper further explores this concept by examining how changes in heritage values impact sites. It discusses how the Providential Pass, Old Fort Victoria, Masvingo Provincial Heroes Acre, and the Musimbira National Monument have been influenced by many people who have altered their meanings, making them vulnerable to exploitation.

Methods

The research design for this study is a case study where the researcher investigated the conflicting values found at heritage sites and their impact on heritage. A purposive sampling method was employed where key actors such as NMMZ staff, neighbouring communities, small-scale miners, neighbouring communities of Musimbira Monument, and farmers at the Masvingo Provincial Heroes Acre were chosen. Narrative analysis was used in analysing data. The researcher chose key stories, which were then categorised into themes. Relevant information related to the research questions was chosen. Research participants were briefed about the purpose of the research. Informed consent was sought from the participants before the commencement of the research. The privacy of the participants was observed in the research.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with NMMZ staff, including curators, site custodians, and heritage education officers. The staff who were interviewed are from the Southern Region of NMMZ. They were interviewed because they are responsible for the management and conservation of the heritage sites. Interviews were also held with the neighbouring communities of Musimbira National Monument. Four members from the community were interviewed. The researcher chose two members who stay close to the site and two elderly members from the community who have been living in the area for a long period. These neighbouring communities are the people who interact with the monument almost daily; hence, they have a wealth of information about what takes place at the site. Three small-scale miners from Masvingo were also interviewed to understand how they value heritage sites, especially in cases where gold or other minerals have been discovered. The small-scale miners are from Zoma, Bondolfi, and Manyama. Their interviews were held separately as they stay far away from each other. Three farmers

with maize fields at the Masvingo Provincial Heroes Acre were interviewed to understand the values they attach to the site.

Site visits to all monuments were made in order to understand how the sites are being preserved and conserved over the years. Archival research was also utilised to gain more knowledge about the history of the heritage sites. The archival research involved consulting textbooks and journal articles.

Results

The results of this research are categorised into four sections, with each segment having its own outcomes. The final part of the results provides an overall overview of the monuments by the NMMZ.

Masvingo Provincial Heroes Acre

The Masvingo Provincial Heroes Acre is a place where liberation heroes from Masvingo Province are interred (See Figure 1). The people included are those who were liberation fighters, as well as males and females (*vanamujibha nanachimbwido*) who participated in the liberation struggle as collaborators serving at times as logistical corps. The Provincial Heroes Acre was declared a national monument in 2017 and is protected by the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe. It is situated on a hillside and is approximately four (4) km away from the city of Masvingo. The Provincial Heroes Acre covers an area of nine (9) hectares.

Figure 1: *Masvingo Provincial Heroes Acre. Picture by Tendai Zihove (2023)*

Due to its significance in the history of Zimbabwe's liberation, the Masvingo Provincial Heroes Acre is viewed as a revered shrine by the liberation war fighters, *zvimbwidos*, *mujibhas*, the Government of Zimbabwe, the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe, and other stakeholders. The fact that it is significant to the nation does not mean it holds the same significance for all people in the country. People from nearby suburbs have carved out farming plots within the national monument, as shown in Figure 2 below. The farmers claim that the land belongs to them. They argue that they have been using the space for a long time, and the land where they cultivate their crops is now theirs. The challenge faced at the site is that it lacks a perimeter fence. Therefore, people access it anyhow, and this exposes the monument to illegal activities being executed around it.

In some instances, people come to the site for picnics. Those who visit the site for picnic purposes might probably think that the place is a resort area where they can do such things. However, in Shona culture, grave sites are revered places where respect is required. As such, the Provincial Heroes Acre is probably not the ideal place for picnics. Certain sections of the shrine are littered with used condoms, and this might be considered the desecration of the place.

Some people use the site for dumping purposes. Rubbish is thrown at the entrance of the Provincial Heroes Acre (See Figure 2 below). This indicates that some people do not consider the site to be of any significance. Visitors to the site might not realise it as a national monument, but rather as a neglected burial area.

Figure 2: *The section showing maize fields and litter at the entrance of the shrine. Picture by Tendai Zihove (2023)*

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Some members of the Ropafadzo church/ *mapostori* set up a shrine within the monument in January 2025 and were asked to vacate the site by NMMZ in March 2025. The shrine is not the first one that was established at the site. There was another one that was situated on the hill slope in 2016, closer to where the graves are located. This suggests that the Provincial Heroes Acre has something that draws the *mapostori* to it. The research findings revealed that members of the *mapostori* are drawn to the Heroes' Acre because they seek to connect with the spirits of the people buried there. It is believed that the spirits of the dead assist them in their prophetic works.

When the NMMZ staff were asked about what they think about the illegal activities happening at the sacred shrine, they argued that arrangements are being made to place a precast wall or boundary partition at the site. They believe this will be the most effective way to prevent people from encroaching on the monument. The NMMZ staff also noted that the Provincial Heroes Acre is looked after by a site custodian and a security guard, and these assist in preventing some of the illegal activities happening at the shrine.

The Masvingo Provincial Heroes Acre is a site where NMMZ is expected to intervene, but so far, no action has been taken. With the illegal activities occurring at the Provincial Heroes Acre, NMMZ is expected to evict all farmers and other individuals who engage in such activities there. It is also expected that the government sponsors the boundary wall to protect the site from any encroachment. Nonetheless, little effort is being made to protect the site. It is also a reflection that the people who are buried there are not considered to have played a significant role in the liberation struggle, as compared to those at the National Heroes Acre. This is probably due to the creation of a hierarchy of heroes. The heroes are currently categorised into two levels: national and provincial, with the higher level being national hero. The national hero status entitles one to be buried at the National Heroes Acre. This is where the issue of assigning values to heritage is evident. If it were the National Heroes' Acre, there would be no illegal activities happening there. Since it is a Provincial Heroes Acre, the values associated with it may not align with those of the National Heroes Acre. As such, its preservation is not prioritised, and unauthorised activities within the monument largely continue unabated.

The values attached to the site are historic, economic, and social values. These values are realised in the way the site is used as a burial place of heroes and heroines; as a farming land; as a place for picnics and for church gatherings. Religious groups, such as the *mapostori,* reinterpret the site's spiritual significance, which illustrates the multiplicity of contested meanings and values. Farmers see an economic potential in the shrine by utilising the space that NMMZ is not currently using. The various activities at the site reveal the competing interests based on collective memory, political, and economic interests.

Musimbira

Musimbira is a small dry-stone structure located on the northern edge of Bikita District in Zimbabwe. The site is situated along the Masvingo-Nyika main road and is close to Bikita Minerals, a company that mines lithium in the area. Musimbira was designated a national monument in 1972. The dry-stone walls occupy about 1800 square metres. There are five main enclosures at the site, but these walls have since collapsed. A few walls on the site are still standing, and the outer perimeter wall is in rubble, as highlighted in Figures 3 and 4 below.

Figure 3: *Standing walls at the site. Picture by Tendai Zihove (2021)*

Figure 4: *Outer perimeter wall at Musimbira. Picture by Tendai Zihove (2021)*

The NMMZ staff members noted that the stone structures were looted from their original positions by some members of the local community, who used the stones to build their own houses. It is believed that those who loot the stones feel that the structures are just heaps of stones that have been abandoned in the bush. Some members of the local community argue that people who take the stones are recent arrivals in the village who are unaware of the site's significance. They noted that the stones were taken during the night. Local community members said that they could have prevented people from taking the stones if they had been taken during the day. Other community members have also pointed out that the site is prone to vandalism due to a lack of proper care of the monument by responsible authorities.

NMMZ, on the other hand, is neglecting the site, as evidenced by the extensive vegetation cover at the site (See Figure 3). The structures at the site are overgrown with vegetation. The challenge of having lots of vegetation around stone walls is that it affects the walls in several ways. The roots of trees can disturb the foundation of walls, potentially causing them to collapse. Walls can split in cases where trees grow between the stone blocks. In other instances, trees can displace upper blocks, thereby disturbing the walls. These structural challenges have been affecting Musimbira National Monument for an extended period, to the point where many stone structures at the site are collapsing. Despite all these challenges, the NMMZ has made little effort to restore the stone structures at the site. NMMZ highlighted that they do not have funds to conserve the site, hence they focus more on those that bring revenue. This explains why other dry stone wall structures in the country that generate revenue, such as Great Zimbabwe, Khami, and Naletale, receive a fair share of conservation measures. So, this is a matter of priorities in terms of which stone structures should be preserved. With the state of Musimbira, it is expected that people think the location has little or no significance to society; hence, why they take stones from the place.

Musimbira is seen as a provider of stone blocks that can be used to build houses by neighbouring communities to the site. This is the value that some members of the local community attribute to the site. Other members of the local community who do not act after realising that the stones have been stolen could be viewing the site as of no importance. If it were that important to them, they could have taken measures to protect the site from further damage. On another note, reporting about the theft of stone blocks might make them suspects, so they prefer to keep quiet. The NMMZ still regards the site as a national monument, but little effort is being made to preserve it. Some of the dry-stone wall monuments, as discussed previously, are being conserved, while Musimbira receives less care, indicating that Musimbira is not considered equally important. The way the monuments are classified could be the reason why Musimbira receives less attention.

Conflicting Values - Zihove

The blame for the status of the site is on both sides, the local community and NMMZ. NMMZ deliberately neglected the site by not restoring the walls and clearing vegetation. The neighbouring communities further caused a lot of damage to the site by removing the stones from the site. While the communities have vandalised the monument, it is important to consider the reasons that drove them to loot the stones. The cost of living in the country could have driven them to use the readily available resources at Musimbira. There is also a possibility that they chose stones over bricks because of their long-term durability and strength. As the site was also not receiving proper care, the community could have assumed that the place was an abandoned area where they could get free resources to build their houses. This is the dilemma that neglected heritage sites face. Musimbira has lost its architectural, cultural, and historic values due to vandalism by omission (by NMMZ) and intentional vandalism (by neighbouring communities).

Old Fort Victoria

Old Fort Victoria is the first town of Masvingo (Sayce, 1978). The town was established in the 1890s. The area was deserted due to water shortages, and the Pioneer Column relocated to the current town, where the City of Masvingo is now situated (Sayce, 1978). The features found at the site include remains of house foundations. There is also a plaque which shows that the place is the first town to be settled in the country (See Figure 5 below).

Figure 5: *The Old Fort Victoria. Picture by Tendai Zihove (2023)*

A member of the Johanne Marange eChishanu Apostolic Church/ *mapostori* once erected a shrine at the site. The results of the study reveal that when NMMZ visited the site for inspection in September 2017, they were told to leave the area as it was a sacred place. One of the leaders of the church told the NMMZ staff, *"Matsika sowe redu! Munoziva henyu kuti kutsika sowe remunhu kunorevei?"* (You have stepped on our shrine. Do you know what it means to step on someone's shrine? You are going to face the consequences). These utterances indicate that the shrine had been established for quite some time. As a result, they felt entitled to the place. NMMZ also felt that their heritage site had been invaded. The members of the apostolic church viewed the site as a "*sowe*" (holy place/shrine), while NMMZ saw it as a monument. These mixed values about the site brought tensions between the two parties. Quarrels over the control of the place emerged as each party felt confident that Old Fort Victoria belonged to them. Nevertheless, the apostolic sect left the area in November 2017 after NMMZ staff told them about the NMMZ Act that forbids people from using the site without the authorisation of the Executive Director. It is most likely that the *mapostori* (as they are affectionately known) left the place, probably due to fear of being arrested for violating the NMMZ Act.

The members of the Johanne Marange eChishanu did little damage to the site. One of the reasons their presence at the site should be applauded is that they assisted NMMZ in maintaining the site, as they consistently cleared vegetation. As the place had become their shrine, or "*sowe*," it was sacred and had to be maintained at all costs. Although they maintained the site, they were unfamiliar with some of the features surrounding it, which include remains of house foundations and ancient mounds. These features, according to some NMMZ staff, were damaged when the *mapostori* cleared vegetation at the site.

The perimeter fence at the site was stolen in 2014, which is a clear indication of vandalism. Some of the houses near the monument are built within the monument's grounds. The encroachment of people into the monument could have been triggered by the fact that the area looks deserted. Moreso, it is most likely that the political leadership in search of support and votes has ignored the legal. The NMMZ stated that it will liaise with the Masvingo City Council to ensure that the buffer zone of the monument is not invaded by people occupying the land around the site.

At Old Fort Victoria, the *mapostori* were able to have their '*sowe*' because NMMZ visits the place once a year. The *mapostori* could have concluded that the area was abandoned, hence they felt that they could occupy the place and have their shrine there. Once an area is not visited regularly, it is prone to being used in various ways. The Old Fort Victoria is likely to be vandalised as the area around it is now being developed to become a residential suburb. Residential stands are being allocated around the Clipsham area where the Old Fort Victoria is situated. Due to these developments, there is a chance

that there will be no evidence to show that the area was the earliest town in Zimbabwe. These are some of the ways heritage is lost.

The case of Old Fort Victoria is evidence of how heritage sites' narratives change. The area is known to be of spiritual significance. The Pioneer Column is believed to have targeted such spiritual places. This is where they set up their first town, and it became a historic place, thus assuming a historic value. The NMMZ seems to prioritise the historic value over the spiritual one since it attaches historical meanings to the site more than the spiritual aspects. The site is considered a historical site based on the history of the colonisation of the country. By virtue of this, the members of the Johanne Marange eChishanu could have been right in finding spiritual healing at the site. As such, the sites have two major values that need to be respected. Nevertheless, the spiritual value is subdued, and any person who attaches that value to the site is considered an 'intruder'. These types of contested values are some of the aspects that bring confusion to the preservation of heritage sites.

Providential Pass

The Providential Pass lies 10 km South of the city of Masvingo on the Masvingo-Beitbridge road, and is one of the first colonial monuments established in the country. The Pioneer Column found the Providential Pass on their route northwards. On their way northwards, they passed through the southern areas such as the Runde River, where there was a lot of heat (Sayce, 1978). The Pioneer Column then reached a cool plateau (Sayce, 1978). The plateau was named Providential Pass because they had discovered the right path, which led them to a cooler environment (Sayce, 1978). The discovery of the pass was a fortunate one, hence the name Providential. The Providential Pass was built of concrete (See Figure 6) and had eight pillars that were supported by a chain.

Figure 6: *The Providential Pass. Picture by Tendai Zihove (2023)*

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Figure 7: *Providential Pass after being destroyed. Picture by Tendai Zihove (2024)*

The area is now a monument, but it is viewed from different angles by people in society. The NMMZ views the site as having historical value, and the organisation aims to preserve it. The society, especially small-scale miners (*makorokoza*), views it as a place where Whites hid treasures and feels that the monument should be excavated in search of minerals that could have been hidden underneath. The monument has since been dug, and it is now damaged (See Figure 7 above). For the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructural Development, the site is a lay-by. Further damage to the monument occurred during the construction of the Harare-Beitbridge highway. The lay-by was extended to where the monument lies, as shown in Figure 7 above. The pillars at the site were removed from their original positions. One of the pillars has been written in a way that anyone passing by would think it is someone's grave. The pillar is inscribed with the name 'Mambo Zago 1969-1982'. This act distorts the history associated with the site. The people who wrote the pillar are not known, but it was likely written by those who destroyed the site. The NMMZ highlighted that an Archaeological Impact Assessment was done before the road was constructed, and the Providential Pass was considered as one of the monuments that needed to be preserved. The NMMZ also made efforts to stop the site from being vandalised during the construction of the Harare-Beitbridge highway. Nevertheless, this did not materialise.

Small-scale miners have different sentiments for the site. They do not see the value of the monument, particularly the structures that are there. The value that they attach to the site is what they assume is hidden underneath the structures. Some of the interviewed

small-scale miners said that *"Zvinhu izvi zvakasiiwa nevarungu saka hazvichina nebasa rese"* (These things were left by Whites, so they are now useless). As such, they feel they can vandalise the property since it is no longer serving the purpose for which it was built. Some small-scale miners indicated that mining is more important than heritage sites. They mentioned that mining boosts the country's economy more than tourism, hence it should be prioritised in the economic sector. Heritage sites, therefore, are seen as of less significance amongst the small-scale miners.

The value of the road being constructed was seen as more important than a colonial structure. To the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructural Development, the structure was just a mere lay-by, while the NMMZ valued it as a monument. The small-scale miners who vandalised the monument viewed it as a 'gold mine', hence it had to be dug. These multiple values attached to the Providential Pass compromised its conservation.

National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe's position on the conservation of the monuments in question

Some employees from the NMMZ highlighted that they lack adequate staff, making it difficult for them to conduct regular monument inspections at other sites within the Southern Region of the NMMZ. They also said that a shortage of labour does not allow them to regularly conserve the sites that are far away from their offices.

Discussion

The study has shown that the sites in question are being vandalised without any action being taken by NMMZ to rescue them from further damage. The main challenge is that they are categorised as of lesser significance, especially Providential Pass, Old Fort Victoria, and Musimbira. As such, their preservation is not taken seriously. Conservation of sites is a preserve of Class One (1) monuments such as Matopos, Great Zimbabwe, and National Heroes Acre in Harare. The NMMZ is also doing less in terms of raising awareness about the importance of heritage sites. Sites classified as Class Three (3) receive less attention in terms of conservation and advertisement. If the sites are advertised sufficiently, they will attract tourists and be able to sustain themselves. A site like Old Fort Victoria is likely to attract many tourists to the country due to its significance as the country's first permanent Western-style urban settlement. Nevertheless, because there is less effort to sell the site to the people, it remains less known.

Across all sites, there are similarities in the way communities value heritage (See Table 1 below). The common values found among the communities are the economic and spiritual values. For the NMMZ, the values that the Providential Pass, Old Fort Victoria, Musimbira, and Masvingo Provincial Heroes Acre have are historic and scientific. One

thing that can be noted is that actors use the sites differently. Communities use the sites to improve their livelihoods by farming, digging for gold and removing stones for building purposes. The NMMZ, as the custodian of the sites, might consider the values attached to the sites by other players as a threat to heritage. While this is true, the vandalism of the sites could not have happened if the NMMZ were strict about the conservation of these heritage spots. The NMMZ is expected to intervene when heritage sites are being encroached upon, but nothing has happened. In a way, the NMMZ is also vandalising the heritage sites by neglecting them. Countries such as Italy, Australia and Germany have strict laws for vandalism of heritage sites and objects (Raič & Jelinčić, 2025). One can be jailed or asked to pay a fine for vandalising monuments. If the NMMZ is to employ similar laws used by Italy, Australia and Germany, the heritage sites will survive for a long period. Once the heritage is lost, it is lost forever and cannot be replaced. As such, if preservation of heritage sites is not prioritised, the heritage is likely to continue facing serious conservation challenges.

The trend of vandalising colonial heritage is becoming prevalent in Zimbabwe, particularly in Masvingo Province. The grave of Willie (Felix) Posselt, an antiquarian who looted cultural artefacts at Great Zimbabwe, was also vandalised. The grave is in Gutu, within the Zoma Communal Land area. Just like at the Providential Pass, small-scale miners vandalised the grave in search of treasure. This suggests that all sites associated with colonialism are believed to have hidden treasure around them. This is also a meaning attached to colonial heritage nowadays, especially among small-scale miners. Vandalism of colonialists' graves is also a reflection that the graves are of no use to Blacks especially considering that the same Whites desecrated their ancestors' graves at places such as Mwalindidzimu and Great Zimbabwe.

Below is a thematic table summarising how multiple values pose a threat to heritage sites:

Site	Community Value	NMMZ value and views	Outcome/ Threat
Musimbira	Architectural value (for use in building homes).	Scientific and cultural values Lack of funding	Loss of the site; Bad image of the local community
Masvingo Provincial Heroes Acre	Economic value (proceeds from the fields); Social Value (picnic); Historic value	Historic value (liberation heritage). Lack of funding	Negative perceptions of the site.

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	(liberation heritage); Spiritual value (place of worship).		
Old Fort Victoria	Spiritual value (place of worship)	Historic value (Zimbabwe's first town) Lack of funding	Loss of the site's identity
Providential Pass	Economic value (search for minerals); Social value (lay-by)	Historic value (colonial heritage) Lack of funding	Irreversible damage; defacement

Table 1: Values and threats to heritage sites

Recommendations

The NMMZ needs to increase its awareness campaigns for the heritage sites in the country. This will help raise awareness about the significance of the sites. There is also a need to give communities the responsibility to look after the sites and ensure that they are not vandalised. Regular monument inspections of all sites should be conducted. When inspections are done regularly, the sites are likely to be conserved. Considering the illegal activities being conducted at monuments, the NMMZ needs to adopt a site programme to alleviate the burden that may be placed on conserving heritage sites within their jurisdiction. The adopt-a-site programme can be extended to communities and the *mapostori*. Currently, this programme applies to three sites in Masvingo: Kubiku, Majiri, and Chibvumani. The nearby schools that have adopted the monuments are Kubiku Primary School for the Kubiku National Monument, Mamutse Primary School for the Chibvumani National Monument, and Chandipwisa Primary School for the Majiri National Monument. Introducing an adopt-a-site programme might help in reducing the illegal activities happening around monuments. Further to this, there is a need to train communities and *mapostori* on how to preserve heritage sites, for instance, the restoration of walls and vegetation clearance at sites, without damaging the features. This training can also be introduced as a module in Heritage Studies at primary and secondary levels so that the younger generation becomes aware of the importance of preserving heritage.

With the rate at which heritage sites are being vandalised, there is a need for NMMZ to tighten heritage laws so that anyone who violates them faces the full force of the law. NMMZ also need to take the preservation of heritage sites seriously. There is a need for

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NMMZ to set aside funds for the preservation of heritage sites, otherwise, the country will end up having fewer of these.

Conclusion

The study explored the different values attached to heritage sites, and how they impact on heritage preservation. The findings reveal that the major issues affecting heritage sites are their negligence and lack of awareness raising by the custodian, NMMZ. The negligence of the sites gives room to different actors exploiting them. The study has shown how the sites were vandalised in various ways, including theft of perimeter fence and stones. The effects associated with vandalised sites are that they end up having low visitorship, and tourists having negative perceptions about them. Given the negatives associated with sites being exploited, there is a need to improve their preservation and to increase public awareness campaigns about the sites.

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

Acknowledgements

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Linguistic Adulteration of the Shona Culture? An Ubuntu Perspective

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Abstract

Zimbabwe constitutionally recognises sixteen (16) languages. Of these officially recognised languages, only English is a foreign language. Be that as it may, its hegemony is all over the country as the de facto lingua franca. Against that backdrop, this paper argues that the dominance of the English language has corrupted lived and liveable philosophies such as Ubuntu/Unhu. Utilising the Shona people as its case study and guided by the Ubuntu/Unhu philosophy, this paper holds that the multilingual situation whereby English dominates the language landscape, though critical in bridging communication gaps, has far-reaching consequences in as far as upholding people's Ubuntu/Unhu and culture is concerned. This argument is guided and informed by the socialist perspective and the lingo-culturalists' standpoint that language is not only a means of communication but also a carrier of culture and a purveyor of political thought and ideology. This treble characteristic of any language, which English is not an exception to, has culminated in it exuding cannibalistic tendencies on the indigenous languages' thoroughgoing cultural nuggets such as Ubuntu/Unhu. Since Ubuntu/Unhu focuses on the whole person in terms of upbringing, the assimilation and continuous use of English throughout various spheres of life has perpetuated cultural genocide. By opting for English wherever culturally sensitive topics are debated, foreign norms, values and beliefs are (un)consciously spewed to avoid culturally sensitive words in the vernacular. Though the intention is to censor what are termed unprintable words in the vernacular, the consequences of the fluid identities are far-reaching in as far as upholding Ubuntu/Unhu is concerned since cultural groundings are slowly being eroded. Though this study focuses on the effects of English culture and language on Shona, the writer acknowledges the impact that other languages in Zimbabwe have.

Keywords: Ubuntu/Unhu, lingua franca, culturicide, multilingual, lingo-culturalist

Background

Shona is a language spoken by a large number of the Zimbabweans. The presence of Shona is also felt in neighbouring countries such as Mozambique and Zambia. In South Africa and even Botswana it is now widely spoken because of the Zimbabwean Diaspora. There are also Shona speakers in Kenya. The Shona society, like any other, has an unwritten code of behaviour which spells out acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and speech, particularly in the public space, so that one's behaviour and speech do not cause discomfort to the listeners (Mubonderi and Mpofu-Hamadziripi, 2018). Ingrained in the Shona language is the Shona culture. Language is culturally transmitted, which implies that people acquire language as a component of the culture they learn (Mhute, 2015). Culture is also imparted through language which means the promotion of language ensures the promotion of culture and vice versa. Furthermore, language can be used as a tool to change or maintain the culture. This resonates with Masaka and Chemhuru (2011), who state that the Shona possess much that is worth retaining and the prospects are that they will save a good deal of it in succeeding generations. As with other indigenous groups, the Shona are bound by Ubuntu/Unhu principles which govern the behaviour exhibited and expected in Shona speaking communities. Hence, the Shona language needs to be preserved and passed down. Previous researchers have tended to shy away from the fact that the community's attitude towards English and code-mixing is paving way for the use of English terms instead of existing Shona ones, hence Shona first language learners are now acquiring Shona that is diluted with English expressions (Matandare and Mugomba, 2016). Sadly, the dilution of the language implies the watering down of the culture and the death of Shona together with its culture. Crystal (2000) notes that language death is a process that affects speech communities where the level of linguistic competence that speakers possess of a given language variety is decreased. This eventually results in the decline and final disappearance of native and fluent speakers of the variety. However, it is essential to recognise that extrinsic factors do not always drive language changes; the language also has a natural evolution, and it adapts to society's needs (Bolban-Abad and Hanifi, 2014).

English Language in Zimbabwe

English is spoken as a second language by most Zimbabweans. Though it is taught up to university level just like Shona and Ndebele, it is the language that guarantees one access to scarce resources both nationally and internationally (Mhute, 2015). Those who are incompetent in it are disadvantaged because the language is the main medium of instruction throughout the education system, a measure of educational achievement and an important qualification for higher education and employment. As explained by Ndhlovu (2009), given that Zimbabwe was a British colony for close to a century, colonial policies

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ensured the entrenchment of English as the language of record and documentation. The importance of English as a medium of record has cascaded down to other linguistic facets, rendering other indigenous languages, such as Shona, less important. The perceived raising of English at the expense of indigenous languages is in response to the demand for English in business, trade and education. Mhute (2015) points out that the Shona people have developed a negative attitude towards their first language; they are eager to develop their ability to communicate in English to greater heights, as it is the only avenue to scarce resources as well as international communication in the global world:

> *In most middle- and high-class Shona homes, there are English terms that are used in everyday conversation slowly replacing the Shona words. Language learners acquire these terms instead of the Shona ones at the language development stage. They only come to learn the Shona terms when they go to school and start learning Shona as a subject* (Matandare and Mugomba, 2016).

This implies that the resultant code-mixing leads to the dilution of the Shona language as the English words replace Shona ones causing a decline in its use.

Problem Statement

Language choice and acquisition are heavily influenced by the perceived power a language wields. The prominence and dominance of the English Language on the Zimbabwean linguistic landscape threatens to hamper the preservation, teaching and passing down of Shona cultural norms and values. This paper seeks to analyse how the ever-increasing use and preference of English seemingly leads to linguistic adulteration of the Shona culture.

Aim

The study aims to explore the role of language in transmitting cultural norms and values preserving or destroying Ubuntu/Unhu with specific focus on the perceived effects of English on Shona culture.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

i.   How do cultural norms surrounding Ubuntu/Unhu intersect with language to shape the individual?
ii. How do the Shona people understand the terms language and culture?
iii. How can Ubuntu/Unhu principles be upheld through language and culture?

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Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the Ubuntu/Unhu philosophy. Ubuntu/Unhu is principally a normative ethical system among the people of Southern Africa (Ewuoso and Hall, 2019). These ethics are learnt, preserved and passed on through the generations. Language plays a pivotal role in ensuring that these ethics are upheld. Ubuntu/Unhu has emerged as a global favourite in a space that desires a diversity of worldviews and global naturalism (Moyo, 2021). As put forward by Khan and Ntakana (2023), Ubuntu/Unhu ploughs togetherness where an individual does not survive alone but with and through others. The existence of various languages affords individuals the opportunity to converse in languages of their choice. With most people being ignorant about the fact that language carries culture, language choices and language use emanating from the dual and/or triple heritage are arguably a direct result of fluid identities, and promote adulteration of culture. This adulteration, it can be argued, occurs due to the perceived loss of cultural identity and the failed preservation of linguistic heritage which occurs when topics ordinarily censored become commonplace discussions. As much as Ubuntu/Unhu holds African societies together, its knowledge and cultural system is rapidly being expropriated through modernisation and globalisation (Khan and Ntakana, 2023). The love for the English language among the Shona-speaking community and its rampant use in everyday communication and as a medium of instruction continuously sees the intrusion of foreign mannerisms in everyday conversations. In their daily conversations, due to code-mixing, the middle- and high-class society can hardly finish a simple Shona structure without bringing in English terms; even when there is a Shona term to use, they replace it with an English one (Matandare and Mugomba, 2016). For example, *Mai vaenda ku*hospital or *Ndichaenda ku*town *masikati*. The terms 'hospital' and 'town' feature prominently in day-to-day conversation even though the Shona equivalents are there, that is, *chipatara* and *dhorobha* respectively.

Conceptualising Ubuntu/Unhu in Language in the 21st Century

The philosophy of Ubuntu/Unhu is governed by several factors in the 21st century. Ubuntu/Unhu as a philosophy is based on generic life values of justice, responsibility, equality, collectiveness, relatedness, reciprocity, love, respect, helpfulness, community, caring, dependability, sharing, trust, integrity, unselfishness, and social change (Mayaka and Truell, 2021). All these should, however, be seen as present in a 21st-century society characterised by the ever-increasing fluid identities. These fluid identities, though inevitable, impact the linguistic heritage of the people. To counter this, Mourad (2018:8) posits:

> *Learners of English worldwide need to recognise the importance of learning about the culture of the other in order to reduce stereotypes and clichés and*

also to avoid cultural clashes and misunderstandings; not only this, by understanding the culture of the other, they will gain insights into their own culture and understand it in another way than they did before.

This speaks to a need for balance and restraint in knowing when English ceases to be a means of communication but a propeller of moral degradation.

Literature Review

The intersection of language and culture is rooted in the understanding of the dynamics between language and identity and language and culture. Language and culture are intertwined; they cannot be separated. Language can be understood only if it is linked to society. Generally, individuals use language to identify themselves and speak about their origins, feelings, thoughts, and communities (Hamidi, 2023). When one understands a language, they should also understand the cultural implications in the context used. Through language, the beliefs of a community are reflected highlighting what is respectful and important to that culture thus leading to identity formation. Language is not merely a tool for communication but a powerful medium through which individuals express, negotiate, and construct their identities (Zrike, 2025). Figurative expressions often provide insights into the values, moral lessons and cultural norms of societies. Additionally, languages lead to the formation of language communities. These communities have a sense of belonging as they are brought together by their common language despite the variations resulting from accents and dialects. Nxumalo and Mncube (2019) posit that if one wants to achieve successful engagement with members of the community, respect and dignity are the requirements. This is also echoed by Zvitambo (2017), who states that Ubuntu/Unhu's values incorporate caring and understanding of one another. Respect is often measured by the language one uses which is 'culturally appropriate' and considers the setting and people one is in conversation with. Through language, cultural groups learn about their culture from stories and history. As a social tool, language is instrumental in maintaining social relationships, relationships that are governed by norms and values. It is crucial to note that the meaning of words and phrases differs depending on context. This then points to the fact that language cannot be understood fully without culture, as how the language is used responds to cultural expectations. Kangira and Mudzingwa (2003) assert this when they posit that the core ethical values of a nation's culture are transmitted from generation to generation through the interactions of children with their parents and surrounding people. In addition to that, a person's value -orientation is not innate, but is rather acquired during childhood, and is passed on from one generation to the next through language (Mhute, 2015). The varying language communities may have different ways of using language as is dictated by its cultural norms and values.

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The language and thought relationship proposed by Sapir (1921) and Whorf (1956) who postulate that thoughts, perceptions and how one understands culture are influenced by the language one speaks (Hussein, 2012). The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis holds that the semantic categories of one's native language influence thought, and that as a result, speakers of different languages think differently (Regier and Xu, 2018). The first language is the one in which the world is defined. The implication, therefore, is that the more one is exposed to languages other than one's mother tongue, the more exposed they become to cultures that are not their own leading to multiple definitions of the world. This raises the opportunities for the corruption of one's culture. This corruption may then affect how celebrations, ceremonies and rituals are conducted, if at all, as demanded by culture. Cultural continuity may thus be compromised. Shahrebabaki (2018) argues that there is a seamless interaction between language and social identity, and this interaction is multi-faceted and contributes to myriads of ramifications. Language and identity points to the role of language in transmitting cultural norms and values. Language plays a central role in the formation and expression of identity, serving as a key marker of group membership (Zrike, 2025). This group is governed by a specific set of norms and values. The social identity theory assumes that individuals derive a significant portion of their self-concept from the groups to which they belong. As suggested by Story and Walker (2016: 138), "identity refers to specific sets of characterisations expressed in particular ways, to which both individuals and groups may subscribe in order to emphasise who they are and to distinguish themselves from others." Fluid identities and linguistic heritage have an immense impact on Ubuntu/Unhu. Fluid identity is one which is not rigid, whose boundary is fuzzy and permeable and can still support some notion of free will and responsibility (Hongladarom, 2019). The way in which individuals express their identities through language is dynamic. This dynamism is caused by factors such as multilingualism, code-switching, variations in language, cultural movements as well as youth language and slang. The interplay between culture, personal identity and language are brought out through fluid identities. Speaking multiple languages and switching between these languages allows an individual to skirt around the different confines of cultural spaces as they express themselves in their language of choice, bound by the context, audience and setting of the discourse. Individuals with fluid identities can communicate with diverse groups of people. This often leads one to explore their identity as they interact with people from different social groups. An understanding of the fluidity of identities allows one to have an appreciation of the negative effects of these identities regarding the preservation of cultural norms and values. Zimbabwe is a case in point where fluid identities exist, fuelled by multilingualism, code-switching, dialect variations, and online communication. The question is thus, since language is a carrier of culture, can cultural values and norms of the Shona be preserved with the existence of these fluid identities? From an ecological perspective, identities are specific mind-sets representing themselves in divergent ways of talking, behaving, and writing, eating, and dressing (Stibbe, 2015). Fluid identities

influence language, which, as alluded to before, carries culture. Though the use of multiple languages may result in mutual intelligibility in society, it may be argued that the purity of individual languages is compromised. This is exemplified by the way in which thoughts, intentions, and ideas are expressed at will in one language but may be socially unacceptable in another. Culturally sensitive words and expressions are easily spoken in English, words and expressions which, ordinarily, are avoided in Shona. Individuals may then be marginalised by their own language community if they exude cultural traits not in tandem with those of their language community.

Methodology

The study is within the qualitative paradigm as a case study. A case study research design of the Shona-speaking people in Gweru urban was used to identify the phenomenon faced by these speakers. Interviews, focus group discussions, and observations were the data collection tools used. Purposive sampling was used to identify the 25 participants in the study. The participants were purposively selected, targeting information-rich pockets of the Shona society in Gweru urban. The participants include teenagers, the elderly, students, and educationists. Gweru was chosen because it is at the centre of Zimbabwe and comprises people with diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Findings and Discussion

Linguistic Adulteration of Culture?

The colonial influence of English has continued, though independence was attained over forty years ago. By virtue of its status as the language of communication, English has had a privileged status. Its importance has grown in stature since independence because it completes the 'O' Level certificate. It is the language used in the business environment, and it is the medium of instruction in schools and colleges. It is a lingua franca. As a lingua franca, it opens opportunities for trade and business with countries worldwide. As a result, the general populace has gravitated towards the use of English at the expense of Shona. To ensure they are well versed with the language, the use of English has permeated the home as a means of preparing the children to use it in the outside world. Yet again, in doing so, the English culture is assimilated with its mannerisms that are not always in sync with those of the traditional Shona speaker.

The study found that speaking in English and assimilating its culture is viewed as prestigious by the participants interviewed.

> *Student 1: It is cool to speak in English both at home and with my friends. Speaking in Shona is a bit backward (laughs).*

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> *Elderly 2: My grandchildren are very intelligent. They speak fluent English. They have a bright future ahead of them.*

The implications from the excerpts are that English is perceived as superior and mastery of the language, in turn, implies that the speaker too becomes superior. It also seemingly creates a sense of intelligence, even though in reality this may not be the case.

The participants acknowledged that there are differences between English and Shona.

> *Student 1: Shona does not always have specific words to explain a concept. It becomes easier to use English or we come up with our own terms to explain what we want to say.*

The differences between English and Shona are in the way of speaking, the choice of words and the tone of voice among others. Student 1's assertion that they come up with their own terms insinuates the concept of Shonglish which, according to Chidora (2024) is a direct translation from Shona to English. All these are means through which Ubuntu/Unhu principles can be reflected. The multilingual situation in Zimbabwe means there is exposure to other cultures through language. These languages do not always share the same dos and don'ts regarding topics that may or may not be discussed.

> *Student 2: My mother is Shona and my father is Ndebele. At school, we use English most of the time. At home, we use all three languages.*

The bilingual and sometimes multilingual situation in the home means that the Shona acquired is no longer in its original form. Linguistic practices, languages and dialects are all encompassed in linguistic heritage. The interchanging of languages in the home makes it difficult to differentiate the linguistic heritage of one language from another leading to the linguistic adulteration of cultures as cultural identity is compromised. Cultural identity is an aspect of linguistic heritage as it not only reveals the community's traditions but values and history as well.

The findings also showed the differences in greetings. Greetings in African languages are not just for greeting per se, but are also meant to find out how the recipient is. To find out how one spent the day, "*Maswera sei*?" (Good afternoon) is used. The use of the plural in *Maswera?* (Afternoon) instead of *Waswera? (*Afternoon*)* as in "*Waswera sei?"* (Good afternoon) points to the collectiveness of the greeting and representativeness and respect as well as the speaker will be asking if all is well even at home. The same applies to the response given, "*Taswera kana maswerawo*" (We are fine, thank you, how are you?). This resonates with the findings of Manyonganise (2023), in Shona, when it is morning, they ask '*Mamuka sei*?' (How did you wake up?) Such a greeting is an inquiry about the state of affairs in the home and immediate environment, such as health. The expected response is '*Tamuka kana mamukawo?*' (We have woken up well, if you woke up well as well). In other words, one is saying I can only say I had a good sleep if yours was good

too. The example above points to the principle of Ubuntu/Unhu, which emphasises that one's wellness depends on the wellness of others around him/her. The theoretical thread in Ubuntu/Unhu lays emphasis on the collective first before individualistic needs are met and the individual cannot be divorced from being a social actor without the family, community and African society, which provides social cohesion, social order, and stability (Khan and Ntakana 2023). The same greeting in English does not indicate that one's wellness depends on the wellness of the other. A simple 'Good morning' warrants a 'Good morning' in response. In this instance, the Shona greeting reflects Ubuntu/Unhu. As African philosophy has long been established through Ubuntu/Unhu, there is a family atmosphere, that is, a kind of philosophical affinity and kinship among and between the indigenous people of Africa (Ramose, 1999). There is, therefore, a need to uphold the language to ensure the continuity of cultural norms and values.

Following globalisation, contemporary trends, and human rights advocacy, we now talk about anything. In primary schools, infants are taught not to allow anyone to touch their bodies, especially their private parts. As a result, the phrase, "don't touch" is commonly used. Though the teachings are meant to protect children by making them aware of what is wrong and what is right, the teachings, however, open the minds of the learners. They are thus exposed early in life to aspects they would have traditionally been made aware of in their teenage years. Discussions on topics such as genital organs occur from as early as the Early Childhood Development (ECD) level in schools. However, these topics are not openly discussed in the African culture, and when discussed, euphemisms are used for genital organs, unlike in English. The study revealed that the school curriculum involves teaching and discussion of topics regarded as culturally sensitive. These topics are discussed in a classroom setup with both boys and girls.

> *Educationist 3: As we teach in English, we use words that are explicit and not roundabout, as is the case in Shona. Learners quickly and easily understand the topic at hand.*

> *Student 3: We cannot run away from what is in the syllabi. We use the words that are used there to refer to the body parts.*

The learners are therefore unable to avoid some culturally sensitive words and topics as this may affect their progression in formal schooling. Respect and dignity, as values of Ubuntu/Unhu and cornerstones in the African culture, are compromised because of the conversations that occur among modern day Shona speakers. Usually, these conversations disregard normal Shona norms as topics of discussion are diverse with minimal censor as to what is discussed which may include taboos.

In Shona speech communities, as is other cases as that of Ancient Hebrew, you will hear people say, for instance, "*Ndichamboenda kunozvibatsira* (lit. I am going to help

myself = meaning going to excrete). About sexual intercourse, euphemistic expressions are used such as *vakarara vese* (they slept together); *vakasangana* (they met), both referring to the fact that the act of sexual intercourse was performed (Mubonderi and Mpofu-Hamadziripi, 2018).

In English, however, as indicated by the findings from the focus group discussion, phrases such as "they had sex/ we had sex" are commonly used making the act appear trivial. The shyness, for example, which may be expressed when speaking of sex in Shona may not be exhibited when discussing the same topic in English. However, despite the ease with which issues may be discussed in seemingly normal settings, those same words adulterate the Shona culture. Values and norms are compromised when culturally sensitive topics are openly discussed. Thus, the more a Shona speaker converses in English the more they become comfortable in uttering culturally unacceptable words and phrases. The breakdown of Unhu/ Ubuntu being experienced in linguistic domains is thus exhibited by the way in which language is used loosely in discussions of aspects normally regarded as taboo.

The study also found that non-verbal gestures differ between English and Shona. For example, in Shona, looking at someone in the eye is disrespectful yet the opposite is true in English. The excerpts below show how Student Participant 5, a student who mostly converses in English, perceives looking one in the eye differently compared to Elderly Participant 4 who is an elderly participant more inclined to using Shona.

> *Student 5: I expect you to look at me in the eye when we speak to each other.*

> *Elderly 4: These young ones, they will look directly at you and still refuse to do what you ask them to do.*

The differing mannerisms carried by English result in the negation of the Shona norms, such as not looking elders in the eye when talking to them. Looking someone in the eye in the English custom reflects one's confidence and willingness to engage in a conversation. However, Shona culture perceives this as disrespectful and a reflection of one's poor upbringing. There is also the incorporation of signs and symbols in discourse, which are foreign to Shona. The Shona norm of crouching to greet is another example. Crouching to greet elders is a respectful gesture practised by the Shona, yet it is viewed as primitive by the English.

> *Student 1: Crouching? No ways. We don't do that these days.*

The defiance by the participant to crouch when greeting, as is the norm in the Shona culture, implies that the participant has lost aspects of their culture and assimilated English.

Participants in the study were reluctant to provide the Shona terms for the genital organs during a focus group discussion but were quick to give their equivalents in English. In their study, Mubonderi and Mpofu-Hamadziripi (2018) identified the Shona equivalents of the names of male and female genital organs. Examples of these terms include: *sikarudzi* (creator of a tribe), *mukana* (passage=vagina), *mhuka* (animal=penis), *mbonausiku* (a thing that sees at night=penis). These terms are euphemistic in nature. Manyonganise (2023) further states that in African communities, the Shona included, the discourse on sex and sexuality is shrouded in secrecy and the very act is treated as taboo, yet the reverse is true in most Western societies. Normally, elders in the community are meant to be the ones to lead in discussions to do with these topics and they use socially acceptable terms even when discussing sexuality. It is evident, therefore, that language can corrupt culture. Traditionally, taboos are used to promote good behaviour and dissuade engagement in topics that are labelled as not morally right. Chabata and Mavhu (2005) observe that words which fall under the label of taboo language refer to a variety of words which are viewed as obscene, vulgar, impolite, derogatory, and those which refer to the physically and mentally challenged. Though Shona taboos are fear inducing, this fear has no intrinsic worth, but is a means to an end, that is, promotion of good behaviour (Masaka & Chemhuru, 2011). The fear instilled leads to avoidance of the trait ensuring that the bad or dangerous behaviour is not practised. Shona people always insist on observing the rules concerning taboo word use (*zvinyadzi*) in situations of verbal interaction (Mubonderi and Mpofu-Hamadziripi, 2018). This is done to maintain Ubuntu/Unhu in social interactions.

In addition, education systems have played and continue to play a role in the adulteration of culture. The evolving curricula in schools has seen the rise in translations of learning material from English to African languages and vice-versa. English has, however, not been adulterated because the translations are meant for the Shona speakers whose English Language context is Zimbabwean and the English is a variant of the standard English which does not necessarily carry the standard (British/American) culture. The participants in the study indicated that they preferred to read English versions of stories and documents because English was easier to read.

> *Student 4: I prefer to read the English versions of any form of writing because it is easier to read English than Shona.*

The preference for using English versions at the expense of Shona versions of reading material has risen. The priority given to the English language at the expense of Shona has made English appear as more prestigious than Shona. As a result, everything

associated with the Shona language is looked down upon and seen as uncivilised. Sadly, this too reflects how the culture that is carried by the language is viewed.

Technological advancements have been the highlights of the 21ˢᵗ century.

> Educationist 5*: Technology has brought a change in behaviour, even language use. We want to fit into the global village so English is the way to go.*

The use of technology has led to the development of gadgets and applications that have impacted lives. Through social media platforms, conversations and meetings are held via WhatsApp or video calls. New forms of communication have emanated, and these are often characterised by abbreviations and slang. Slang is also created as a youth culture phenomenon whereby linguistic forms respond to trends among the youths. Slang use varies based upon which generation is currently using a term and how long a specific term has been in use; as such we can expect the meaning of certain words to change over time as the users mature and enter new phases of life (Haqiq, 2019). An ever-evolving cycle of slang words is found throughout history and each generation brings with it a new youth culture thus introducing a unique set of lexemes. These slang words, a type of informal language, carry their own culture, one normally devoid of traits of the language from which the slang emanated. The implication, therefore, is that with the coining of each new word, new behaviours emanate. These behaviours conform to the group culture, usually generational. There are then new expected behaviours regarding drinking, eating and general socialisation which are different from the culture carried and expected by one's mother tongue. In the context of this study, the slang comes in with its own culture, a culture partially or at times solely devoid of any Shona norms and values thus adulterating the language.

Implications

During language acquisition, children also undergo identity formation as they are introduced to their culture and are made aware of what is acceptable and what is not. This will have an impact on their view of the self and how they then relate to others in the community. However, in instances where children are exposed to a multiplicity of languages and language varieties, their cultural grounding may be compromised. The multiplicity of languages at their exposure affords them a broader view of the societies in the world around them, and by default, the cultures. When parents and guardians actively ignore this challenge, their cultural grounding stands to be corrupted as there will be a lot of borrowing and assimilation of various norms and values from the varying languages. This will also have an impact on their thought processes as all thinking is done in a language. Urban vernaculars, it may be argued, are also detrimental to the development of wholesome, culturally sound members of the communities. This is because they are

made up of discourse elements, lexical items, and syntactic forms drawn from a number of different languages (Makoni, Brutt-Griffler and Mashiri, 2007). The presence and impact of urban vernaculars cannot be argued as they contribute to the changes in a language. However, the changes in a language due to natural motion also need to be acknowledged and what these changes mean to culture, for examples changes in spelling conventions and standardisation of the language where several dialects are merged. This resonates with Matandare and Mugomba (2016) who argue that when a child is regularly exposed to code-switching, the child will have difficulty developing the original mother tongue. Though language choices are usually made based on what would be beneficial to their cognitive development, these choices may not always ensure that culture is not corrupted. This implies that measures need to be put in place to safeguard culture. A balance between global and cultural needs must be achieved. Despite the modernisation that comes with globalisation, the self still needs to be preserved, safeguarded and respected. It is prudent to be cognisant of the fact that languages are always evolving in response to global trends. As such, faced with globalisation and migration effects, cultural shifts constantly occur meaning that language use evolves to suit the shifts. Due to migration in families, changes in linguistic preferences have been noted in favour of English. Though adapting to new trends that emanate from cultural shifts is crucial to remain relevant, signs and symbols have been incorporated into the language as non-verbal forms of communication. The signs and symbols may not have been in existence before or may be in response to the evolution of language and culture. Their impact may not always conform to the traditional norms and values thus corrupting culture as their application is confined to specific contexts. Ultimately, this may lead to language death. It is important to note that the death of a language means the disappearance of the culture it carries. This will mean the loss of the traditional values, wisdom and knowledge housed in that language (Mhute, 2015). With these implications in mind, adequate intervention measures can be put in place to minimise the linguistic adulteration of the Shona culture. Raising awareness on the need not to assimilate the English Language wholly can minimise this adulteration.

Conclusion

The linguistic adulteration of the Shona culture continues to occur largely as a result of perceived behavioural demands, perceptions and shifts in response to the heavy influence of English on the Shona culture. Language adulteration continues to exist with the advent of technology, curriculum demands and multilingualism among other factors which go against the Ubuntu/ Unhu philosophy. The Ubuntu/Unhu philosophy needs to acknowledge the impact of the fluid identities that are prevalent in   Zimbabwe. This is because this fluidity has led to the incorporation of the beliefs, behaviours, and traits of other cultures by the Shona people. The assimilation of other cultures through languages

learnt and used, is not an avenue for one to denigrate their cultural values and norms. With the dual and triple identities comes the need to ensure that the Shona remain morally right by ensuring they remain conscious of who they are, where they are and the topic of discussion. In addition, Ubuntu/Unhu principles should be taught at schools and workspaces to ensure that the Shona remain in touch with their culture.

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Decolonising Education in Postcolonial Zimbabwe: Context and the Way Forward

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Abstract

The current reflection comes against the backdrop of coloniality; a cancer presently bedevilling education in Sub-Saharan Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular. Coloniality is the colonial logic herein construed as the dark side of Euro-North American-centric modernity. Guided by the 'postcolonial' and 'narratives of return' theories, this secondary research explicates the context of coloniality within the Zimbabwean society in general and the country's education system in particular. In the process, the paper reveals the impact of colonialism on, inter-alia, African history, power, epistemology, being, culture, religion, and heritage. It is against this background that the current reflection expounds the generic concept of decoloniality upon which it explores the possibilities of decolonising Zimbabwe's education system. Decolonial ideals include but are not limited to the philosophy of African redemption, African renaissance, Unhu/Ubuntu, heritage-based philosophy, and Africanisation - most of which repose within Gade's 'narratives of return' theory. It becomes permissible, therefore, to argue that customising Zimbabwe's education curricula in accordance with Gade's 'narratives of return' serves to effectively decolonise her education so that her paideia is in the end geared towards heritage-based creativity and innovation leading to indigenous-oriented but still globally competitive industrialisation. This penchant for decolonial ideals is, on the whole, exigent for reclaiming, restoring, repairing, rediscovering, and redefining the Afro-Zimbabwean history, power, knowledge, being, culture, religion, and heritage for posterity. It is, thus, recommended that decolonial ideals take centre stage in Zimbabwe's postcolonial education system.

Keywords: coloniality, decoloniality, decolonisation, 'narratives of return', postcolonial

Introduction and Background

The current reflection is a search for ideals or philosophies with which to decolonise education in Zimbabwe. Notwithstanding the ongoing efforts to decolonise the same, the colonial logic (coloniality) continues to permeate the Afro-Zimbabwean society in general and the country's education system in particular. Therefore, the submission that colonial legacy permeates the Zimbabwean education system even within the postcolonial dispensation is in itself a truism. The coloniality of local education is, thus, conspicuous. Despite the rhetoric to Africanise local education and have *Unhu/Ubuntu* as the home-grown philosophy guiding life in general and education in particular, Zimbabwe's postcolonial education continues to be steered by the exotic but inappropriate epistemologies grounded in individualism, neoliberalism, and habits of consumerism. Hence, relics of colonialism are evident in the hybridised graduates produced by the country's contemporary education system, graduates who exhibit signs of inauthenticity,

uprootedness, alienation, existential vacuity, mimetic philopraxis, and self-contempt (Makuvaza, 2008; Makuvaza & Shizha, 2017).

Graduates alluded to in the foregoing are fundamentally uprooted from their culture, yet they do not readily fit into the Euro-North American-centric culture, which they seem to view with a respectful and covetous eye. These hybridised *alumnae* are like bats, which are neither rodents nor birds; hence, they are dubbed 'salads' (Makuvaza, 2008). Regrettably, universities in Africa (Zimbabwe included), for instance, continue to produce alienated Africans that are socialised into hating the Africa that produced them and liking the Europe and America that hate them (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). Hence, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015, p. 489) declares, "Schools, colleges, churches and universities in Africa are sites for the reproduction of coloniality. We so far do not have African universities. We have universities in Africa. They continue to poison African minds with Western research methodologies". Thus, education in the formerly colonised African states (which include Zimbabwe) is a reflection of the West (Europe and North America) and a propagation of self-hate among the ex-colonised peoples. It is, therefore, lamentable that the colonial hang-over continues to shape life and education in Zimbabwe even in the postcolonial era.

Problem Postulation

The itching point of this reflection is the uprootedness, alienation, existential vacuity, mimetic philopraxis, and self-contempt that seem to be evident and conspicuous in graduates from postcolonial Zimbabwe's institutions of learning. To substantiate the above, Makuvaza (as cited in Wuta, 2020) reports that most Afro-Zimbabwean youths manifest inauthentic and mimetic existence in the way they dress, their music and dance styles, preferred lifestyle and contempt of the mother tongue. This is also reflected in how they walk and talk, hairstyles which demonstrate contempt and regret over their natural kinky hair and reading of foreign, especially Western novels, and so forth. This reflection, therefore, seeks to ruminate on how to address this lamentable status quo, which, when left to continue unchecked, can possibly bring about a cultural vacuum that can only be filled with confusion, loss of identity, disregard of the Afro-Zimbabwean heritage, and a total annihilation of Afro-Zimbabwean power, epistemology, being, worldview, and culture.

Theoretical Underpinnings

This reflection is informed by the postcolonial theory, which attempts to explain the struggle for ethnic, cultural, and political autonomy. Exponents of the postcolonial theory include Antonio Gramsci, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha, who construe the said theory as a notion that attempts to disrupt the dominant discourse of colonial power (dcac.du.ac.in>Metrial, as cited in Wuta, 2023). Thus, the postcolonial theory is endowed

with a strong change agenda. Hence, "it is a fundamental aspect of the postcolonial theoretic project to destabilise the 'truths' born out of colonialism and to open a space in the academic world for alternative voices and perspectives to be heard" (dcac.du.ac.in>Metrial, as cited in Wuta, 2023, p. 112). Therefore, the postcolonial theory is wary of the 'coloniality' of power, knowledge, and being, *id est*, the colonial logic which it seeks to explain and destabilise within education in the formerly colonised societies of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in general and Zimbabwe in particular.

The current reflection is also guided by Gade's 'narratives of return' theory, which also challenges the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being, and hence the 'narratives of return' are a reaction to the colonial logic. "The major statement behind 'narratives of return' is a desire or yearning to 'return' to the past for possible solutions to challenges and problems associated with the postcolonial dispensation" (Makuvaza, 2017, p. 351). Gade's theory of 'narratives of return' is, thus, consistent with the decolonisation of Zimbabwe's education system in pursuit of the decolonial agenda, which has since gained currency and momentum within the postcolonial dispensation.

Research Methodology

This paper is documentary analysis or secondary research; a qualitative research design in which the researcher systematically examines existing documents or literature to extract meaningful data relevant to the driving concerns of the inquiry. According to Bowen (2009), documentary analysis is an efficient method which is less time-consuming and cost-effective as it requires data selection instead of data collection, documentary analysis is available (since many documents are in the public domain), unobtrusive (does not draw undue attention), and non-reactive (unaffected by the research process). It is for these reasons that documentary analysis was preferred as the research design of this reflective piece. It is in the form of discourse analysis, which, according to Mhlanga and Shumba (2013), is the process of interpreting the powerful meanings underpinning a text enabling the researcher to distil valuable insights from research data. The paper, therefore, is a reflection on other people's literary works that include primary and secondary sources (journal articles, book chapters, and handbooks) that speak to the decolonisation of education in Zimbabwe. Sources of literature considered herein include Zimbabwean education commissions like the Nziramasanga Commission Report of 1999 and reflections on specific theories related to coloniality, postcoloniality, and decoloniality in the Sub-Saharan context.

Findings: Coloniality in Generic

The current reflection is best understood from the perspective of 'coloniality' – the colonial logic ushered into SSA in general and Zimbabwe in particular through a type of colonisation called settler colonialism. According to Mazrui (as cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni,

2015), settler colonialism ushered Africa into the Euro-North American-centric modernity whose dark side is 'coloniality'. Settler colonialism, thus, occasioned the existing and ongoing asymmetrical power relations (in the formerly colonised regions) configured into a matrix dubbed the 'continuity of coloniality'.

According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015), coloniality is premised on the three units of analysis, *id est*, coloniality of 'power', 'knowledge', and 'being' - the triad of coloniality. The coloniality of power helps in investigating into how the current 'global body politic' was constructed, constituted, and configured into a racially hierarchised, Euro-American-centric, Christian-centric, capitalist, hegemonic, asymmetrical, and modern power structure (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). To Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015), therefore, coloniality of power enables delving deeper into how the world was bifurcated into the 'Zone of Being' and the 'Zone of Non-Being' wherein the former incorporates the Global North or core Euro-American world (beneficiaries of modernity) whilst the latter comprises the Global South populated largely by the so-called peripheral peoples (victims of imperialism, colonialism, and apartheid). SSA in general and Zimbabwe to be precise are located within the 'invented' Zone of Non-Being, where the socio-political and economic power of erstwhile white colonisers is still being felt.

Coloniality of knowledge "focuses on teasing out epistemological issues, politics of knowledge-generation, as well as questions of who generates which knowledge and for what purpose" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 490). This coloniality of knowledge, thus, portrays the Euro-North Americans as the custodians of real knowledge which is worth being sought. "Coloniality of knowledge is useful in enabling us to understand how endogenous and indigenous knowledges have been pushed to what became understood as the barbarian margins of society" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 490). Coloniality of knowledge, therefore, carries with it the disparagement and denigration of local epistemology (home-grown knowledge production and/or meaning-making) within the formerly colonised regions. As a result of the continuity of this coloniality of knowledge, Africa, for instance, is saddled with irrelevant knowledge that serves to disempower rather than empower individuals and communities (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015).

Coloniality of being gestures into the ontology of human beings (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015), ontology herein construed as the science of being and/or existence. The ontology of human beings, thus, speaks to the humanity of the different human races among which the humanity of Africans is questioned by the Euro-North American-centric school of thought. To Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015, p. 490), therefore, "coloniality of being is very important because it assists in investigating how African humanity was questioned as well as into the processes that contributed towards the 'objectification'/ 'thingification'/ 'commodification' of Africans." This unfortunate idea of questioning African humanity and commodifying Africans finds expression in the ideas of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804

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A.D./C.E.) who, according to Kaputa (2011), once said 'Africans need to be driven by thrashing' and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831 A.D./C.E.) who, according to Funteh (2015), once remarked 'there is nothing harmonious with humanity in Africa'.

Mendoza (2020) conceives 'coloniality' as a residue of colonialism whereas Quijano (as cited in Makuvaza & Shizha, 2017) views 'coloniality' as the structures of power, control, and hegemony that have emerged during the era of colonialism. It should, therefore, be noted that 'coloniality' differs from 'colonialism' because colonialism ends with independence, *id est*, when external and direct administrative rule comes to an end whereas coloniality continues to structure social relations even after independence (Mendoza, 2020). Hence, Thondhlana and Garwe (2021, p. 4) define coloniality as "the continued imposition of epistemic, geographic, and psychological domination of power that transcend colonialism." Thus, coloniality spans beyond the end of colonial rule. Likewise, Maldonado-Torres (as cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 487) writes:

> *Coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and every day.*

In other words, coloniality continues to permeate life and education in the formerly colonised nations of the world up to this day.

Coloniality of Postcolonial Education: The Zimbabwean Context

The British colonisers, under the auspices of the British South Africa Company (BSAC), invaded Zimbabwe in 1890. By 1894, these conquerors had destroyed the sovereignty of the Shona and Ndebele-speaking people (the indigenous peoples of the area) and established a new political order which embodied their sovereignty. This marks the genesis of the 'coloniality' of power, knowledge, and being in the then Rhodesia now Zimbabwe. The preceding coincided with the establishment of colonial education, largely under missionaries, in Rhodesia, which transcended the colonial era right into postcolonial Zimbabwe.

Hence, Higgs (as cited in Makuvaza & Shizha, 2017, p. 3-4) avers:

> *the overall character of much of education theory and practice in Africa is overwhelmingly either European or Eurocentric. In other words, it is argued that much of what is taken for education in Africa is in fact not African, but rather a reflection of Europe in Africa.*

This exhibits the 'coloniality of power' because Western hegemony in education is more than conspicuous, and 'coloniality of knowledge' because Western epistemology has

since been exalted and legitimated in Sub-Saharan education. Higgs's position is consistent with Mazrui (as quoted in Mawere, 2015, p. 61) who argues, "very few educated Africans are even aware that they are also in cultural bondage. 'All' educated Africans … are still cultural captives of the West." Thus, people in SSA are uprooted and alienated as a result of the colonial experience and hence they continue to live the life of mimicry definitive of the colonial logic.

Strong testimony to the coloniality of knowledge in SSA (Zimbabwe included) is presented by De Beer and Whitlock (as cited in Shizha, 2010, p. 44) who report, "many teachers are hesitant to incorporate Indigenous Knowledge in the classroom out of fear of infecting classroom teaching with pseudoscience." These teachers, therefore, manifest a colonial mind-set as they tend to denigrate the African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKSs) which they dismiss as 'pseudoscience', 'backward', and 'retrogressive', and erroneously regard the Western Knowledge Systems (WKSs) as 'authentic', 'legitimate', and 'progressive'.

It is clear that, "[T]hough attempts were made to reform the education systems in general, and the curriculum in particular in order to ensure relevance to the African needs in post-independence states, most research indicate that not much was achieved" (Mavhunga, 2006, pp. 446-447). Thus, educational reform in post-colonial SSA has also not quite succeeded, owing to a troubled and poor economy (Zvobgo, as cited in Mavhunga, 2006). This troubled and poor economy has stifled curriculum research, planning, design, review, renewal, and modification. Hence, it allowed for the continuity of coloniality of knowledge since the preponderance of Western epistemology seems to be continuing in the postcolonial Sub-Saharan countries.

One major mistake made by post-independence governments in Africa (Zimbabwe included) is succinctly presented by Zvobgo (as cited in Mavhunga, 2006, p. 448), thus, "Western models of education were imported by the new states in the belief that they only had to westernise their education systems in order to modernise their societies and so become industrialised and rich." Therefore, educational reforms that emerged from such arrangements ended up further entrenching Western values in the guise of 'modernising' education systems. As Mavhunga (2006, pp. 447-448) observes, "In Zimbabwe for instance, despite well documented plans to localise the curriculum by adopting indigenous values and technologies, of course tempered with technological developments from the world over, the school curriculum has fundamentally remained Western". This portrays an inheritance situation within which education in Zimbabwe is located. Mazonde (2001, p. 20) endorses the above as he submits, "there has been retention of curriculum content and theory associated with the colonial period and the educational traditions of the colonising powers. Thus, curricula often follow European

models." This inheritance situation emblematises the continuity of coloniality of knowledge in local education.

Nziramasanga (1999, p. 362) reports, "there was a general agreement countrywide that the present school curriculum is based on a philosophy that excluded the promotion of indigenous culture in the education of the Zimbabwean child." This implies that Zimbabwe's postcolonial education system was and still is being steered by irrelevant and inappropriate epistemologies. Therefore, "the Commission is in agreement with the view that Zimbabwe's education system can be best described as Euro-centric in its cultural content and orientation" (Nziramasanga, 1999, p. 367). Consequently, the indigenous African culture has been relegated to the margins of Zimbabwe's school curriculum thereby propagating the colonial logic in general and coloniality of knowledge and power in particular.

For exemplification purposes, Nziramasanga (1999) cites music education in Zimbabwe's school curriculum which at present (as was the case in 1999) is directed towards enhancing music appreciation and participation in Eurocentric music environments, which also fuels cultural uprootedness. This concurs with Mutema (2013, p. 59) who reports, "the traditional children's songs and games are no longer as popular as they used to be. In fact, it is possible that they are facing extinction." Mutema, therefore, views these indigenous forms of edutainment as an endangered genre. Since these traditional songs and games are endowed with the Afro-Zimbabwean cultural-philosophical package, to then allow their extinction is to allow the intensification of the coloniality of power (Western hegemony) and coloniality of knowledge (legitimation of Western epistemology) within local education.

Coloniality of knowledge is evident in the negation of AIKSs that represent African epistemology or the African meaning-making. It is also conspicuous in the legitimation of WKSs which embody Western epistemology or the Occidental ways of knowing. According to Mapira and Mazambara (2013), AIKSs were often despised in order to promote the Western forms of knowledge such as the natural neo-liberal science. Yet AIKSs cover "ecology, climate, agriculture, animal husbandry, botany, linguistics, medicine, clinical psychology and craft skills" (Mapira & Mazambara, 2013, p. 91). In spite of their diversity and versatility, AIKSs have been neglected in most academic and non-academic disciplines (Mapira & Mazambara, 2013). This observation is confirmed by Mazodze, Mapara, and Tsvere (2021) who contend that student development in higher education has remained firmly anchored on Eurocentric ways of knowing at the expense of other epistemologies especially those from the Global South. To Mazodze, Mapara, and Tsvere (2021), indigenous epistemologies are inferiorised and marginalised. Efforts to Africanise the curriculum have largely been piecemeal and student development theory has continued to be underpinned by Eurocentric epistemology with a devastating impact

on student identity and character development (Mazodze, Mapara & Tsvere, 2021). With this continuous marginalisation of AIKSs, Zimbabweans could be losing what could be of socio-economic value to them.

According to the Government of Zimbabwe (2015), the new 'O' and 'A' Level Family and Religious Studies syllabi introduced a component of Indigenous Religion. However, with the contempt that the 'uprooted' students and teachers in Zimbabwe seem to have of Indigenous Religion, chances are high that it may not receive its due recognition. Family and Religious Studies as a learning area is bound to continue being dominated by the well-marketed Judeo-Christian religious ethos that, according to Mukusha (as cited in Wuta, 2020), are literally better positioned for the Israelis. This has the potential to perpetuate 'Christocentricity' - a chauvinistic Western religious predisposition, which, in the local education curriculum, epitomises the colonial logic in general and the coloniality of power, through the Church, in particular.

Mavhunga (2006) claims that History as a secondary school subject has all along been taught and learnt with a Western slant. He further alleges that where African History was taught, the African was portrayed negatively. However, Mavhunga (2006) recognises the notable Afro-centric changes instituted, for instance, in 'O' Level History since the 1980 attainment of political independence - changes which resonate with the increased emphasis on Afro-Zimbabwean History, particularly that of the liberation struggle (1966-1980). Nonetheless, pockets of resistance to the new History content that emphasises Afro-Zimbabwean History, particularly that of the liberation struggle, have been noted (Mavhunga, 2006). This resistance bears testimony to the coloniality of knowledge because those against the Afro-centric History seem to acquiesce to the perceived veracity, believability, and legitimacy of the Western side of the story.

In terms of language-in-education, Nziramasanga (1999, p. 157) submits, "while officially indigenous languages enjoy equal status with English, the reality of examinations and the requirements of commerce and industry tend to give higher status to English." This diaglossic relationship between English and indigenous languages epitomises the coloniality of power and is consistent with the coloniality of being (nullification of African humanity) in local education. With the eternalised use of English as the official medium of instruction, Zimbabwe's school system is persistently failing to speak to *Munhu/Umuntu*. This scenario is worsened by the prevailing contempt over the use of African languages in law, administration, media, and entertainment where the majority of Zimbabweans prefer to use English (Nziramasanga, 1999), which demonstrates self-hate on the part of Afro-Zimbabweans and in the end manifest the colonial logic.

The genesis of this diaglossic relationship between English and indigenous languages is traceable to as far back as the Kerr Commission Report of 1952 which recommended English speech training for Africans, the Judges Commission Report of 1963 which

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required English to be *compulsorily and idiomatically employed in the teaching of other subjects*, and the Lewis-Tylor Committee Report of 1974 which required all subjects to be taught in English (Nziramasanga, 1999; Ndamba, 2010). Unfortunately, the post-independence 1987 Education Act continued to bestow more respect upon English. Hence, "evidence from the Zimbabwe Languages Association states that the present Education Act of 1987 is characteristically colonial because it promotes English at the expense of developing indigenous languages" (Nziramasanga, 1999, p. 161). To make matters worse, the 1987 Education Act gives no legal status to indigenous languages and effectively deprives Afro-Zimbabweans of a sense of linguistic pride in their own heritage. Thus, Nziramasanga (1999, p. 167) avers:

> *Essentially, language is a vehicle of the transmission of culture hence, the acceptance of English language has led to the adoption of English culture at the expense of traditional cultural values. In other words, the colonial master may have left the country as a result of the protracted liberation war but continues to dominate Zimbabweans through the English language.*

This dominance of English language in Zimbabwean education, therefore, remains an epitome of the colonial logic. The 1991 and 2006 Amendments to the 1987 Education Act, the Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education (2015-2022), and the Heritage-Based Curriculum Framework (2024-2030) did not save the situation either, since they seem not to have substantially improved the status of indigenous languages.

Above all, Mavhunga (2006, p. 454) proclaims:

> *… the school system is accused of breeding apologists to Western hegemony, products that look up to Europe for solutions to local problems rather than independent thinkers who seek African solutions to African problems; people who have no cultural base and, therefore, no identity.*

The contemporary local education system is herein criticised for inducing a dependency syndrome of some kind on the Western system, thereby bolstering the coloniality of power. It is, therefore, argued, "while SSA might have attained political independence from their erstwhile colonisers, however, their coloniality still remains and thus requires interrogation" (Ashcroft *et al.*, as cited in Makuvaza & Shizha 2017, p. 5). Hence, the continuity of global coloniality is on the whole evident. It is against this backdrop that Abdi (as cited in Makuvaza & Shizha, 2017, p. 6) declares, "SSA requires first and foremost a decolonising philosophy as well as a decolonising education," which evokes the decolonial discourse for decolonising education in Zimbabwe.

Synthesis of Findings

The colonial hangover in Zimbabwe as configured into the colonial logic has proved to be most evident in the areas of language-in-education, curriculum content, colonial educator mindset, and general dependency syndrome, among others. In terms of language-in-education, English (the colonial language) remains the official medium of local instruction up to higher and tertiary education. In curriculum content, the Western epistemologies continue to maintain a supremacist posture and domineering role. The colonial educator mindset is that of denigrating African epistemologies as pseudoscience and anachronism, deriding AIKSs as primordial and antiquated. The general dependency syndrome is seen in Afro-Zimbabwean graduates who continue to look up to Europe for solutions to local problems instead of independently seeking African solutions to African problems. It is from this perspective that decoloniality is fathomed.

Discussion: The Concept of Decoloniality

Chief proponents of the decolonial theory include Frantz Fanon, William Dubois, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Kwame Nkrumah, and Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, among others. The decolonial agenda targets the 'triad of coloniality', which subsumes the coloniality of 'power', 'knowledge', and 'being' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). This is endorsed by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020) and Ranawana (2023) who construe decoloniality as the 'how' part of decolonisation as well as a process of liberation to unmask and reveal coloniality, and challenge its endurance across the three dimensions of power, knowledge, and being. Decoloniality, thus, announces a broad 'decolonial turn' that involves the task of the very decolonisation of knowledge, power, and being, including institutions of learning.

Unlike the simple decolonisation movements of the 20th century, "decoloniality was and is aimed at setting afoot a new humanity free from racial hierarchisation and asymmetrical power relations in place since conquest" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 489). Decoloniality, thus, seeks to eradicate the colonial logic in general and coloniality of power in more specific terms. This is substantiated by Maldonado-Torres (as cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 488) who writes:

> *… by decoloniality it is meant here the dismantling of relations of power and conceptions of knowledge that foment the reproduction of racial, gender, and geopolitical hierarchies that came into being or found new and more powerful forms of expression in the modern/colonial world.*

The decolonial agenda, therefore, is wary of the racially and colonially-induced injustice, inequality, inequity, and iniquity.

Decoloniality is understood to be adversative to the neo-colonial forces (under the guise of globalisation) that continue to afflict the ex-colonised peoples of the world, hence it is

emancipatory in outlook (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015; Ranawana, 2023). Thus, decoloniality seeks to expose coloniality as the dark side of the Euro-North American-centric modernity which continues to shape and define the life of the formerly colonised peoples across the globe (Ranawana, 2023). "It (decoloniality) is a particular kind of critical intellectual theory as well as a political project which seeks to disentangle ex-colonised parts of the world from coloniality" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 489). Decoloniality, therefore, is an antidote to the undue supremacist posturing of the cultures and worldviews of the Global North – it is a counter to the chauvinist Euro-Oriental pomp located within the coloniality of power.

Decolonial theorists view institutions of learning within the formerly colonised countries as agents of the hierarchisation of human races definitive of the coloniality of power. Decoloniality, thus, conceives education in the formerly colonised states as a reflection of the Euro-Oriental world (the Global North) and a propagation of self-hate among the ex-colonised peoples (the Global South). It is against this backdrop that decoloniality seeks to combat the racial hierarchisation of humanity, asymmetrical power relations between the former colonisers and the formerly colonised, and Western hegemony in the formerly colonised nations – cancers embedded in the coloniality of power.

Decoloniality is a way of thinking, knowing, and doing; a way of life for the formerly subjugated peoples across the globe (Ranawana, 2023). It is part of the marginalised peoples' persistent movements that emerged from struggles against the slave trade, imperialism, colonialism, and underdevelopment (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). Thus, the roots of decoloniality are traceable to the iniquities committed by the Westerners against the peripherised and vulnerable global peoples like Africans, Caribbeans, and West Indians, among others – iniquities whose effects and structures (as configured into the coloniality of power) are visible up to this day. Hence, fighting the coloniality of power is at the epicentre of the decolonial agenda.

Decoloniality can also be construed as a counter-force against a lamentable situation whereby universities in Africa, for instance, continue to produce alienated Africans that are socialised into hating the Africa that produced them and liking the Europe and America that hate them (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). These universities, therefore, manifest the coloniality of knowledge as they valorise Western epistemology much to the chagrin of decolonial theorists. Likewise, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015: 489) writes, "In decoloniality, research methods and research methodologies are never accepted as neutral but are unmasked as (Western) technologies of subjectivation if not surveillance tools that prevent the emergence of another-thinking, another-logic, and another-worldview. Research methodologies are tools of gate-keeping." To decolonial theorists, therefore, Western epistemologies are deliberately designed to intellectually subjugate and dehumanise the ex-colonised peoples, forestall the possible rise of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in ex-colonised regions, and thwart the ex-colonised peoples'

heritage-based worldviews that are destined to rise to prominence. This is glaring coloniality of knowledge, which the decolonial agenda seeks to challenge.

Decoloniality is a call for the democratisation, de-homogenisation, de-Westernisation and/or de-Europeanisation of knowledge (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). This is further endorsed by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020), who calls upon Africa to turn over a new leaf in the domains of politics, economy, and most importantly knowledge as it frees itself from imperial global designs and global coloniality. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020), thus, calls for a radical turning over a new leaf, predicated on the decolonial turn and epistemic freedom. Decolonial thinking, therefore, conceives knowledge as an entitlement to all peoples (democratisation of knowledge), it is against the Western-orchestrated universalisation of knowledge (de-homogenisation of knowledge), and it challenges the perceived Western-European custodianship of worthwhile knowledge (De-Westernisation or De-Europeanisation of knowledge). This is endorsed by Ranawana (2023) who views decoloniality as challenging the assumed universality of coloniality and its associated systems. In other words, decoloniality rejects the possibility of the so-called Western universal truth, and hence it counteracts the coloniality of knowledge. Decoloniality could also be understood as an opportunity for the formerly subjugated to relearn their knowledge that could have been pushed aside, forgotten, buried, or even discredited by the forces of modernity, settler-colonialism, and racial capitalism.

As an epistemological movement, decoloniality has always been overshadowed by the hegemonic Euro-North American-centric intellectual thought and social theories (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015; Ranawana, 2023), a *status quo* emblematic of the coloniality of power and knowledge. However, decoloniality still emerged from this deliberately and structurally orchestrated invisibility to challenge the coloniality of power and knowledge. As a political movement, it has consistently been subjected to the surveillance of global imperial designs and colonial matrices of power. Despite all this reconnaissance and deliberate shadowing by neo-colonial forces, decoloniality continues to gain momentum among the formerly colonised peoples of the world; it continues to counteract the coloniality of power and that of knowledge.

Decoloniality, therefore, could be harnessed to explore colonisation, settler-colonialism, racial capitalism, modernity, and most recently, neoliberalism and neo-capitalism, and how they have displaced an array of the modes of living, thinking, and being in SSA in general and Zimbabwe in particular. Thus, decoloniality could be leveraged to restore, elevate, renew, rediscover, acknowledge, and validate the multiplicity of lives, life experiences, culture, and knowledge of the indigenous ex-colonised Afro-Zimbabweans in order to challenge the colonial logic in its entirety. In other words, decoloniality is consistent with Zimbabwe's topical heritage-based ideology, which has since been

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decreed the underlying philosophy of education transcending the Early Childhood Development, junior, secondary, higher and tertiary education cycles.

Decolonising Education: The Way Forward

Being the 'how' part of decolonisation, decoloniality commits to combating the colonial logic in its three dimensions of coloniality of power, knowledge, and being. The genesis of this decolonial agenda is traceable to as far back as the late 1950s, when Ghana's first President and Pan-Africanist leader, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, highlighted the importance of Africa-centred knowledge when he established the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana (Crawford, Mai-Bornu & Landstrom, 2021). In further pursuance of the decolonial tradition in the early 1980s, the Nigerian political scientist Claude Ake (as cited in Crawford, Mai-Bornu & Landstrom, 2021) advocated for endogenous knowledge production on issues about Africa. The ongoing focus of the decolonial agenda was also given a major impetus by the '#Rhodes Must Fall' movement in South Africa in 2015 (Crawford, Mai-Bornu & Landstrom, 2021). The current reflection, therefore, proffers *Unhu/Ubuntu*, African redemption, African renaissance, Africanisation of education, and indigenisation of language-in-education as philosophies-ideals of the decolonial agenda for combating the legacies of colonialism in Zimbabwe. The above philosophies-ideals are, in one way or the other consistent with Gade's 'narratives of return' theory, which, according to Makuvaza (2017), articulates the yearning to return to the past for possible solutions to problems vexing Afro-Zimbabweans within the postcolonial dispensation.

Makuvaza (2008, p. 373) argues, "since education contributed significantly towards the uprooting of the Africans from their culture, then it should, indeed, be instrumental in their cultural liberation and redemption. In other words, it should equally be engaged in efforts towards de-rooting the Africans culturally." This places education at the disposal of Afro-Zimbabweans for use in resisting the coloniality of power (Western cultural hegemony) which has persisted into the postcolonial era. To this end, Makuvaza (2008) proposes education for *Unhu/Ubuntu* herein construed as a homegrown decolonising philosophy of education consistent with the heritage-based ideology currently undergirding Zimbabwe's primary and secondary as well as higher and tertiary education systems. Grounding local education in *Unhu/Ubuntu*, therefore, becomes a viable alternative for eradicating the Western cultural hegemony, thereby decolonising the African mind. With its communocentric and cooperative communalistic inclinations, *Unhu/Ubuntu* inherently challenges the neoliberal elements of individualism, consumerism, and profiteering nurtured by the Western capitalist culture.

Unhu/Ubuntu is a deconstructive, restorative, decolonising, and reconstructive African philosophy of life and of education (Makuvaza, 2008). Hence, *Unhu/Ubuntu* is deconstructive in the sense that it urges the re-writing of the Afro-Zimbabwean history to nullify the Western-orchestrated falsehoods of African ahistoricality and sub-humanness.

This way, the *Unhu/Ubuntu* philosophy accentuates the reclamation and redemption of African history and the African 'being'. *Unhu/Ubuntu* is restorative in the sense that it attempts to reorient Africans to the African culture. *Unhu/Ubuntu* is decolonising because it is emancipatory in outlook. It (*Unhu/Ubuntu*) is, above all, reconstructive as it seeks to resuscitate African heritage and rebuild African history, power, knowledge, being, image, confidence, and pride. Being inclined towards resuscitating African heritage on the part of *Unhu/Ubuntu* places the said philosophy into close propinquity with the heritage-based ideology, which accentuates development, based on locally available resources that include the cultural, agricultural, climatological, and mineralogical endowments. *Unhu/Ubuntu* is on the whole a decolonising philosophy undergirding a decolonising education.

Operationalising the philosophy of African redemption in Zimbabwe's system of education also serves to counter the colonial logic. Therefore, Zimbabwe is urged to adopt Ignatius Loyola's counter-reformation *modus operandi* of 'taking the school first' (Rusk & Scotland, 1960). James (2009) decrees that the new philosophy of African redemption, being a revelation of the truth in the history of Black people's civilisation, must be taught in the home to the young children; in the colleges and schools to students. This cultivates a liberated consciousness among the Afro-Zimbabwean youths so that they lead authentic African life; a life anchored in the heritage of Zimbabwe, not the life of mimicry (mimetic existence), alienation, and uprootedness. Operationalising the philosophy of African redemption, thus, serves to fill these youths with African pride and liberate them from mental servitude, thereby redeeming and reasserting Afro-Zimbabwean power, knowledge, and being.

Equally important in the decolonial agenda is the notion of African renaissance. According to Higgs and Van Wyk (as cited in Msila, 2009), the colonial subjugation of Africa ignored indigenous knowledge because of the inverted mirror of Western Eurocentric identity. This deliberate nullification of African epistemology occasioned the coloniality of knowledge, a state of affairs which gave birth to numerous attempts to reassert distinctively African ways of thinking and of relating to the world, and it found expression in the call for an African renaissance (Higgs & Van Wyk, in Msila, 2009). African renaissance resonates with the call for the recognition of indigenous knowledge and hence it counteracts the coloniality of knowledge. According to Msila (2009, p. 312):

> *African renaissance is a unique opportunity for Africans to define themselves and their agenda according to their own realities and taking into account realities of the world around them. It is about Africans being agents of their own history and masters of their destiny.*

African renaissance, therefore, is replete with emancipatory ideals and predicated essentially on the realisation that what is regarded as education in SSA is, in fact, a

reflection of Europe in Africa. In view of the above, African renaissance could be deployed to counteract the coloniality of power, *id est*, the Euro-American hegemony in SSA in general and Zimbabwe in particular using education as a tool.

The fusion of AIKSs and WKSs with the former occupying a larger portion within the current regimes of education in SSA in general and Zimbabwe in particular, herein referred to as the Africanisation of education, is also consistent with African renaissance and the decolonial agenda. AIKSs constitute African epistemology; the African ways of knowing or African meaning-making. Therefore, the Africanisation movement testifies that something is missing in the African education systems and hence 'Africans are somehow not African enough' (Chetty, as cited in Okeke, 2008). This intimates the coloniality of knowledge as emblematised in the denigration of AIKSs matched with the exaltation and legitimation of WKSs (Occidental epistemology) in local education. Regrettably, little has so far been achieved in terms of the Africanisation agenda. As a result, the need to Africanise the school curriculum continues to suffuse educational discourse in Africa South of the Sahara. This agenda for Africanising education is targeted at exposing, destabilising, and counteracting particularly the coloniality of knowledge, which is ubiquitously and abundantly manifest in postcolonial Zimbabwe.

African Indigenous Religion was not real religion in the eyes of the conqueror and coloniser. This communicates the colonial frame of mind with which White colonists deliberately instituted the coloniality of power and knowledge in SSA in general and Zimbabwe in particular. Therefore, attempting to revive the African Indigenous Religion within postcolonial Zimbabwe's curriculum is part of the crusade against the coloniality of power and knowledge. Hence, Nziramasanga (1999, p. 70) suggests, "the present Religious and Moral Education (RME) Programme (in Zimbabwe) ... should in future also include in its multi-faiths approach African Traditional Religion." This Africanisation of RME as a learning area has since been fulfilled by Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education 2015-2022 (which later on morphed into the Heritage-based Curriculum Framework 2024-2030), whose reconfigured subject 'Family, Religion, and Moral Education' now recognises the four pillars of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Indigenous Religion. Such recognition as recently bestowed upon African Indigenous Religion partly serves to decolonise Zimbabwe's religious instruction.

In the teaching of 'O' Level History in Zimbabwe, Mavhunga (2006) recognises notable changes which were instituted in accordance with the Africanisation agenda, which harmonises with the decolonial project. These include the replacement of 'O' Level History Syllabus 2160 by History Syllabus 2166 in 1990, which, in turn, was replaced by History Syllabus 2167 in 2003. In 2015, History Syllabus 2167 was also replaced by History Syllabus 4044, which was part of the Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education 2015-2022 (now Heritage-Based Curriculum Framework 2024-

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2030). As these changes were unfolding, more African doses of History and local themes like the country's liberation struggle received more coverage thereby partially counteracting the coloniality of knowledge. Consequently, History is no longer taught and learnt with a Western slant in Zimbabwe. Where African History is taught, the African is now mostly positively, he/she is no longer portrayed as a villain without cogent justification.

Against the peripherisation of indigenous languages in education, Wuta (2020) advocates the promulgation of an official national language-in-education policy which provides for the use of indigenous languages as official media of instruction beyond the primary level of education in Zimbabwe. This indigenous language-in-education policy is strategically positioned to counteract the coloniality of knowledge because delivery of instruction in indigenous languages is synonymous with having knowledge production done in the mother tongue. According to Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986), 'language carries culture'; culture which, in this case, is embedded in *Unhu/Ubuntu*. Therefore, the promulgation of a vibrant, forceful but progressive indigenous language-in-education policy helps in reviving the Afro-Zimbabwean culture. This indigenous language-in-education policy, thus, becomes a counter-measure against the coloniality of power (Western cultural hegemony). In alignment with the preceding, Chetsanga wrote an 'English to Shona - Science and Technology Dictionary' in 2014 (Wuta, 2020), a decolonial undertaking designed to redeem, restore, rediscover, redefine, recentre, and reposition the Afro-Zimbabwean power and knowledge.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As has emerged from the preceding, the colonial logic continues to define the education systems extant in SSA in general and Zimbabwe in particular. These Western-oriented education systems in turn continue to shape societies in the region in question. Such a trend is lamentable because if left unchecked it can lead to the complete obliteration of African history, power, knowledge, being, worldview, culture, religion, and heritage. When this happens, Afro-Zimbabweans are ushered into a world which is alien to them thereby creating a cultural vacuum which can only be filled by a rejection of the African heritage, loss of identity, confusion, and a total break of African power, knowledge, and being. Yet, Afro-Zimbabwean history, power, knowledge, being, worldview, culture, religion, and heritage need to be preserved for posterity. To decolonise local education and preserve the Afro-Zimbabwean heritage, therefore, architects of Zimbabwe's education system are urged to reformulate policy with which to escalate the philosophies-ideals of African redemption, *Unhu/Ubuntu*, African renaissance, and indigenisation of knowledge and language.

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Mulungushi: A toponymic exegesis

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Abstract

This paper examines the toponym Mulungushi, a name that is slowly becoming popular in Zambia's urban toponymic landscape. We begin by tracing the origin and/or importance of the name. Next, we identify the features that have been named Mulungushi in Zambia, and establish the informing ideology that underpins the choice of this name for the identified national features. The data for the study were collected mainly through documentary analysis, and also through semi-structured interviews of selected participants thought to be privy to the post-independence era, particularly the period from 1964 to 1970. The study found that the toponym Mulungushi is associated with nationalization and industrialization, in addition to serving as an enduring and unalloyed reminder of the urgent need for an economic manumission and (re)generation that characterized Zambia under Kenneth Kaunda's rule during the independence euphoria and zeitgeist. We used the Critical Toponymic theory to contend that the drive to inscribe this toponymy to the urban toponymic landscape is engineered by the desire to inform and remind of the nationalization and industrialization drive that characterized Zambia immediately following independence, the ultimate aim being to harness and foster the same mood in the present state in a bid to bring about the much-desired economic emancipation in the country.

Keywords: Critical Toponymic theory, Kenneth Kaunda, Mulungushi, toponymic landscape

Introduction

Zambia earned its political independence from British rule in 1964, and Kenneth Kaunda was entrusted by the Zambians with the mandate to lead the country. A critical glance at some of the policies of Kenneth Kaunda's government during the independence euphoria years seems to suggest that the much-hyped political independence was devoid of economic independence, and therefore, an economic independence was also inevitable. An example of such policies is the Mulungushi Economic Reforms of 1968. The meetings that gave birth to the economic reforms were held at the banks of a small river known as Mulungushi in the Central Province of Zambia. Thus, the economic reforms were named after the river. The interest in this study is in the toponym *Mulungushi*.

One of the cross-cutting arguments in toponymy is that place names, just like any other category of names, are not mundane; rather they radiate social phenomena, or have an onomastic content. Thus, place names are not neutral. In this study we examined the toponym *Mulungushi*, a name that is slowly becoming popular in Zambia's urban toponymic landscape. The choice to focus on this toponym is instigated by the fact that a

cursory glance at it seems to suggest that its onomastic content has been encrypted. As such, a vast majority of the Zambian population that were born around the 1980s henceforward, may find the name opaque in terms its onomastic output. The loss of the onomastic content of a name is popularly referred to as onomastic erasure (Pfukwa, 2012). Pfukwa identifies place renaming as the major cause of onomastic erasure while Chabata, Mumpande and Mashiri (2017) identify a mangling of place names as the major cause. In the case of *Mulungushi*, the cause of the onomastic erasure can be attributed to the decrepitude as a result of the passage of time. Thus, this study undertakes to decrypt the toponym *Mulungushi* so as to bring to the fore the hidden onomastic content of the toponym.

We begin by tracing the origin and/or importance of the name *Mulungushi*. Next, we identify the features/places that have been named *Mulungushi* in Zambia, and establish the informing ideology in designating this toponym to the identified national features. This is done within the matrix of knowledge that place names are not innocent designators (Berg & Vuolteenaho, 2009), but are so charged that they are useful to (re)negotiate and (re)align social phenomena in a fashion that brings it in sync with the aspirations of the namer (Alderman & Inwood, 2013). This is the reason why they are commonly viewed as historical chronicles (Hang'ombe, Chabata & Mamvura, 2019), despite some of them, such as *Mulungushi*, seemingly neutral, especially if not critically examined in a historical context. The capability of place names to serve as historical chronicles can be credited to the principle of persistence (Saparov, 2003; Donada & Reinoso, 2014) that is integral to them. This principle holds that place names are durable, meaning that they can survive for many generations, though over time, they tend to undergo an onomastic erasure or onomastic decrepitation.

To successfully decrypt the toponym *Mulungushi*, we first undertake a review of the Mulungushi Reforms of 1968. We identify the backdrop against which these reforms were passed, their objective and the aspirations of Zambia at that time. In addition to the review, we carried out semi-structured interviews with five senior citizens that have a rich understanding of the reforms and the gear that Zambia was at the time that the reforms were being passed. The five senior citizens were identified through snowball sampling. The researchers knew of one senior citizen with rich understanding the economic reforms because they participated in the meetings that lead to the reforms. With the assistance of this participant, the researchers were able to identify four other senior citizens that had a rich knowledge of the Mulungushi Economic Reforms.

 We also conducted semi-structured interviews with five adult and five youth participants aged between twenty (20) and forty (40). These participants were purposefully sampled based on their knowledge of the Lusaka and Kabwe towns' toponymic landscape because it is in these towns where the toponym *Mulungushi* is mostly found in Zambia. We refer

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to the participants in this age group as the younger generation. The aim of the interview with all the participants was to establish their understanding of the onomastic content of the toponym *Mulungushi*, as well as its historical significance. The collected data are couched in the Critical Toponymic theory.

The Mulungushi Economic Reform

The Mulungushi Economic Reform was passed in April 1968 at Mulungushi Rock of Authority about 10 km, north of Kabwe town in the Central Province of Zambia. At independence in 1964, the economy of Zambia was run by foreigners. It was a privately owned economy. The Zambian citizens who were treated as second class citizens during the colonial era were also deprived of running businesses in their own country.

It was the foretold economic lacunae that compelled the Zambian government under then President Kenneth Kaunda, on the 19th of April 1968 to announce that the state would intervene in the Zambian economy and nationalize all privately owned industries through what came to be known as the Mulungushi Reforms (Kaunda, 1968). It is important to point out that the Mulungushi reforms of 1968 were meant for the restructuring of Zambia's economy in industries only. This did not include mining and financial sectors. The nationalized industries included agricultural, railway, transport, electricity, brewing, wholesaling and retailing as well as the supply and manufacture of building materials (Kaunda, 1968).

The nationalization policy implemented through Zambia's 1968 Mulungushi Reforms constituted a deliberate strategy by the Kaunda government to assume 51% state control over key industries previously dominated by foreign capital, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, railways, transport, electricity, brewing, wholesale/retail trade, and building materials manufacturing (Kaunda, 1968, p 56; Sardanis, 2003, p. 112). This move was emblematic of the broader post-independence African zeitgeist that sought to dismantle colonial economic structures and assert sovereign control over strategic sectors, as articulated by Nkrumah (1965, p. 73) and characterized by scholars as a "commanding heights" approach to economic development (Shivji, 1976, p. 24). The reforms were theoretically grounded in three core principles: economic decolonization, aimed at reversing foreign corporate dominance that controlled 80% of Zambia's formal economy at independence (ILO, 1969, p. 15); resource mobilization, designed to capture and redirect copper revenues accounting for 45% of GDP toward national development through parastatals like INDECO (World Bank, 1970, p. 32; Sardanis, 2003, p. 118); and social equity, reflecting Kaunda's Zambian Humanism philosophy that promoted collective ownership to address colonial-era inequalities (Kaunda, 1967, p. 92). However, implementation revealed significant challenges across sectors: agricultural productivity declined by 20% following the state takeover of maize marketing boards (Agricultural

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Marketing Committee Report, 1973, p. 17), the national transport company ZAMBUS struggled with maintenance due to technical constraints (*Daily Mail*, 15 June 1970), and Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation (ZESCO)'s electricity monopoly led to infrastructure underinvestment. These difficulties mirrored wider post-colonial African experiences where nationalization, while symbolically important for asserting economic sovereignty, frequently encountered operational shortcomings and global market vulnerabilities (Mkandawire, 2005, p. 16), ultimately necessitating the International Monetary Fund (IMF)-led structural adjustments by the 1980s that highlighted the inherent tensions between nationalist economic ideals and practical governance realities (Loxley, 1990, p. 144)

The Mulungushi economic reforms led to the taking over of 25 relatively large companies under the 51% state and 49% private share equity (Chanda, 2007, Sardanis, 2003, p. 78). This strategic partial nationalization targeted critical sectors such as mining, manufacturing, and commerce, with the government acquiring majority stakes in subsidiaries of key corporations like Anglo-American and the Rhodesia Selection Trust (RST) while preserving private sector involvement (*Times of Zambia*, 30 April 1968). The rationale for this equity structure was threefold: first, it sought to assert economic sovereignty by reducing foreign dominance, particularly in the copper industry, which accounted for over 90% of Zambia's export earnings (Government of the Republic of Zambia, 1968, p. 12), a sentiment echoed by President Kenneth Kaunda's declaration that "Zambians must control their own economic destiny" (Kaunda, 1968, p. 34). Second, the retention of 49% private ownership ensured technical continuity, allowing Zambia to maintain access to foreign expertise and capital, crucial given the nation's limited managerial capacity at independence (Sardanis, 2003, p. 82). Third, the model facilitated a gradual transition toward economic indigenization, avoiding the abrupt disruptions seen in more radical nationalizations elsewhere in post-colonial Africa (Tordoff, 1974, p. 215)

These reforms saw the creation of state companies to invest and run business with the aim of modernizing the economy. The state set up the Industrial Development Corporation (INDECO) to buy shares in private firms to start investment in new areas (Chanda, 2007). The Industrial Development Corporation was established in 1965 as Zambia's primary vehicle for industrial growth, initially operating under government directives rather than parliamentary legislation (Sardanis, 2003, p. 112). Following the Mulungushi Reforms of 1968, INDECO became the central holding company for Zambia's newly nationalized industries, managing key sectors such as mining, manufacturing, and finance (Kaunda, 1968, p. 45). During its peak in the late 1960s and early 1970s, INDECO played a pivotal role in Zambia's industrialization, establishing factories and subsidiaries like Zambia Breweries and Nitrogen Chemicals of Zambia (*Times of Zambia*, 1971). However, its success was short-lived. The 1973 oil crisis and the subsequent collapse of copper prices in 1975 severely undermined its financial stability (World Bank, 1976, p. 23), while

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mismanagement and inefficiencies further eroded its performance (Larmer, 2005, p. 78). By the 1980s, under pressure from IMF-imposed structural adjustment programs, INDECO began to decline, ultimately leading to its dismantling during the privatization wave of the 1990s (Craig, 2000, p. 56).

Today, INDECO no longer exists in its original form. The privatization policies of the 1990s saw most of its assets sold off or liquidated, marking the end of its role as Zambia's industrial powerhouse (GRZ, 1992, p. 34). In 2014, the Zambian government launched a new entity, the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) of Zambia, as a modernized state-owned investment vehicle (*Post Newspaper*, 2014). However, this new IDC operates under a fundamentally different model, focusing on strategic investments rather than direct industrial control (IDC Zambia, 2020).

Mulungushi Rock of Authority was selected for these economic reforms due to its nationalistic symbol as the birthplace of Zambia's independence. The place was first discovered and recommended by Mr. Grey Zulu in the early 1950s for political gatherings and speeches. The place was first used in 1958 for a rally of the Zambia African National Congress and then in 1960 for the conference of the newly-formed United National Independence Party. Since 1964, it has been regularly used by successive political parties for their annual conventions and meetings.

With the enactment of the Mulungushi Reforms of 1968, the place also became the birthplace of Zambia's economic reforms.

Critical Toponymic Theory

Critical Toponymic theory views place names as an arena of a relatively new philosophy used in the study of place names. Some of the advocates of this theory are Perko, Jordan and Komac (2017), Wideman and Masuda (2017), Rose-Redwood, Alderman and Azaryahu (2010), Vuolteenaho and Berg (2009) and Yeoh (2009). The underlying argument of this theory is that place names are loaded with political nuances and are emblems of power. As such, this theory advances the thesis that place names should be studied in relation to political situations and power struggles over landscape/place and place naming (Perko, Jordan & Komac, 2017; Wideman & Masuda, 2017, p. 3; Vuolteenaho & Berg, 2009, p. 1; Yeoh, 2009, p. 71). Commenting on the power struggles reflected in place names, Perko et.al (2017) note that people are not in equal positions to name places, and that place names usually may be important for establishing and (re)producing social identities, even if they are also loaded with alternative interpretations and contested histories. This tells that place names are not innocent designators. From this observation, it can be concluded that the name *Mulungushi* is arguably loaded with some history and other possible social aspects.

Medway, Warnaby, Gillooly and Millington (2021) note that Critical Toponymic Theory is concerned with the political aspects that underpin urban toponymic landscape. These political dimensions are also perceived "as a means of power, identity and national-building by government institutions in postcolonial ... contexts" (2018, p. 1). It may be argued that Medway et al. (2021) have in mind the urban toponymic landscape because governments tend to have more interest in the urban toponymic landscape than the rural countryside.

Wanjiru and Matsubara (2017) observe that Critical Toponymic theory addresses issues surrounding how society aims to manage and contest the naming process while engaging in wider social, economic and political struggles. Thus, one may conclude that society has an insatiable appetite for place naming and this name designation act is a social practice that everyone seeks to perform. Once given an opportunity to name, probably people tend to select place names which promote their social, economic, or political aspirations. On the other hand, missing the opportunity to assign names implies missing the opportunity to leverage one's agenda through the names. This paints a rather clear picture of the web of power struggles that names and naming processes and practices are entangled in, inviting their thorough interrogation while rejecting their fetishization, no matter how mundane they may appear.

Political semiotics may be identified as a sub-theme in scalar toponymy. According to Medway, Warnaby, Gillooly, & Millington (2021, p. 155) the focus of political semiotics is on the use of place names for commemorative purposes. In Critical Toponymic Theory, the meanings and functions of names given to places in commemoration of people have a political inclination. Such names are predominantly meant to imbue certain political aspirations which are in sync with the person the place is named after. This means that such place names serve two functions: to celebrate the eponym and somehow, to inscribe the political agenda of the eponym into the public space.

In this study, the lenses of Critical Toponymic theory are used to examine and discuss the historical connotations of the name Mulungushi in the context of the economic reforms in Zambia immediately following Zambia's independence. Next, the theory is used to expose the motive behind the Zambian government's avidness to assign this name to important national features and facilities such as universities and conference centres, among others.

Features named Mulungushi

Many features are named Mulungushi in Zambia's urban landscape. The next table provides an inventory of the features named Mulungushi as well as their location.

Table 1: *Features bearing the name Mulungushi in Zambia*

S/N	Feature	Location	Year /period built/launched	Usage
1.	Mulungushi International Conference Centre	Lusaka	1970	It is used for hosting national and international conferences, exhibitions, and other high-profile events.
2.	Mulungushi University	Kabwe	2008	It is one of the top-ranking public universities in Zambia.
3.	Mulungushi House	Lusaka	Post-independence	It is a massive building that houses the headquarters for the Ministry of Lands and Agriculture.
4.	Mulungushi Village	Lusaka	Post-independence	It is a top-notch facility that offers accommodation in an excellent area surrounded by upmarket shopping malls. It is a few kilometers from the Lusaka Central Business Area and the Kenneth Kaunda International Airport.
5.	Zambia-China Mulungushi Textiles	Kabwe	2024	Formerly Mulungushi Textiles that ceased operations in 2007. The company mainly manufactures cloth.
6.	Mulungushi Road	Lusaka	Post-independence	It is found in Roma, a low density and highly prestigious residential area.

The foregoing table shows that six features bear the name *Mulungushi*. However, these are not the only ones. The features presented in the table are the prominent ones named Mulungushi, and there are many more non-prominent features bearing this name across Zambia. These include streets in residential areas and many businesses. From Table 1, it can be noted that the features named *Mulungushi* are located in Lusaka the capital city of Zambia, while others are in Kabwe town but are names of highly prestigious places and/or ventures in Zambia. By virtue of being located in Lusaka, the places with the name Mulungushi in Table 1 can be said to wield a very high social and economic status in Zambia.

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Second, it can be noted from the table that the places named *Mulungushi* were constructed after 1964. The name *Mulungushi* gained importance and traction following the *Mulungushi* Reforms of 1968. As observed earlier, the *Mulungushi* reforms were targeted at awakening the spirit of nationalization. The objective at that time was to establish the economic machinery in the stewardship of the Zambian government. This leads us to the third observation about the features named *Mulungushi* in Table 1: the features are mainly government owned or controlled. This accords the features in the table an express national status that in turn, probably inscribes national symbols of whatever motivated the bestowers to select the name for the features from a vast pool of names in the

The recurrent thesis in toponomastics is that name selection is not an apolitical human undertaking. Literature on the subject states that they are wittingly selected and, always aimed to marshal and perpetuate ideologies that resonate with the views, aspirations and needs of the bestowers (Chilala & Hang'ombe, 2021; Hang'ombe, Chabata & Mamvura, 2018; Matsubara, 2016; Ndletyana, 2012). But the case for the toponym Mulungushi seems to be somewhat different: most of the people interviewed are not aware of the agenda behind the name, implying that the name has suffered an onomastic erasure. Onomastic erasure is an onomastic situation whereby the meaning of a name has been exterminated or when the original meaning of the name has been lost Clark, 2017). However, in a strict sense, onomastic erasure occurs when a place is renamed. Thus, the case for *Mulungushi* may not be regarded as one of onomastic erasure. Rather it may be best viewed as a case of onomastic semantic content encryption. This is because the onomastic semantic content has not been erased, but is hidden to the younger generations, and only visible to most of the older generation that were there and old enough to understand the nationalization zeitgeist that characterized Zambia's economic horizon at the time of her independence. In this case, it can be argued that when the older generation have all gone, the toponym undergoes an erasure. The next section attempts to decrypt the onomastic semantic content of the toponym *Mulungushi*.

Decrypting *Mulungushi*

To successfully decrypt the toponym *Mulungushi*, we started off by considering the 1968 Mulungushi Reforms. The meetings that birthed the reforms were held on the banks of a small river, Mulungushi River about 10kms north of Kabwe town in central Zambia in 1968. Thus, ordinarily, all the features and infrastructure bearing the name Mulungushi in Zambia, including those in Table 1, are named after this river. The particular point where the meetings were held became known as the *Mulungushi* Rock of Authority. The agenda during the meetings revolved around the urgent need to nationalize the economy of Zambia, and all the deliberations were aimed at coming up with innovative ideas on how the then infant Zambia's economy would be strengthened. At that time, the president of

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Zambia was Kenneth Kaunda. By virtue of being the head of Zambia's government during that time, Kaunda can be said to be the central brain behind the thirsty to strengthen the economy of Zambia that led the delegates to the *Mulungushi* River to caucus on the best way the dream of a flourishing Zambia would be realised (Sardanis, 2003, p. 78).

Other notable people that attended the meetings at the Mulungushi Rock of Authority in April 1968 included Vice President Simon Kapwepwe, whose advocacy for radical economic decolonization proved instrumental (Tordoff, 1974, p. 112), and Mainza Chona, then Minister of Home Affairs, who played a crucial role in drafting the legal frameworks for nationalization (*Zambia Hansard*, 1968). The conference's resolutions, strongly influenced by UNIP Secretary-General Alexander Grey Zulu's strategic vision (Macola, 2010, p. 145), were implemented through the coordinated efforts of key cabinet members. Finance Minister Dingiswayo Banda operationalized the 51% state ownership mandate (Larmer, 2005, p. 67), Agriculture Minister Elijah Mudenda restructured the farming sector (GRZ Agricultural Policy, 1969, 23), and Commerce Minister Justin Chimba oversaw the takeover of foreign commercial enterprises (*Times of Zambia*, April 19, 1968). The resulting *Mulungushi* Reforms, formally articulated in the *Mulungushi* Declaration (GRZ, 1968), marked a decisive shift toward economic sovereignty, targeting Zambia's copper mines and foreign-owned businesses as part of a broader strategy to decolonize the economy and redistribute national wealth (Kaunda, 1968, p. 34). This collective action by Zambia's leadership represented both a rejection of neocolonial economic structures and an ambitious assertion of post-independence self-determination, though its long-term consequences would prove complex and multifaceted (Sardanis, 2014, p. 156-160).

The key resolution that was passed by the attendees of the meetings at the Mulungushi Rock of Authority was that Zambia's economy needed to be nationalised. It is for this reason that the name *Mulungushi* is synonymous with nationalization, as noted from one of the older generation participants who observed that:

> *The name Mulungushi is a name of the river in Kabwe, but to me, it reminds me more about Kaunda. Kaunda fought very hard to make the economy of Zambia strong through good projects like INDECO [Industrial Development Corporation].*

> (*Participant A, 2024*).

All the older generation participants shared similar views with participant A. They either linked the name *Mulungushi* to Zambia's first Republican President Kenneth Kaunda or to the Industrial Development Corporation. As such, the onomastics semantic field of the toponym Mulungushi includes Kenneth Kaunda and nationalization. The *Mulungushi* Economic Reforms (1968) brought about the nationalisation of the agriculture, railway, transport, electricity, brewing, wholesaling and retailing as well as the supply and

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manufacture of building materials. To date, some of these sectors of Zambia economy are parastatal or run by government, while others were privatized in the early 1990s.

The Mulungushi Economic Reforms were aimed at improving Zambia's economy. The need to improve the economy of Zambia was instigated by an aspiration for an economically free Zambia. As a visionary leader, it can be claimed that Kaunda's vision over-arched beyond a political emancipation to include economic freedom. Against this backdrop, it can be opined that the semantic field of the name *Mulungushi* includes economic freedom. A society that has an economic freedom is a happy one. Such a society, in turn, finds their voice in their everyday affairs, including governance in contrast to marginalized ones whose freedoms are stifled and downtrodden (Muwati, 2015).

Arguably, the other semantic field that the name *Mulungushi* has attained over the years is prestige. Thus, the name *Mulungushi* is associated with prestige. As can be noted from Table 1, the name is given to national features/places that are prominent and highly prestigious. This allows the name more (inter)national visibility relative to most of other place names in the country. This argument is collaborated by the observations of most of the younger generations that were asked about the meaning of the name. One of them, a student at Mulungushi University, responded, "Okay, the name Mulungushi is a name for my university. I am not sure of what it means." After being probed further, the participant stated that:

> *The name is also given to an international conference centre in Lusaka. [While smiling] It is a big name for big institutions. My institution is big. I am happy to be in this institution.*

The participant's observation that 'my institution is big' can be interpreted to mean that the establishment is prestigious. This interpretation is supported by the observation by the student that 'I am happy to in this institution', an observation that signifies that the participant associates themselves with the institution. In toponymic literature, two types of place names can be identified: names with positive connotation, and those with a negative one (Donada & Reinoso, 2014). Leveraging on Donada and Reinoso's categorisation of place names, one can opine that the name-identity-pendulum of human beings is such that they tend to identify, associate and love the names that have a positive identity, while disassociating, denigrating and shying away from those with a negative implication. In light of this thesis, it can be concluded that the toponym *Mulungushi* has a positive connotation on the basis that it is given to features that have a high status in the country. Therefore, the name can be said to be synonymous with prestige.

So far, we have laboured to espouse the meaning and/or identify what is associated with the name *Mulungushi*. However, the question of why this name is bestowed on important

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national features has not yet been addressed. The remaining part of the discussion in this paper concerns itself with this question.

From the standpoint of the Critical Toponymic theory, a choice of this name on important national features is tucked under certain motives and agenda. This means that the name is given with a view to infuse certain national narratives and aspirations within the national onomastic landscape. As such, apolitical as the toponym *Mulungushi* may present itself to the younger generations in Zambia, it resoundingly articulates, (re)echoes, remembers, and (re)enforces the zeitgeist, vision, and aspirations of Zambia's post-independence. This confirms the key argument in Critical Toponymy that place names are not neutral. Another example of a toponym in Zambia that seems neutral is *Victoria Falls*, a name for the water fall along the Zambezi River near Livingstone town in Zambia and the Victoria Falls town in Zimbabwe. According to Hang'ombe, et al. (2018) the name Victoria Falls seems neutral at face value. However, a critical view of it reveals that the name commodifies the water fall, and it serves as a marketing strategy for the water fall as a tourist attraction. In addition, when David Livingstone named the water fall after the queen, he was asserting the power of the British monarch as well as claiming ownership of the falls. This is because of the name is associated with one of the previous queens of the British Empire, Victoria. Thus, by naming the water fall Victoria, David Livingstone honoured the Queen Victoria, and by implication inscribed the high status and power of the queen on the water fall. Therefore, by insisting on using it as an official name for the water fall ahead of others such Syungu Namutitima, Chinotimba, and Mosi-Oa-Tunya, the governments of Zambia and Zimbabwe leverage on the high status and fame of name, which attributes Hang'ombe et al, to argue that it has more potential to attract tourists to the water fall than would the said local names.

We have already argued that *Mulungushi* is synonymous with nationalization and industrialization and that these were aimed to jump-start and boost the economy of Zambia. From a Critical Toponymic theory, therefore, bestowing this name on national places, has the potential to promote and remind the Zambian populace of the need and importance of national economic emancipation that nationalization and industrialization is capable of bringing. Put more resolutely, the name is a subtle call to Zambians to be industrious (hardworking) so that they can attain economic liberation that would make the political liberation attained in 1964 more meaningful and complete.

On the basis of the fact that the toponym *Mulungushi* is a name of a place in which political meetings were held during the struggle for independence, the name is synonymous with the struggle for Zambia's political freedom. Thus, the name is an independence insignia, especially that it strides political and economic freedom. Bestowing the name on important national features, therefore, can be regarded as a stark reminder of the sapping and stultifying affray for political freedom that led to the loss of lives for the many

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independence visionaries, and the subsequent attainment of the independence in Zambia in the 1960s.

Concisely stated, the toponymy *Mulungushi* invokes and serves to remind the Zambian people of the struggle for political freedom, as well as an aspiration for a national economic freedom that Zambia has been pursuing from the time the Mulungushi Economic Reforms were passed in 1968 to date.

Conclusion

This study has examined the toponymy *Mulungushi*, one whose onomastic content seems to have been encrypted over the years. To successfully decrypt the toponym, an effort is made at identifying the major national features the name has been bestowed on, their location and usage. Next, an effort has been made to discuss the onomastic semantic field that the names accumulated over the years. In relation to the onomastic semantic field of the name, the opinion made in the paper is that the toponym *Mulungushi* is synonymous with the struggle for political independence, the aspiration and need for economic independence that would be operationalized through nationalization and industrialization, economic undertakings that we perceive to be a subtle call to the Zambians to hard work and creativity aimed at growing the economy of the country. The central thesis in this paper, steeped in the Critical Toponymic theory, is that bestowing the toponym *Mulungushi* on national features is meant to inscribe onto the toponymic landscape of Zambia and, remind the citizens of the struggle for political freedom and the inescapable reality of the fight for economic freedom that preoccupies every Zambian, consciously or unconsciously.

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The Place of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 Curriculum: Insights from Lecturers at a Selected Teachers' College in Harare

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Abstract

This hermeneutical study sought to estimate the value of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKSs) in Zimbabwe's higher and tertiary education. Thus, it assessed the interface of AIKSs and the country's higher and tertiary education curriculum, which, in essence, is the Education 5.0 curriculum. The study was informed by Gade's theory of 'narratives of return' and the Sankofa principle, cognate ideals that look into the past for solutions to problems currently vexing Sub-Saharan Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular. This study employed the qualitative approach and adopted the case study design. Interviews were conducted with six lecturers purposively sampled from one selected teacher's college in Harare. The in-depth individual face-to-face interview was the chief data-generation instrument, buttressed by document analysis to permit the triangulation of findings for credibility and trustworthiness of results. It was discovered that participants (college lecturers) possess a sound understanding of the concept AIKSs, which presents a good starting point for integration of the same into Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum. Participants communicated their appreciation of the benefits that come with integrating AIKSs into Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum. Thus, AIKSs contribute immensely to heritage-based problem-solving, creativity, innovation, industrialisation, and national development. However, some participants noted potential drawbacks of this integration agenda. Hence, they suggested, inter-alia, the involvement of indigenous communities, curriculum modification to foster respect for AIKSs, re-orientation of educators to the dictates of AIKSs, development of relevant text material, and integrating AIKSs into education starting from Early Childhood Development. Participants also suggested government support at policy level, and monitoring and evaluation. The study, therefore, recommends an elaborate, comprehensive, and progressive policy framework tailored to tweak and expedite implementation of the agenda for integrating AIKSs into Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum. This in the end fosters educational contextuality, instructional relevance, heritage-based creativity, indigenous-oriented innovation, and locally based but globally competitive industrialisation.

Keywords: African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKSs), Education 5.0 curriculum, narratives of return, Sankofa

Introduction

The current study centres on the interface of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKSs) and Zimbabwe's higher and tertiary education programmes (the Education 5.0 curriculum). AIKSs are an embodiment of African epistemology. Since epistemology is construed basically as the theory of knowledge (Chemhuru, 2011), AIKSs, therefore, can be understood as the African meaning-making or African ways of knowing or African

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knowledge production. In other words, AIKSs constitute the African knowledge aspect. AIKSs also underpin *Chivanhu*, which, according to Makuvaza (2010), forms the bedrock of the home-grown *Ubuntu/Unhu* philosophy. AIKSs, thus, sustain the epistemological dimension of the *Ubuntu/Unhu* philosophy, which, in turn, forms the substratum of a holistic African existentiality. The operationalisation of Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum is traceable to as recent as 2019. Education 5.0, sometimes referred to as the Heritage-Based Education 5.0 abbreviated to HBE 5.0, comprises of five pillars namely teaching, research, community outreach, innovation, and industrialisation. These pillars harmonise with the National Development Strategies 1 & 2 (NDS 1 & 2), which are Zimbabwe's strategic economic development programmes of 2021-2025 and 2026-2030, respectively, towards Vision 2030 of achieving an upper middle-income status in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. This study, thus, estimates the benefits that accrue to Zimbabwe as a nation through integrating AIKSs into the country's Education 5.0 curriculum.

Background

Zimbabwe's higher and tertiary education curriculum (Education 5.0 curriculum) is purportedly heritage-based. A heritage-based education, science, and technology development is delivered conscious of the environment it seeks to transform (Government of Zimbabwe/GoZ, 2018). This heritage-based aspect, therefore, accentuates the ideals of contextuality and functionality which command education to be culture-embedded. Likewise, GoZ (2018, p. 5) states, "Zimbabwe is adopting an education system that imparts knowledge, which is suitable for exploitation of locally available resources for its transformation to an industrialised and modernised economy." The 'locally available resources' alluded to in the foregoing sentence include the cultural, agricultural, climatological, and mineralogical heritage to be harnessed for indigenous-oriented national development. The heritage-based philosophy "supports the application of gained knowledge on the local environment in order to produce relevant goods and services" (Muzira & Bondai, 2020, p. 46). This ideal of relevance, as embedded in the heritage-based philosophy, is consistent with the agenda for Africanising education, which, in this context, speaks to the integration of AIKSs into Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum. It should, however, be noted that a great deal of debate surrounds the integration of AIKSs into education at all levels.

On the one hand, there is advocacy for the integration of AIKSs into the education system. Thus, for countries whose educational policies have embraced AIKSs, the result has been a phenomenological improvement in these countries' technological development and an improvement in their people's standards of living (Zengeya-Makuku, Kushure, Zengeya & Bhukuvhani, 2013). Examples of such countries include Kenya, India, and Australia. AIKSs, therefore, are considered of value to education in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in

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general and Zimbabwe in particular. It is upon this realisation that Tapfuma (2012) urges the incorporation of AIKSs into the education curriculum at all levels because they can be used as an alternative or complement to the conventional scientific methods and techniques for sustainable development especially in agriculture, health, and environmental management. Hence, AIKSs could be incorporated into the education curriculum as a matter of policy as they cover a wide spectrum of human endeavour inclusive of ecology, climate, crop cultivation, animal husbandry, botany, linguistics, medicine, clinical psychology, and craft skills (Wuta, 2020). Moreover, AIKSs have the potential to promote innovative thinking as they provide the basis for problem-solving strategies for the local communities. In view of the preceding, the Zimbabwe Environmental Education Policy demands the incorporation of AIKSs into the teaching of Environmental Education in schools, colleges, and universities (GoZ, as cited in Wuta, 2020).

It is clear that, "There is need to find a place for indigenous knowledge in the current Eurocentric curriculum" (Zengeya-Makuku *et al.*, 2013, p. 446). Therefore, any education system in Africa South of the Sahara which denigrates and sidelines AIKSs could be viewed as an extension of the colonial project. Indigenous knowledge provides a beacon of light within the tunnel of Eurocentric dogma, misinformation, and untruths (Emeagwali & Dei, 2014). Hence, the incorporation of AIKSs into African education is portrayed as the surest way of enhancing decolonial ideals, African renaissance, and empowerment. This Africanisation thesis (with a decolonial inclination) is endorsed by Mawere (2015, p. 62) who argues:

> *With indigenous knowledge and conventional science in the curriculum, learners are, therefore, better empowered to shake-off the chains of imperial domination, make their own decisions, and chart their own destiny based on what they learn both at home and at school.*

The foregoing, therefore, demonstrates the decoloniality of AIKSs within local education.

On the other hand, AIKSs are not without criticism. Some Westernised Africans tend to dismiss indigenous knowledge as a manifestation of an anachronism. This intimates that AIKSs have been overtaken by events. To Mosweunyane (2013), critics of AIKSs are convinced that the African continent is immensely benefitting from the contemporary technological changes taking place in the world. Hence, Mosweunyane (2013, p. 56) submits,

> *… it is self-evident that all knowledge is comprised of concepts and propositions, including concepts and propositions that deal with learning strategies and methods of conducting inquiries. It has to be noted that not only education but social reality has become schooled or institutionalised.*

In view of the foregoing, learning is what happens in school (the Western-oriented four walls mentality) and all epistemology is couched in concepts and propositions which are of a Western origin. Critics of AIKSs, therefore, are of the conviction that the modern Euro-Oriental instructional institutions (which nurture Western epistemology) guide life and worldview, and define what is legitimate and what is not. This delegitimises AIKSs, which on the whole are acquired from home and community.

SSA cannot take the risk of reverting to its precolonial knowledge systems (Mosweunyane, 2013). Thus, with constant developments in Science and Technology, with the new means of communication such as Radio and Television, "any person who does not keep up-to-date with these changes is condemned to be overtaken" (Mosweunyane, 2013, p. 56). The preceding expresses the anachronism allegedly characterising AIKSs. This thesis of anachronism affirms the view that it is difficult or almost impossible for Africa to revive its AIKSs, some of which have been lost over time (Mosweunyane, 2013), lost possibly due to the absence of proper and reliable documentation. It, therefore, becomes indisputable that Africa benefits and continues to benefit immensely from the Euro-Oriental meaning-making. However, the said anachronism could be a misunderstanding of AIKSs by those who think that the indigenous African epistemology is stagnant.

In some enclaves of African society, AIKSs are dismissed as pseudoscience. Hence, "many teachers are hesitant to incorporate indigenous knowledge in the classroom out of fear of infecting classroom teaching with pseudoscience" (Shizha, 2010, p. 44). AIKSs, therefore, are believed to lack scientific validity. Thus, Mosweunyane (2013, p. 57) declares:

> *African continent is part of the 'global village' and cannot in its current economic, social and political situation afford to function in isolation. This means the technological advancement that is so far realised will remain attractive to Africans, which will further compound the problem of indigenisation.*

This casts aspersions on the agenda for Africanising education herein construed as the hybridisation of AIKSs and Western Knowledge Systems (WKSs) in Sub-Saharan education.

With the foregoing debates, therefore, the inquirer was caught on the horns of dilemma trying to determine the extent to which the integration of AIKS into Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum brings value to the nation. It is this uncertainty which perturbed the inquirer and compelled him to embark on this study with a view to weighing the evidence.

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Problem Context

The author is perturbed by the contending views on the relevance of AIKSs to contemporary education in SSA in general and Zimbabwe in particular. On the one hand, AIKSs are construed as a decolonial force in the current Eurocentric curricula (Zengeya-Makuku *et al.*, 2013). On the other hand, AIKSs are dismissed as manifestations of an anachronism and propagation of pseudoscience (Wuta & Zivurawa, 2024), to such an extent that local educators are hesitant to incorporate indigenous knowledge in class out of fear of infecting instruction with pseudoscience (De Beer & Whitlock, as cited in Wuta, 2020). This portends the practical uncertainty that lecturers face in integrating AIKSs due to the conflicting discourses. The current inquiry, therefore, sought to ascertain the value of AIKSs in Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum. This hermeneutical study, thus, estimated the contribution that the AIKSs could bring to creativity, innovation, industrialisation, and national development.

Stimulus Questions

1. What do you understand about AIKSs?
2. How far does the integration of AIKSs into the Education 5.0 curriculum benefit Zimbabwe as a nation?
3. What do you suggest for tweaking this agenda for integrating AIKSs into Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum?

Theoretical Framework

The study was informed by Gade's theory of 'narratives of return' (Makuvaza, 2017). "Narratives of return is taken to mean embodiments of postcolonial critical 'consciousnesses' or 'voices' expressed in the form of political ideologies, philosophies and 'protest writings' by postcolonial statesmen, intellectuals as well as academics" (Gade, cited in Makuvaza, 2017, p. 351). Gade's 'narratives of return' theory, therefore, is in close propinquity with critical theory; a pedagogy which is suffused with a strong change agenda for liberating the downtrodden from the circumstances that enslave them. "These political ideologies, pronouncements as well as protest writings originate from discontentment and resentment of the *status quo* in postcolonial states where they are located" (Gade, cited in Makuvaza, 2017, p. 351). Thus, Gade's 'narratives of return' are also a reaction to the forces of neo-colonialism which undertake to legitimise Western epistemologies thereby denigrating and downplaying the indigenous meaning-making in the postcolonial dispensation.

As one scholar observes, "The major statement behind 'narratives of return' is a desire or yearning to 'return' to the past for possible solutions to challenges and problems associated with the postcolonial dispensation" (Makuvaza, 2017, p. 351). Gade's theory

of 'narratives of return', thus, concurs with the Africanisation agenda which is bent on hybridising the AIKSs with the neo-liberal WKSs in local education, since the AIKSs are perceived to have vast potential to complement the WKSs in terms of development within virtually all domains of human endeavour. The preceding is endorsed by Meylahn (as cited in Dreyer, Dreyer, Foley & Nel, Undated) who proclaims categorically that the different narratives of return all made a call for Africanisation.

According to Hankela (2014, p. 48), "these narratives (of return) have in common the sense that for the sake of a good future, society needs to *return to something African* rooted in pre-colonial times." *Returning to something African* concurs with the *Sankofa* principle. According to Woodson (2020), *Sankofa* is an Akan word from the Akan-Adinkera ethnic group in Ghana. The literal translation of the word and the symbol is 'it is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind'. The term is derived from the words *San* meaning 'return', *ko* meaning 'go' and *fa* meaning 'fetch, seek and take' (Slater, 2019, p. 1). After having been interpreted and re-interpreted in several different ways, it was established that *Sankofa* symbolises the Akan people's quest for knowledge based on critical reasoning-examination, intelligent, and patient investigation of the past (Woodson, 2020; Slater, 2019). "Visually and symbolically, '*Sankofa*' is expressed as a mythic bird that flies forward while looking backward with an egg (symbolising the future) in its mouth" (Slater, 2019, p. 2). This ties with the motto, 'In order to understand one's present and ensure one's future, one must know their past'. To the Akan, therefore, it is this wisdom in learning from the past which ensures a strong future (Slater, 2019). Consequently, both Gade's 'narratives of return' theory and *Sankofa* principle coincide with Msila's (2009) notion of African renaissance, which, in turn, dovetails with the agenda for Africanising education in SSA in general, and Zimbabwe in particular.

Indigenous Knowledge and African Indigenous Knowledge Systems Unravelled

The word 'indigenous' is derived from the Latin word '*indigena*' whose English equivalent is 'indigene', which is usually taken to mean 'native'. Indigenous, thus, refers to "the root of things; as something that is natural and in-born to a specific context or culture" (Msila, 2009, p. 311). Indigenous knowledge, therefore, depicts the kind of meaning-making or knowledge production or epistemology which is peculiar to any given locale. The above is endorsed by Zengeya-Makuku *et al.* (2013, p. 447), who view indigenous knowledge as "knowledge that people in a given community developed, and continue to develop over time and is based on experience often tested over centuries of use, adapted to the local culture and environment which is ever-changing and dynamic". Indigenous knowledge, therefore, is home-grown but amenable to change. Mawere (2015, p. 61) also views indigenous knowledge as "a set of ideas, beliefs and practices of a specific locale that has been used by its people to interact with their environment and other people over a long period of time." Thus, indigenous knowledge is the 'traditional', 'native', 'local'

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epistemology embedded in the history and culture of any people, including their civilisation.

Indigenous knowledge systems in general have been defined as "the sum total of the knowledge and skills which people in a particular geographical area possess" (Shizha, 2010, p. 32). AIKSs, therefore, comprise the meaning-making process (epistemology) deemed idiosyncratic to SSA. They incorporate combinations of epistemologies encompassing the technological, philosophical, social, economic, educational, legal, and governance systems of Africans (Msila, 2009). AIKSs are sometimes called the African people's science, ethno-science, folk-ecology, village science, or local science as they cover ecology, climate, agriculture, animal husbandry, botany, linguistics, medicine, clinical psychology, and craft skills, *inter-alia* (Mapira & Mazambara, 2013). Mapira and Mazambara (2013) also maintain that AIKSs are home-grown, cultural, perennialistic (mainly through oral history), geared towards problem-solving, and dynamic/versatile/adaptable to changes/events taking place.

Review of Related Literature

In the various communities of the world, there exist indigenous epistemological (meaning-making) systems that can be meaningfully integrated into the pro-Western school curricula (Kaino, 2013). WKSs and AIKSs, therefore, can coexist and complement each other in the education curricula. Hence, Kante (as cited in Murwira & Wuta, 2023) asserts that the integration of AIKSs at all levels of education in Africa is beneficial to students because it enhances the relevance and effectiveness of instruction since it consequently provides an education that adheres to students' own inherent aspirations, perceptions, experiences, language, and customs. Kante's assertion pertains to the whole world, which manifests a geographical gap in literature. The current inquiry, therefore, sought to narrow down to issues of a similar nature at a local level, *id est*, in Zimbabwe.

The African continent has its own knowledge systems (AIKSs) which have been utilised by its inhabitants for an extended period of time. To Mohamedbhai (2013), there is rich indigenous knowledge embodied in Africa's cultural and ecological diversities, and African people have drawn on this knowledge for hundreds of years to solve specific developmental and environmental problems. Likewise, Odora-Hoppers (2004, p. 8) writes:

> *Today, indigenous knowledge is marginalised, even denigrated, but it lives and sustains millions of people economically, socially and spiritually as a living framework for continuing creativity and innovation in most fields of technology. It is a source of wealth, both as an economic asset and as cultural patrimony.*

AIKSs, therefore, constitute the African heritage and it is the aforementioned creative and innovative potential of AIKSs which justifies their fusion into the higher and tertiary

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education curricula within SSA. Mohamedbhai's (2013) and Odora-Hoppers's (2004) contributions are above board. However, they exhibit a geographical gap as they tend to be applied to the Sub-Saharan region in general, which constitutes a simplistic generalisation. The current study, therefore, sought to fill this gap by conducting a study of a similar nature locally (in Zimbabwe) in order to gather a more nuanced picture of the phenomenon under review.

As emerged from a study conducted locally in Zimbabwe by Zengeya-Makuku *et al.* (2013), AIKSs serve to contextualise instruction, enhance learner understanding of the concepts under study, and foster scientific-technological development leading to the betterment of people's standards of living. Although Zengeya-Makuku *et al.*'s contributions are in the local context and are deemed valuable, they manifest a population or sample gap in the sense that they were gathered from secondary school teachers only, which excluded lecturers. The current inquiry, therefore, sought to bridge this gap by gleaning relevant insights from teachers' college lecturers.

Ndhlovu and Musuku (2004), however, report that the Zimbabwean education system is conspicuous for its disregard of AIKSs, which, according to Kaya (2014), are perceived in some quotas of the African society as inferior, primitive, superstitious, unscientific, and improper sources for social theory and research development. It is against this critique and denigration of AIKSs that the current study seeks to weigh the evidence and, in the process, estimate the value of African epistemology in Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum.

According to Muchenje and Goronga (2013) and Mapara (2009), numerous studies were conducted covering (a) AIKSs and sustainable development, (b) AIKSs and their integration into primary and secondary school, (c) AIKSs and science, and (d) contributions of universities to the renaissance of AIKSs. The above-named authorities on the whole conclude that AIKSs are a valuable instructional resource. Notwithstanding the value of the aforementioned research efforts, the researcher noted a paucity of literature particularly on AIKSs and their place in Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum.

Research Methodology

The current study was informed by interpretivism, sometimes called hermeneutics, a research philosophy in which the researcher "seeks to understand situations through the eyes of the participants … and (is) premised on the view that reality is socially constructed" (Cohen, Manion & Morisson, 2007, p. 27). The inquirer, thus, sought to understand human-social phenomena from the perspective of the speaking and acting participants. Through hermeneutics, the inquirer undertook data interpretation focusing on the meanings and value systems expressed by lecturers.

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This hermeneutical study took the qualitative approach, which, according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), is more successful when dealing with human-social phenomena. Qualitative research seeks to probe deeply into the study settings to obtain an in-depth understanding of the way things are, why they are that way, and how participants in that context perceive them (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2011). Thus, the current inductive and naturalistic inquiry was concerned with the depth, not breadth of information on human-social phenomena, which, in this case, was teachers' college lecturers' perceptions on the place of AIKSs in Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum. The current inquiry was a case study by design, which focused on one selected teachers' college in Harare.

The purposive sampling technique was preferred since it gave the inquirer the convenience to pick on information-rich interviewees who furnished him with relevant in-depth information that gave the whole inquiry the quality of being qualitative. The small sample size of six lecturers was determined by the purposive nature of participant selection within the specific context of teachers' colleges. The fact that data saturation was achieved provides further justification for the small sample size of six.

In terms of instrumentation, the current study employed the use of in-depth individual face-to-face interviews and analysis of documentary evidence (document analysis) because the two data-generation tools were deemed compatible with the qualitative research approach and case study design (Tshuma & Mafa, 2013). Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with the six purposively sampled lecturers from the selected teachers' college to obtain in-depth information on issues to do with the interface of AIKSs and the Education 5.0 curriculum. The researcher also employed document analysis as a buttress research instrument in order to allow for triangulation, which guaranteed the credibility and trustworthiness of findings. Peer debriefing and active reflexivity were also employed to further enhance the rigour, credibility, and trustworthiness of findings. In document analysis, private records, books, reports, periodicals, bulletins, and syllabi maybe used as sources of data (Best & Kahn, 2006). The current study, thus, reviewed related literature as contained in journals and analysed in particular the *University of Zimbabwe Vice Chancellor's (2022) Teacher Education Transformation Programme* as some kind of a bulletin to gather baseline information pertaining to the interface between AIKS and Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum.

Presentation and Analysis of Findings

Findings were presented verbatim in order to give a qualitative feel to the study and ensure that the readership catches the original flavour of participants' contributions. This presentation and analysis of findings was configured in accordance with the stimulus questions, meaning that the 'sub-headings' under this 'findings section' derive from their

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respective stimulus questions stated earlier. Research participants are coded CL which stands for College Lecturers.

Understanding African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKSs)

Participants' definitions of AIKSs were as follows:

> ***CL₁.*** *AIKSs refer to the unique knowledge, practices, and beliefs of the indigenes of Africa. They constitute a holistic approach that encompasses cultural practices, spiritual connections, as well as environmental, medicinal, agricultural, social, cultural, and traditional knowledge.*

> ***CL₂.*** *AIKSs constitute local knowledge systems which emanate from people's existential circumstances and are not borrowed from other exotic knowledge systems. Indigenous knowledge encompasses traditional knowledge which has been passed from generation to generation. African indigenous knowledge permeates aspects of societal life such as agriculture, medicine, and food production, and conservation, etcetera.*

> ***CL₃.*** *These are cultural and traditional practices, beliefs, customs, norms, and values that separate Africans from other races. Africans are identified by these practices, which make them unique as a people. These practices are passed from generation to generation through African narratives, observations, and imitation.*

> ***CL₄.*** *AIKSs refer to the body of knowledge built since time immemorial by successive generations of Africans. It is an acknowledgement and affirmation that a holistic body of knowledge that covered all the domains of human life existed on the African continent and speaks to the ingenuity and lore of the continent's early inhabitants which must be preserved and passed to posterity. AIKSs capture human existence in its totality because the evidence that can be adduced so far points to Africa as the cradle of human race, and given that human knowledge started with human evolution there is no doubt whatsoever that AIKSs constitute the basis of all forms of all knowledge as they exist today, never mind the new dynamism. AIKSs are first of a political nature, that is, the art of governance from the family set up to the village head, chiefs, and kings. AIKSs are of an economic nature because economic production on the land was associated with the fortunes prescribed by nature. Good seasons followed pious human conduct while tragedies attended human error. The social aspect of AIKSs is the most enriching as it encompasses medicine, divination, rain-making, fertility, pre- and post-natal therapy, puberty rites, parenting, nutrition, communalism, Unhu/Ubuntu, and many more.*

> ***CL₅.*** *AIKSs denote the system of knowledge that is inherent in the lives of Africans. It is passed from one generation to another. It recognises the knowledge ingrained*

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in African culture. It is a way of explaining natural and spiritual thoughts, beliefs, and feelings which are the cornerstones of African existence. AIKSs have long been dwarfed by Eurocentric and colonial philosophies which trivialised the African knowledge systems. Nevertheless, AIKSs continue to embrace the relevant principles and schools of thought through which Africans explain phenomena. Although AIKSs tend to evolve with time, whatever elders know about the maze of issues like disease, diet, life skills, farming, marriage, etcetera, is critical in understanding and solving problems. For example, some behaviours of animals and/or plants can be used to forecast the weather whilst herbs are useful in curing diseases, averting disease outbreaks and related disasters.

CL$_6$. AIKSs are the unique traditional form of knowledge and practices of Africa's different and diverse cultures.

Participants on the whole converged on the understanding that AIKSs constitute the unique African traditional knowledge, practices, customs, norms, values, and beliefs. As understood by participants, this African traditional epistemology encompasses the cultural, spiritual, social, environmental, medical, and agricultural knowledge which is perennialistic and holistic. Participants also stressed that this peculiarly African traditional knowledge was built since time immemorial; it is geared towards problem-solving and demonstrates the intelligence and traditions of Africans. The fact that the interviewed teachers' college lecturers have a sound conceptual understanding of AIKSs presents a good grounding and starting point for the integration of these AIKSs into Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum, making it a genuinely decolonised and heritage-based training programme.

Integration of AIKSs into Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum: Benefits and drawbacks

Participants' views are as follows:

CL$_1$. Zimbabwe can preserve its/her cultural heritage and identity by including AIKSs in the curriculum at all levels. AIKSs, thus, inform agricultural practices such as crop management, grain storage, and livestock management which can then improve food security. AIKSs promote cultural diversity, inclusivity, and heritage preservation, which enhances the relevant learning outcomes and cognitive development among students. The integration of AIKSs into pro-Western education serves to empower local communities so that they take ownership of their own development and conservation efforts promoting community-led initiatives and sustainable resource management. Potential drawbacks of AIKSs include limited recognition and support, inadequate literature, and cultural suppression.

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CL2. The integration of AIKSs into the country's Education 5.0 curriculum fosters understanding of the diversity of local natural resources which can be utilised in creativity, innovation, and production of goods and services. It equips and empowers students with local knowledge and skills which help them solve local community problems. It brings about the element of affordability and easy access to resources, which usually come free or at a low cost because the resources are locally available.

CL3. Integration of AIKSs into Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum fosters critical thinking and heritage-based innovation. In the end, it breeds industrialists who are capable of using their locally available natural resources to produce goods and services thereby transforming society and industry, id est, promoting endogenous but globally relevant socio-economic development.

CL4. With this integration, we stand up to tap into the rich culture of our forebears and this improves our present paradigms in the political, economic, and social domains of life. Previous development levels and strategies should be strategic to our present thrust. We cannot start from scratch when our forebears have done the spadework for us. We must take from where they left, for instance, 'vocationalisation' was their invention and 'on-the-hands apprenticeship' was their brainchild. This, we must take stock of, detail by detail so that we do not miss this rich tapestry from the past.

CL5. Zimbabwe stands to benefit from AIKSs although the process of their integration into the Education 5.0 curriculum is still lacklustre, piecemeal, and selective. The production and use of indigenous herbs to manage illness, for instance, Zumbani, Cannabis, and Gavakava in the treatment of Cancer, High Blood Pressure, Sexually Transmitted Infections, Covid-19, and related Flues demonstrates the value of AIKSs. There are factories that are making foodstuffs, drinks, and medicines from locally available resources using community/family support systems grounded in AIKSs. Regrettably, consumerism is defying the conservation of locally available resources.

CL6. The integration of AIKSs into Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum helps to promote and preserve Zimbabwe's rich and diverse cultural heritage. It makes learning more relevant and contextual.

Participants seem to concur that AIKSs promote cultural identity, cultural diversity, cultural heritage, sustainable agricultural development, community empowerment, community-led conservation efforts, and sustainable resource management. As emerged from participants, AIKSs also foster heritage-based creativity and innovation, indigenous-oriented production of goods and services, problem-solving, and low-cost learning based

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on locally available resources. Above all, AIKSs were found to nurture critical thinking, indigenisation of thought, vocationalisation of learning, indigenous medicine, instructional contextuality and functionality. However, some drawbacks were noted which include limited recognition and support, inadequate literature resources, cultural suppression, consumerism which continues to defy conservation efforts, and above all the integration effort which is still lacklustre, piecemeal, and selective. Nevertheless, the finding that the interviewed college lecturers appreciate the value of AIKSs in Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum intimates that educators on the whole view the integration project in positive and benevolent terms. Hence, the chances are high that they are forthcoming and proactive in the implementation process.

Tweaking the process of integrating AIKSs into Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum

Participants tendered the following suggestions:

> *CL1. I suggest, inter-alia, the involvement of indigenous communities to ensure that their knowledge and perspectives are respected and adopted (stakeholder engagement); curriculum modification - developing a culturally relevant curriculum grounded in Zimbabwe's cultural heritage and AIKSs; capacity building through re-orientating educators, id est, further training and support for educators to effectively integrate AIKSs into the curriculum; development of resources such as textbooks and teaching materials that incorporate AIKSs; supportive policies that enhance the integration of AIKSs into the curriculum; effective and consistent policy implementation; regular monitoring to check progress and effective evaluation of the integration project; fostering community ownership and participation in the development and implementation of the curriculum; and prioritisation of indigenous knowledge in the curriculum development process so as to cultivate respect for it.*

> *CL2. I suggest the sponsoring of further research on the heritage-based curriculum and particular AIKSs. I also urge staff development on the heritage-based curriculum and its envisaged benefits. There could be need to promote the creation of more innovation hubs, which innovate in the processing of local resources. I encourage more documentation and preservation of AIKSs as these are usually undocumented and transmitted orally.*

> *CL3. I suggest that the curriculum be inclusive of AIKSs starting from the foundational grades, that is, from Early Childhood Development (ECD) thereby catching them young. This will foster a sense of belonging and appreciation. Thus, children begin to appreciate their cultural heritage from a tender age. Hence, they grow up acquiring the heritage-based skills needed in local industry and, in the*

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process, become the vanguards of the agenda for turning around the country's economy basing on locally available resources.

CL4. Amidst the neo-colonial forces currently wreaking havoc in SSA in general and Zimbabwe in particular, we be our own king makers by using our own languages to develop African ingenuity. This should be our starting point. We cannot use English to preserve and develop African tradition. That is a contradistinction which we must eradicate. Let us take on board the custodians of African culture so that they partake in our search for African urgency. We need to understand this premise, 'The master's tools cannot be used to dismantle the master's house'. A complete paradigm shift, therefore, is necessary.

CL5. I suggest the following: involvement of the surrounding especially rural communities, monitoring and evaluation of the integration process against the background of evolving policies and geopolitics, funding the AIKSs initiative at all levels of education, deliberate formation of a department under the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development (MoHTEISTD) that sponsors and conducts research targeted at developing AIKSs.

CL6. AIKSs could be taught from ECD level through the primary and secondary cycles up to higher and tertiary education. The relevance and essence of fusing AIKSs into Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum should be clearly spelt out before operationalisation on the ground.

Key suggestions, thus, include indigenous community engagement, curriculum modification for heritage preservation and cultural relevance, re-orientation of educators (capacity-building and/or staff development), and production of more literature on AIKSs. Participants also suggested consistent formulation and promulgation of more policies to effectively enforce implementation. They urge curriculum monitoring and evaluation to check progress of the integration agenda. Participants advocate for the promotion of AIKSs in the curriculum to instil respect for indigenous epistemology, further research on Education 5.0 and AIKSs, more indigenous-oriented innovation hubs, and increased documentation and preservation of AIKSs. Participants also support the incorporation of AIKSs into education as from ECD in order to catch them young. Above all, participants encourage the use of indigenous languages to articulate AIKSs, they encourage the funding of AIKSs initiatives at all levels of education, deliberate formation of a department under the MoHTEISTD to spearhead the integration agenda, and awareness raising. These suggestions have the transformative potential to guarantee success of the integration project rendering Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum more heritage-based and functional, which is what defines quality education.

Discussion of Findings

The fact that participants (college lecturers) of the current study have exhibited a sound conceptual understanding of AIKSs mirrors the finding by Zengeya-Makuku *et al.* (2013) that secondary school teachers in Zimbabwe possess a sound and common conceptual understanding of indigenous knowledge (AIKSs). In fact, what is applicable to secondary school teachers can as well be transferrable to college lecturers because they are fellow educators though at different levels. College lecturers' sound conceptual understanding of AIKSs finds confirmation and substantiation in Murwira and Wuta's (2023) study, which also established that educators appreciate the value of AIKSs in teacher education. This presents a good grounding and starting point for the integration of AIKSs into Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum. Lecturers' views, thus, align with Mawere's (2015) Africanisation (integration) thesis, which is consistent with Gade's 'narratives of return' theory and the *Sankofa* principle, cognate ideals that enjoin Afro-Zimbabweans to revert to their precolonial past in search of what could have been forgotten or left behind which could be of value in addressing problems of today. This integration project, therefore, has the vast potential to magnify and amplify the heritage-base of Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 philosophy, which is an exigency for sustainable indigenous-oriented development.

The fact that participants on the whole viewed the agenda for integrating AIKSs into Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum in positive and benevolent terms also affirms Mawere's (2015) Africanisation thesis and challenges the pseudoscience and anachronism critiques. The above finding reveals lecturers' willingness to participate in the implementation process and that the whole reform idea is worthwhile. This worthwhileness of AIKSs is affirmed by Murwira and Wuta, who, in their 2023 study, discovered that AIKSs are of value to Zimbabwe's teacher education curriculum and the nation as a whole. The preceding is further confirmed by Muchenje and Goronga (2013) and Mapara (2009), who, in the review of related literature, ennobled AIKSs. Lecturers on the whole advance the Afrocentric and decolonial ideals in the context of Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum, which is tailored to assume a heritage-based outlook in its thrust of indigenous-oriented development.

Drawbacks raised by some participants paint a gloomy picture about the future of Mawere's (2015) Africanisation-integration project, thereby manifesting skepticism about AIKSs - negativity which seems to have crept into some educators and students alike in Zimbabwe. This skepticism finds expression in the sentiments of De Beer and Whitlock (as cited in Shizha, 2010), according to whom, some educators are hesitant to incorporate AIKSs into teaching due to fear of infecting instruction with pseudoscience *viz* fake village science. Such skepticism harmonises with the fact that AIKSs are seen in some quarters of the Afro-Zimbabwean society as manifestations of anachronism, *id est*, as having been overtaken by events (Mosweunyane, as cited in Murwira & Wuta, 2023). Some lecturers

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(participants), therefore, challenge the relevance-applicability of Gade's 'narratives of return' theory, *Sankofa* principle, and Mawere's (2015) thesis of Africanisation. However, with this self-negating mind-set, Afro-Zimbabweans could be losing what could be of value to them.

Despite the critique of AIKSs and Africanisation in the foregoing, participants on the whole tendered suggestions that have the potential to tweak the integration project, thereby rendering Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum more heritage-based, indigenous-oriented, and functional, which is what education and training should be. Participants' suggestions, thus, align with Mawere's (2015) Africanisation (integration) thesis, Gade's 'narratives of return', and *Sankofa*. Participants' suggestions also affirm Shizha's (2010) advocacy for the hybridisation of AIKSs and WKSs in the education curriculum with the former occupying a larger portion. Above all, participants reiterate Murwira and Wuta's (2023) chief recommendation that academics could continuously research and publish on AIKSs and in the process keep the interface between AIKSs and Education 5.0 vibrant within an immortal conversation.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The finding that college lecturers appreciate the concept of AIKSs presents a good grounding and starting point for the integration agenda. This integration project has the vast potential to magnify and amplify the heritage-base of Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 philosophy. Participants' appreciation of the benefits that come with integrating AIKSs into Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum, thus, intimates the availability of a proactive task force at the disposal of the MoHTEISTD for the successful implementation of this integration project. However, potential drawbacks of this integration agenda were noted as well, which warrants the conclusion that a lot still needs to be done in terms of tweaking the whole integration process. To the MoHTEISTD, the study recommends formulation of an elaborate, comprehensive, and progressive policy framework tailored to expedite and tweak implementation of this agenda for integrating AIKSs into Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum. This is envisaged to foster instructional contextuality and relevance leading to heritage-based creativity, indigenous-oriented innovation, and locally based but still globally competitive industrialisation.

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