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Humanity's Imminent Crisis: An Urgent Call for the Restoration of Peace, Stability, and Well-Being

Guest Editors
Mpsanyana Makgahlela
Tholene Sodi &
Mahlapahlapana Themane

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Dedication

The 2023 NIHSS/ SAHUDA biannual conference organisers and editors wish to dedicate this volume to invited scholars, post-graduate students, professsionals, and all interested parties who participated in the conference. We thank you for having responded positively by gathering in Limpopo Province to discuss and position the Humanities and Social Sciences toward the restoration of global peace, stability, and well-being.

Re a leboga!! Ro livhuwa!! Hi khensile!!

Executive Deans' Dedication

Prof. Satsope Maoto (UL) and Prof. Bongani D. Bantwini (UNIVEN)

What a brave decision by the South African Humanities Deans' Association (SAHUDA) in partnership with the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) to task the Northern Corridor (University of Limpopo and University of Venda) to host the 2023 National Conference. The decision was made in July 2023, and the Conference was targeted to take place on 25 – 27 October 2023, only a period of three months, to ensure that the conference becomes successful. What a challenge!

It appeared to be a mirage when the then SAHUDA President, Prof. Pamela Maseko, as she presented a message of support, mentioned that 'as an output from this conference they cannot wait to see some of the papers in a publication'. What a happy ending!

We are thankful to all the presenters for sharing such valuable, rich knowledge around critical issues confronting humanity. It was indeed significant that together, as African scholars, we sit and interrogate the conference question, *"What role can Africa play in maintaining global peace, stability, and wellbeing, especially considering the recent COVID-19 scare and the strained state of international relations?"*

We commend the Guest Editors: Prof Mpsanyana Makgahlela, Prof Tholene Sodi, and Prof. Mahlapahlapana Themane, for journeying with the authors, and contributors in this volume, to propose restorative, tangible, sustainable strategies and interventions that could contribute towards global peace, stability, and wellbeing.

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The financial assistance of the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS), in collaboration with the South African Humanities Deans Association (SAHUDA) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed, and findings, conclusions and recommendations arrived at, in this peer-reviewed publication, are those of the authors and are not necessarily to be attributed to the NIHSS and SAHUDA.

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ARTICLES

Mental Health, Wellbeing and Healing in Modern Day (South) Africa

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Humanity's Imminent Crisis: An Urgent Call for the Restoration of Peace, Stability, and Well-Being

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The Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 14 December 1960. The Declaration was a conscious effort to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights while creating conditions of stability and wellbeing including peaceful and friendly relations between peoples of the world (United Nations 1960). While the colonial system has been abolished for violating basic human rights, it is its long-term impact that is still felt today especially in many countries that were colonised. Stunted economies, political decline, social tension, hunger, violence, substandard health care systems, and so forth, remain cause for concern 65 years later after the system was abolished. Some social analysts (e.g. Ashara & Obuah 2023; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018) have attributed the humanitarian crisis in former colonies to sustained hegemonies of colonial forces or neocolonial relational patterns. It is within this context that Africa has continued to battle the humanitarian crisis.

Realising that Africa has over the centuries been in a state of dis-ease due to human atrocities such as slavery, colonialism, apartheid in South

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Africa, and the covert yet malignant neoliberal agenda, this collection of peer-reviewed *Alter*nation journal papers was put together. The articles emanated from the Biennial conference of the 2023 South African Deans Association (SAHUDA) funded by the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS), co-hosted by the Universities of Limpopo and Venda. The conference theme was, 'Humanity's Imminent Crisis: An Urgent Call for the Restoration of Peace, Stability, and Well-Being'.

As was expected of participants in the conference, contributors to the volume, sought to answer the conference question,

> *What role can Africa play in maintaining global peace, stability, and wellbeing, especially considering the recent COVID-19 scare and the strained state of international relations?*

With this question in mind, contributors formulated the African crisis to be rooted in its colonial and imperial history while sustained through the neo-colonial agenda. The authors argue that if Africa is to realise its potential including being recognised as a key role player in the restoration of global peace, stability, and people's well-being, Africa must be released from the clutches of its former colonisers. Africa must awaken to the reality that while imperialism and colonialism might have ended, their traces are left on the continent still at play in the economies, politics, and people's collective imaginations. It is the colonisers' philosophies, cultural traditions, and laws which continue to inform the praxis across all sectors including in academia and business. We perceive the sustained African crisis as undesirable and likely to regress progressive forces who seek to restore all of humanity's peace, wellbeing, and prosperity. We see this volume as an opportunity to echo the voices of all people protesting the perpetuation of the African crisis including the Russia – Ukraine and Israel – Palestine conflicts owing to North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) expansionist ambition.

This volume is organised into three sections, with theme one, being, ***Colonisation and the Perennial Displacement of African Philosophies, Cultural Values, and Sacred Practices***. Papers presented under this theme represents research and elaborate on the trauma of colonialism, that is, they contend that African contact with colonisers has resulted in the loss of African philosophies, cultural practices, values and wisdoms.

In contrast, papers under theme two titled, ***Protestations against the Continued Inequalities and Suffering of the Marginalised African***

Communities, do not necessarily provide answers to the problems that confront humanity with special reference to the African continent. Instead, they stir us to open conversations on what humanities and social sciences should be offering to redress prevailing human injustices for the equal advancement of human development, peace and stability.

The last theme focuses on, ***Mental Health, Wellbeing, and Healing in Modern Day (South) Africa***, and dovetails the previous theme, with the papers presented under this topic, just scratching the surface regarding mental health issues while offering some insights into psychosocial healing imperatives and practices in Modern day (South) Africa.

Colonisation and the Perennial Displacement of African Philosophies, Cultural Values, and Sacred Practices

In Africa, colonisation and human enslavement have come and gone, however, colonialism has persisted. While colonisation served to colonise African spaces, colonialism colonised peoples' 'beingness', that is, it has parasitically colonised them mentally and spiritually. Today, the subtle yet destructive operations of colonialism are discernible in how African philosophies and indigenous cultural practices have been expatriated while some decimated. A primary consequent of which has been African peoples who have become misoriented theologically and alienated culturally. Secondarily, Africans suffer perpetual losses of their ancestral wisdoms, including tangible and intangible cultural heritages. Identity confusions among Africans are commonplace owing it to the trauma of colonialism.

The two papers presented under this theme magnify the trauma of colonialism, that is, they contend the idea that African contact with colonisers has resulted in the loss of African philosophies, cultural practices, values and wisdoms. The first paper by ***Reshoketswe Mokobane*** and ***Maletšema Ruth Emsley***, decries the loss African proverbs, which have over centuries been used as vehicles for carrying rich African wisdoms and teachings across generations. It was through the tradition of *Koma* that the Bapedi cultural group of South Africa transmitted wisdoms of adulthood into adolescent boys and girls. Koma is (-was) a custom of circumcision through which the naïve youth are schooled into manhood and womanhood. Upon graduation, they are conferred with the status of adulthood. In this paper, the authors argue that *Koma* as a cultural rite of passage has been obliterated while its proverbial status of being *kgororwane* or *khupamarama* (i.e., in literal terms, an oath of secrecy) has been lost with

colonial contact. It is within this context that the authors argue that while African proverbs have historically served as agents for the transition of oral traditions, cultural values and ethos, they have since been threatened by Western infiltration. The point in contention is that *Koma* was a culturally acclaimed sacred practice, however, in modern day Bapedi cultural context, it has lost its moral ground.

The second paper by ***Moffat Sebola*** presents a reminiscent and nostalgic picture of **'Venda of Yore'** through the lenses of three Vhavenda poets. This paper interrogates three Vhavenḓa poets, that is, Ralson Ramudzuli Matshili, Eddie Thinandavha Maumela and Tendamudzimu Robert Ratshiṱanga, and distinguishes their eight poems into two broad categories based on each poet's attitudes towards Venda: those who romanticise the Venda of yore and those who reject the romanticisation. Irrespective of each poet's analytical stance, the author arrives at an interrogative finding that these poets' works are revealing of the disruptions and losses brought by the conquest of Venda. The author maintains that the poets reconstructed from memory and imagination pre-colonial Venda history, revealing of the tragic consequences of colonisation and apartheid upon the psyche of Vhavenḓa people. This point is particularly revealing of the veracity of imprisonment of African minds by the parasitic colonial system. The article also points out that in their attempts to confront the oppressive powers which aimed to erase Venda people's selfhoods, the poets explore areas of overlap between the turbulent experience of Africans and the cataclysmic history of black Africans in unsettling colonial narratives to re-assert and re-create their own cultural mythologies and narratives.

The two papers presented under this theme serve to expose how colonisation particularly colonialism displaced African philosophies, values, and sacred cultural practices. The perennial displacement meant acceptance of defeat or continued protest of the injustices and inequalities. The latter is the stance taken by the works presented by authors of the papers presented under this theme. This is of course, if Africans are to emerge out of the colonial trauma and crisis that they have been battling since the 15th century onwards.

Protestations against the Continued Inequalities and Suffering of the Marginalised African Communities

With the advancement of science and technology, and progress made in human rights issues, it was hoped that the oppressed and the marginalised commu-

nities would eradicate inequalities. But this has so far remained a mirage in South Africa, as elsewhere in the world. The two papers on Youthful Fantasy and Plutocracy and Protest are illustrative of the dream that blew in our face. This failure is particularly felt by young people. Therefore, papers 1 and 2 under theme 2 by ***Thabo Tšehloane*** and ***Bongani C. Thela*** respectively, echo this cry loudly. Undoubtedly, these papers have succinctly expressed how young people feel betrayed and their identity crushed by this failed dream.

Specifically, paper 1 presents a beautiful literary work to paint a bleak picture of the state of South African young people's identity and place in contemporary African dilemma. Through Sifiso Mzobe's *Young Blood* (2010) and Sello K. Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* (2000), this paper explores the themes of identity and self-discovery through the narrative perspective of two young Black men. The paper contends that Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* and Mzobe's *Young Blood* demonstrate and illustrate how through 'narrative and imagination the authors show how poetry becomes a crucial tool of capturing and eradicating the state of disenchantment of the black youth even in contemporary times.

Equally, paper 2, shows how South Africa has become one of the most unequal countries or societies in the world, with unconscionable levels of poverty and unemployment. It is within this context that this narrative, through the lenses of ***Aubrey Sekhabi's*** *Marikana the Musical* (2014), that the author explores the theme of fairness and equal distribution of resources in the ever-unequal South African economy. The paper argues that South Africa is a plutocracy, and examples to paint the picture for this argument are drawn from the primary text, Marikana the Musical. Thus, these two papers draw a vivid picture of a bleak future that young South Africans face, which constitute the human crises. They both offer a unique perspective of the failed post-apartheid South African liberation struggle for freedom and democracy that remains pipe dream for most of the youth. These papers undoubtedly capture the theme of this collection. There is no doubt that issues of redress, inclusivity, and transformation should be addressed as a matter of urgency if we are to restore the dignity of the marginalised and forgotten.

The transformative and restorative outcry are echoed in the other three papers, namely **'Becoming a Musician in Black South African Communities: Domains of Music Learning, Training and Apprenticeship Processes'** by ***Madimabe Geoff Mapaya***, '**The Relationship Between Traditional Leadership and Local Government on Land Allocation: A Case Of Thulamela Local Municipality'**, **South Africa** by ***Justice***

Makhanikhe, ***Vhonani Olive Netshandama*** and ***Pfarelo Matshidze***, and **'Sign Language in the Multilingual Space: The Case of English First Additional Language for Deaf Learners in Limpopo Province'** by ***Ndivhuwo Matshanisi*** and ***Berrington Ntombela***. These papers also point to the dire and urgent need for redress, inclusivity and transformation of higher education curriculum if the South African society is to grapple with the humanity crisis. The authors rightly argue that in the 30 years of democracy little has been done to decolonise the education system. Most of decolonial efforts concern bread and butter matters, that is, issues that have been raised are just a talk show with little or no practical benefits to the rank and file of those who are supposed to be the beneficiaries of the new dispensation

In paper three, the decry of the lack of musician access and success is more pronounced. To date, in South Africa, formal music education is still limited to a specific class, creating substantial barriers for disadvantaged aspiring musicians due to resource scarcity and high entry requirements. This makes it nearly impossible for individuals from poor backgrounds without prior school-level music education to enter university music programmes. This is despite the fact that young black musicians with impressive knowledge and skills are emerging in local communities.

The fourth paper also exposes the stark reality of the margination of certain minorities such as the deaf community, who even though sign language is now recognised as an official language remains in the periphery of the higher education curriculum. This is evidenced by the fact that teacher education programmes do not offer training in sign language and other African languages, despite impressive policy statements in the programme mix. There is a disconnect between what is happening in universities and colleges and what is their statutes.

Paper five also raises the same issue, but from a different but critical perspective, the issue of land restoration. The author rightly points out, the issue of land restoration remains a pipedream in South Africa. The failure of both academics and politicians to provide clear cut answers is pathetic. The failure to give guidance on the interface between traditional leadership and local governments is the case in point. Both the traditional leaders and the local government are expected to provide co-leadership in same areas of jurisdiction but without much guidance on how that should be done. The author poignantly points out that because of this weakness, there is constant tension in the relationship and questioning between the two centers of power; tensions, such as those that largely exist around issues of land allocation. The paper explores

the relationship between traditional leadership and local governments about land allocation in Thulamela Local Municipality. Why has it taken so long for the democratic government to address the issue of land dispossession may appear a simple question to answer, however, a cancer that has its roots deep penetrating the cells always clings on for its dear life. It is penetrative, deceptive, and forever mutating.

The five papers presented in this theme do not necessarily provide answers to the problems that confronts humanity with special reference to the African continent. Instead, they stir us to open conversations of what humanities and social sciences should be offering to redress prevailing human injustices for the equal advancement of human development, peace and stability.

Mental Health, Wellbeing and Healing in Modern Day (South) Africa

Dovetailing from the previous theme, papers presented under this theme scratch on the surface regarding mental health issues including offering some insightful perspectives towards healing of distressed Africans in modern day (South) Africa. The four chapters featured all point to the importance of this focus area which has received more attention in recent years following the COVID-19 pandemic. Guided by the African philosophical concept of *Moya **Nare Masola, Mpsanyana Makgahlela*** and ***Tholene Sodi***, adopted a phenomenological approach to understand and describe the psychosocial and spiritual meanings embedded in the dreams of African indigenous healers (AIHs). Particularly, the authors were interested in understanding the notion that AIHs, through their dealings with the spiritual world, can '*dream on behalf of and for the benefit of their clients*'. The key question that the paper aimed to address was 'What is the nature and essence of the dream experience of AIHs in the context of the management of mental health conditions?' The study found that dreams form a bridge that provides for a spiritually mediated process that enables continual reciprocal interaction between ancestral spirits and AIHs for the benefit of their clients. In essence, the study underscores the role of ancestral spirits in the work of AIHs. It is a contribution to the existing African literature (e.g. Baloyi & Ramose *et al.* 2016; Moshabela *et al.* 2017; Nwoye 2015) that highlights the centrality of African spirituality and the critical role that AIHs play in health promotion in the context of African communities. It also points to the need for a dialogue on the options that should be considered

to foster collaboration between AIHs and Western trained mental health practitioners to service Africans in the modern age.

Guided by the Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual (BPSS) theoretical framework as a lens, ***Lesley Takalani Mauda*** and ***Mpsanyana Makgahlela*** extend-the collaborative argument from the perspectives of Black Pentecostal pastors. Black Pentecostal pastors arguably play a crucial role in the delivery of mental health care services within African communities. In this regard Mauda and Makhgahlela's empirical study with 19 pastors found that most of the pastors viewed the prospects of working together with mental healthcare practitioners in a positive and favourable light - a finding which essentially replicates several previous studies (e.g. Kamanga *et al*. 2019; Burns & Tomita 2015). While this is the case, it may also be worth highlighting that documented collaborative studies between Black Indigenous Healers, Black Pentecostal pastors, and Black western trained mental health professionals always yielded an interesting picture. In hindsight, we intentionally use the social construct, Black, to help emphasise the three groupings' 'common ancestral heritage' as opposed to its historical usage, that is, as a derogation of African peoples based on skin colour, cultural background, and spoken language (Jones 2021). Black Pentecostal pastors and Black western trained health practitioners are always warm to the idea of working together in the service of health care users. While this is important, unfortunately, the two groupings often are reluctant or reject the idea of also collaborating with Black Indigenous Healers. The negative attitude and rejection of the idea is sustained, despite ample evidence suggesting that African clients have continued to rely on indigenous and western mental health care services to meet their physical, mental, and spiritual health needs. In our view, the anti-collaborative stance exposes the successes of colonial capture, wherein Africans initially were divided based on colonial lines, and today on the successes of the westernization and Christianisation projects. Instead of collaborating for a common purpose, which is harnessing Indigenous African and western healing methods for the benefit of the service user, a preferential attitude is still given to western methods. Returning to Mauda and Makgahlela's paper, the authors recommend a bidirectional referral pathway between Pentecostal pastors and western trained mental healthcare practitioners for the benefit of service users.

The third paper by ***Edgar Malatji, Tebogo Lekota*** and ***Mamohlotlo Mothiba***, highlights on the possible positive and negative impact of social media in modern Africa. In particular, the authors investigated the perceptions of South African Instagram users on the effect that the posts on this commu-

nication platform have on their mental health. This is a timely contribution given the fact that most of the studies on this subject emanate from the United States of America, a high-income country which is a considerably different cultural environment when compared to other regions such as those in the global south. In their study, Malatji *et al.* used the Identity Social Theory, and the Uses and Gratification Theory to understand the effects of Instagram posts on mental health among users in the South African context. Using the qualitative methods of inquiry, the authors selected 20 participants through purposive sampling and used semi-structured interviews to collect the date from the selected Instagram users. Whilst suggesting that Instagram has some value as a common way of social expression and communication, the study also points to some negative impact that these lifestyle posts might have on the users. The authors make two useful recommendations on the actions that can be taken to mitigate the negative impact of Instagram on the mental health of users. These include the use of certain features such as filters and time restrictions, and professional help for some users. Importantly, the authors also highlight the need to inculcate the culture of digital literacy among the users of social media platforms.

The fourth and final paper covered under the mental health theme touches on rampant illicit drugs which have become one of the underlying causes of mental health problems in African societies today. In this paper, ***Khutso Mabokela*** and ***Thabiso Muswede***, adopts a framing theory and a qualitative content analysis method to analyse how *The Sowetan*, *Daily Sun*, and *The Citizen* dominant local newspapers in South Africa frame their news report on the scourge of illicit drugs. To achieve this objective, the study identified and selected one hundred and sixteen (116) news reports from these three newspapers. Though the news reports demonstrate the seriousness of illicit drugs in South Africa, the author concludes by pointing to the lack of intervention from the media, communities, and government to arrest this scourge. The author highlights the need for these stakeholders to create awareness on the dangers and impact of illicit drugs on societies, more especially given the fact that public's attitudes and actions on how to prevent drug related problems is influenced by how this problem is portrayed in the media.

A running thread of the papers presented from theme 1 to 3 is the realisation that from the early days of slavery and now recently, Apartheid in South Africa, the exploitative globalist agenda has disrupted the normal developmental trajectory of Africa. The consequence of this unmitigated

onslaught has been an Africa that has perpetually failed to contribute meaningfully in all respects towards the advancement of its humanity including of diverse peoples of the world. Africa has remained a traumatised child who, like in the case of someone with a split ego personality, has half of its persona stuck in a dependent and clinging ego state, which displays an anxious, fearful and childlike character that yearns to continually identify with the aggressor. In contrast, her other ego-state, is driven by the need for restorative justice, redress, and the rejection of the colonial master's globalist agenda which today operates under the guise of neocolonialism. It is within this context, that the contributors collectively project a picture of an Africa whose humanity, humanism, and cultural heritages are on the brink of catastrophe. And like cancerous cells, those elements of African humanity and way of being that are infected by the cancer of colonialism continue to have the potency to destroy the soul of the entire continent. The papers presented in this volume contribute towards efforts aimed at restoring and healing the soul of Africa.

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Colonisation and the Perennial Displacement of African Philosophies, Cultural Values, and Sacred Practices

'Koma', the Determinant of Cultural Identity and its Diverse Ethnic Relations: A Case Study of Limpopo Province, South Africa

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Abstract

Koma re bolela kgororwana, khupamarama re hwa nayo contextually means that in traditional circumcision, we only talk in related words and keep the secret of what practically happens at the initiation school (*komeng)*. Culturally, this means that all that is learnt and experienced at the initiation school must never be said to uncircumcised males and uncircumcised or circumcised females, but we only talk in euphemisms and keep deep secrets within our cheeks until death. It is the *Bapedi*'s proverbs that protect and preserve their taboos. Proverbs serve as agents for oral traditions that transmit cultural values and heritage from one generation to another. They preserve the cultural identity of African communities and honour their ancestral knowledge. The ethos of the *Bapedi* has been threatened by the Western infiltration by breaking the aim of the proverb above. In testing whether the hypothesis of *Koma* and traditional male circumcision's state of secrecy *(khupamarama)* still holds, the paper aims to critique literature from 1900 to 2000 that uncovers and endangers taboos of traditional circumcision in Limpopo Province, South Africa. The results show that the hypothesis of the status of *kgororwana and khupamarama* no longer holds as per the Bapedi's proverb. The practices like the removal of the foreskin (*khupamarama)* which was recorded prior to 1900, break the intention of the proverb. Furthermore, traditional circumcision has been practised in various cultures around the world for centuries, significantly based on cultural,

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religious, and social contexts in which it is performed, for example, for health, supernatural beliefs, social acceptance, symbol of maturity and adulthood, fertility and virility. The paper clarified the African philosophy regarding *Bapedi* culture based on the proverb; expressed cultural diversity, ethnic relations with respect to *Koma* while communities engage in deforestation.

Keywords: culture, identity, heritage, decolonisation, traditional circumcision

1. Introduction

This paper aims to assess the secrecy of *Koma* using literature from 1900 to 2000 that uncover and endanger taboos of traditional male circumcision (TMC). The word or name '*Koma'* needs to be understood as an expression that usually presents a figurative language or speech which has nonliteral connotation attached to it such as an idiom. Bapedi, previously called Northern Sotho tribe consists of diversely populations of different ethnic-rich culture across Limpopo Province (LP), one of the Nine (9) provinces of South Africa. In particular, the Bapedi from Manganeng in the Sekhukhune district of LP, culturally prohibit *Koma* conversations among graduated initiates with non-initiates, women, and any other men who underwent *Koma* differently from their ethnic way; by singing a special *Koma* song to test whether the male person knows its lyrics or not, before he is earmarked to be dragged into their next coming *Koma. Koma* is a figurative speech on which an idiom was presumably formulated as *Koma re bolela kgororwana, khupamarama re hwa nayo,* meaning, we only talk in euphemisms but keep the key secret of what truly happens inside our cheeks, we die with it. It is the Bapedi's proverb that protects and preserves their taboos. It is acceptable to any *Mopedi* (singularity of plural Bapedi) who has graduated in *Koma* administered in *Mphato* which is situated in the valleys and rivers flowing adjacent to big mountains with dense forests[1].

[1] The number 1 denotes word per word translation of *Koma* (concoction of secrets), re (we) *bolela* (talk*), kgororwana* (mumbling small/ few words), *khupa-marama* [*khupa* (hold in mouth) i.e, secret held closed in - *marama* (cheeks) or deep secret to be kept closed in cheeks - tongue must not say)], *re* (we), *hw*a (die), *nayo* (with it).

Proverbs serve as agents for oral traditions (Dlali 2023) that transmit cultural values and heritage from one generation to another (Amojo 2020). Bapedi use proverbs to preserve the cultural identity of their African communities and honour their ancestral knowledge. In African civilisations, proverbs are used to express philosophical ideas and employ metaphors and symbolism to convey meaning which contains numerous ways to interpret them due to tones in a language (Seitel 1976).

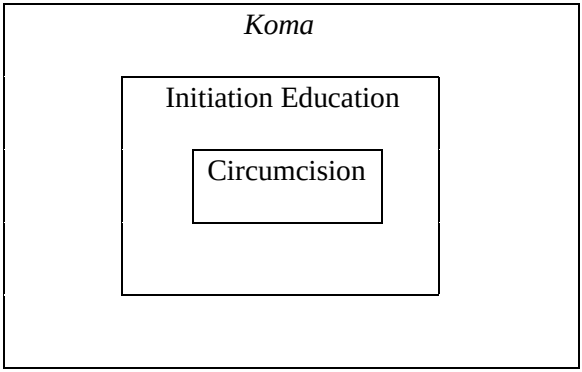
Blaming colonialism concerning cultural knowledge transfer, Pemunta and Tabenyang (2020) contend that Africans developed indigenous medicinal knowledge and conveyed it orally in customary activities to future generations, such as totems, *Koma*, and timing for farming. This was before colonialism introduced competition between indigenous and modern therapies. This infiltration led to the enforcement of laws which banned several African approaches in favour of biomedicine, including the traditional techniques in spiritual healing. Related to this, many indigenous circumcision practices were scientifically inspected and frequently subjected to rejection (Schoen *et al.* 1989). This paper presents how long ago the ethos of the Bapedi tribes has been threatened by the Western infiltration in hindering the aim of the *khupamarama* proverb about *Koma*.

2. Discussion of Cultural *Koma*, Circumcision and Initiation

It is difficult to define *Koma* detached from culture. A cultural *Koma* refers to the systems and processes which embrace initiation and circumcision. The systematic approaches of *Koma* are precise ancestral practices that are characterised by several realities of life, not limited to people's hierarchy (*Moroto*), different roles, types of accommodation (as huts, caves, rocks and open kraals), cultural attire (leather underwear and tree leaves or *Lekgeswa and Ntepa)*, apparatus, type of foods relevant for the *Koma* period, initiation education that mainly promotes sex and reproductive health rights culturally, tolerance, law-abiding citizens and patriotism. Music is the daily activity of *Koma*, praising and lamenting at the same time. The starting point in time until to the end point of all processes of *Koma* is called *Lebollo.* Several authors define *Koma* as limited to circumcision, interchanging it with initiation; but it sounds better in Sepedi culture if it is called initiation school. Scientifically, one can visualise the term *Koma* as a big union set which contains two elements, initiation school and the intersection is circumcision where all processes and cultural systems are mutually inclusive. When all cultural

practices are conducted according to the ethnic norms and standards, newly graduated initiates disperse from home King's kraal (*Moshate)* to their respective homes, the Bapedi know that *Koma* is closed (*alogile*).

Table 1: Schematic visualisation of *Koma*



Self-drawn diagram to visualise the meaning of *Koma*

Table 1 should show several subsets which contain cultural preparations of the novices, traditional healers, experienced elders; traditional healers, male parents/guardians with memorised and well-known plans and procedures with roles which intersect at circumcision processes on initiates, including the king's son(s). Table 1 tries to depict a bigger picture about how Neutel (2016) attempts to explain the characterised ritual circumcision elements described by McClymond (2016). Circumcision is a cultural or religious practice involving the traditional operation or medical surgery performed by all genders to signify adulthood. Neutel (2016) referenced Hoffman (1996) in establishing that the Jews conducted religious infant circumcision as their identity defining rites, back in time before the first century. Traditional circumcision surgery is often performed as part of rituals or ceremonies (Smith 1993), marking the transition from boyhood to manhood (Karras 2003). The topic of any gender circumcision and initiation is considered taboo in some cultures, including the Pedi culture (Lebaka 2019). Cultural circumcision procedures differ widely from one tribe to the other based on ethnic identity (Dionne & Poulin 2013). In some cultures, the procedure is performed in a formal and ceremonial setting by trained practitioners, while in others, it might be conducted in less formal settings. The

tools, techniques, and associated rituals also differ significantly. Modern medical circumcision, performed by trained healthcare professionals in sterile environments, is generally considered safer and has lower risks of complications (Ellis & Abdalla 2018). Measures are enshrined in healthcare policies to enforce respect for cultural practices while also prioritising health and safety. In the case of the Bapedi's traditional male circumcision surgery, if the 'how' (Anaesthesia way), 'who' (females and uncircumcised males' staff) and 'where' (hospitals) are outside *Mphato*, that defeats the benefits of *Koma* as an identity (Brennan 1988) determinant. Instead, it promotes cosmopolitanism which lacks the observance of cultural ethics. This could impact communities' norms and standards, for example, in a male-shortage of doctors' setup such as in Limpopo Province, females may be assigned to perform the procedure which would go against the cultural norms.

Dunsmuir and Gordon (1999) reported that Barns (1936) determined that the literature may not correctly estimate when circumcision operations were performed because even the anthropologists cannot agree on the origin of circumcision. Dunsmuir and Gordon (1999) also attested that Sir Graham Elliot Smith, the Egyptologist, suggested that circumcision was a cultural practice that was spread over some 15000 years ago globally, including people in the Near East, throughout tribal Africa, Moslem peoples of India, south-east Asia and Australian Aborigines long before 15000. In their book, Ellis and Abdalla (2018) illustrate different types of surgeries performed on humans' bodies from head to toe back in the ages with primitive techniques which were horrible but irregularly successful in those days during ancient civilisations. Ellis and Abdalla (2018) postulate that previous ethnological researchers discovered that circumcision surgery was commonly practised in primitive villages by equatorial Africans, the Bantus, Australian Aborigines, South Americans and those in the South Pacific; and traditionally by Ancient Jews (during 800 BC), as well as by Muslims between 2400 and 3000 BC. A tomb carved with a picture of two boys who had been circumcised with a crude stone bears reference to these dates. It is written that these communities applied stone knives despite having several metal instruments; and circumcision was performed for hygiene, fertility, or initiation rites purposes. Ellis and Abdalla (2018) documented information that advocates the development of surgical methods from the Dark Ages and Renaissance to the contemporary male circumcision that is coupled with anaesthesia; hence the fear of attending traditional Bantus initiation school among young boys of today as they have heard of safer technology. Prior to Ellis and Abdalla's (2018) submission,

Lewinsohn (1958) documented that the Egyptian mothers were circumcised by 1300 BCE and Egyptian wall paintings yield evidence that circumcision was customary for many thousands of years before that.

3. The Psychological Aspect

Contrary to the notion of the gains versus the disadvantages of the initiation school, Graber (1981) re-tested the psycho-cultural theory of male genital mutilation and found that some fathers allow circumcision as security against patrilocality. Similarly, Rosen (1988; citing Whiting 1960) studied the psychological purposes of initiation rites and related studies which align with Whiting's hypothesis which claims that initiation in male adolescence serves to prevent violent masculinity against parents and female counterparts (Whiting *et al.* 1958); and these findings do not differ from Munroe and Munroe's (1973) interpretation of male initiation rituals. They establish that fathers ease their concerns by circumcising their adolescent sons to prevent anticipated masculine aggression. Initially, male circumcision was mainly performed at birth in some African tribes, in Judaic societies on the eighth birthday, in early adult life for Moslems and many of the ethnic cultures as readiness to puberty or marriage (Jolly 1899). However, Rogers (1956) views circumcision as like the cutting of hands, fingers and private parts' mutilation as primitive methods before the scientific ways. Kepe (2010) postulates circumcision as the secret which kills while Verit (2002) noted a shortage of studies on the perception of and attitude towards circumcision therapy.

Initiates' deaths were rare and uncommon according to most of the unpublished knowledge of Bapedi traditional healers who were familiar with and experienced in the application of indigenous plants used for communities' health, including circumcision (Green *et al.* 1993). Initiation schools were held in areas that were an integral part of the forests containing plants with healing properties. Some published studies, such as Maroyi (2021) conducted a systematic review of medicinal plants which Africans have used over the ages (Jäger *et al*. 1996); that is, medicinal plants that were found successful in treating inflamed and septic circumcised wounds and successfully cured the initiates (Dilika *et al.* 1996). Brown (1921) concurs with other researchers who comprehend that male circumcision is part of *Koma* rituals; and its advantages provide pleasure experienced by novices before and after Koma, which outnumber the disadvantages.

4. The Secrecy (*khupamarama*)

There are several studies which have divulged different elements of *Koma.*Deacon and Thomson (2012) argue that the traditional circumcision secrecy and the way its rituals are performed differ drastically according to regional and historical context. After disclosing and reporting on studies that also reveal taboos, Deacon and Thomson (2012) pointed out that any documented ritual on traditional circumcision is referred to as a transgression of a taboo. This, according to them, violates people's rights because it discourages discussions. It is indicated in Deacon and Thomson (2012) that questions that need to be addressed by future research are how a researcher could prudently advance a scientific investigation of ethnic norms and standards in relation to *Koma* without ethical disapproval. They also found that the cultural practices of circumcision are valued with long memories.

Similarly, Silverman (2004) indicated certain taboo elements of male and female circumcision practised in sub-Saharan Africa while Morton (2011) uncovers the similarities and differences of Bogwera processes among Batswana initiation schools in different regions that is, those practised by Eastern, Northern, Western, and Southern Batswana tribes. Astonishingly with the BaJok tribes from the West Indies, an old woman was allowed to prepare the novices just before the traditional circumcision, as outlined stepwise by Holdredge and Young (1927), on how the traditional male circumcision is performed among adolescent boys using an unsterilised native made knife in cultural huts adjacent to the Kasai River within the village.

In addition, Brown (1921) revealed how circumcision is performed during *Koma*. Gruesome pain is inflicted on the initiates by the chosen elderly who at times are not skilled in circumcision. Brown (1921) attests that the unjustified punishment meted on the disobedient initiates often results in death, especially if the initiate is an orphan. Brown (1921) established from an Bechwana informant that a sharpened edge knife or spear is used to cut the foreskins of the lined-up initiates where each is held tied and hidden so not to see the initiate in front nor hear his noisy cries because each cut is covered by the loud nose of *Koma* songs. Here, the cultural operator does not apply an anaesthetic before cutting or antiseptic treatment before and after. They only depend on astringent herbs to prevent haemorrhage after each cut. It is noteworthy how Brown (1921) outlines the aftermath, the care afforded to the initiates whose cuts get septic and inflamed; the care extends beyond the *Koma* period, monitored strictly by the chosen elders until cured, by not engaging in

sexual practices; and all other activities that are said to be good and notorious during *Koma* rituals (Schlossberg 1971).

On the other hand, Deacon and Thomson (2012) reviewed several studies on the history of *Koma*, initiation school, traditional and religious male circumcision in Southern Africa from 1800 to 2000 and found that 13 publications on traditional male circumcision already existed from 1800 to1809, 45 in 1930-1939 and an increase in studies from 2000 to2009. Most of these studies display and explain what the Bapedi regard as taboo. When trying to uncover the *Koma* taboos of Basotho Ba Botswana, during a massive HIV/AIDS prevention campaign (Kreiss 1993) by the Health ministry of Botswana and partners, Katisi and Daniel's (2015) team was confronted by rejection by Botswana communities – the aged traditional leaders expressed their dissatisfaction in a dramatic manner expressing how the data collection of the campaign breached the secrecy of their cultural circumcision rituals; and explained how unethical it was because women were part of the team.

5. *Koma* as a Business

Cabot (1924) found that there are also complications in male circumcision administered by medical doctors, especially in babies who later get affected by vaccinations (Taddio *et al.* 1997). Later, Barrie's (1995) confirmed low complications occurrences in traditional Jewish boys' circumcision and their studies indicate far better outcomes than the hospital operations; but several researchers counteracted this by advocating the medical operations of new-born boys (Fink 1990) when compared to traditional ones (Calnan & Copenhagen 1966). In responding to the advocacy, Denniston (1997) avers that circumcision was used as a business where most medical practitioners inflated the boys' circumcision charge to high prices. Currently, some communities perceive that also the traditional *Koma* is used as a business reality where an initiate charge is not regulated (Adler *et al.* 2020). There are countless irregularities that require vast management in South Africa, in relation to the public and traditional initiation and circumcision space. Some of the initiates' parents and guardians are confronted by difficulties in paying for expensive medical care for their children (Anike *et al.* 2013) because the cultural practice of circumcision or initiation school has been spoiled by becoming a profitable industry. According to Nkwashu and Sifile (2015), the owners of illegal initiation schools are said to function as a syndicate, requiring money from initiates without the parents' knowledge or agreement.

6. Materials and Methods

6.1 Information Source

The paper focuses on the traditional male circumcision (TMC) and *Koma* in the Bapedi context. TMC has been practised by various societies and communities around the world for centuries but still holds cultural identity, religious, and social significance. In testing whether the hypothesis of TMC's *khupamarama* status still holds, the paper aims to critique the literature from January 1900 to December 2000 that uncovers and endangers the taboos of the Bapedi's Koma and TMC in Limpopo Province, South Africa. The sample consists of articles and books (or book chapters) which were sampled during a literature search by authors on agreed themes, then reviewed and found relevant. These are studies assumed to be exposing taboos as defined by Gao (2013). The studies which meet the selection criteria are captured in Microsoft Excel for better distribution. The qualifying study is placed alongside the appropriate phrase and under the type of electronic bibliography search; and used to synthesise data. The other remaining sources were used to synthesise the data. The other studies were filtered out and applied to substantiate the arguments in this paper.

6.2 Information Synthesis Procedure

This paper was instigated by the Bapedi proverb, *Koma re bolela kgororwana, khupamarama re hwa nayo*. Our objectives were formulated around it to assess if the secrecy concoctions of *Koma* and TMC which are culturally administered in the secluded forest mountains still deserve the status of being kept secret (the status of *kgororwana* and *khupamarama re hwa nayo*); Is *Koma* still serving as the determinant of *Bapedi* cultural identity that preserve diverse ethnic associations of the Bapedi *Ba* Limpopo? Relevant to our topic, the *Scoping Review Method (SRM*) was carried out aiming to investigate the hypothesis:

Koma and Traditional Male Circumcision's Secrecy Status Still Holds.

The scoping review is defined by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) as a type of method which synthesises knowledge which answers an exploratory study question that aims at linking major concepts of the study. Types of evidence that reveal gaps in research in a well-defined field whereby the information or

knowledge is searched, selected and synthesised systematically (Mays *et al.* 2001). This paper used the framework developed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) which later incorporated robust critiques and recommendations by Levac *et al.* (2010) on scoping methods into SRM. The framework directs that the following procedural steps be applied: (i) identifying the research question; (ii) identifying relevant studies; (iii) study selection; (iv) charting the data; (v) collating, summarising and reporting the results; and (vi) optional consultation. The above steps were followed using the data sourced from identified relevant studies in the form of academic published articles, books or book chapters. The literature review done in other languages was not considered. To ensure reliability and validity, the authors had to agree on search criteria:

1. The search comprises of English studies published from 1900 to 2000, otherwise used as literature review.
2. Literature which conforms to the debated and agreed phrases.
3. The phrases' words can be substituted by synonyms to enhance the search.
4. Every phrase must be searched from the agreed different bibliographies before moving to the next.
5. Select studies which uncover, outline steps, document procedures, stipulated initiation songs, explicitly explain when and how *Koma* is administered, initiation school and traditional male circumcision are administered, whether in the village, mountain or at Health institutions.
6. Capture and collate the studies into MS Excel which, when evaluated against one or more points of the criteria, is viewed to endanger taboos of Bapedi *Koma*, initiation school and TMC.
7. Use studies in point 6 above only for information synthesis, summarising and reporting the results.

The authors have discussed and agreed on the following themes or phrases before conducting the search, together during weekends and holidays, and separately in virtual meetings:

1. History of male circumcision / initiation (the origin of male circumcision / male initiation).
2. History of traditional male circumcision / initiation (cultural, traditional, ritual ethnic, social, and educational, medieval).

3. Male circumcision procedure (surgery or operation administered in private and public health and religious institutions).
4. Traditional male circumcision/initiation procedure (surgery or operation administered traditionally, culturally, ethnically, in a ritual manner, at initialisation school, in mountains, at the *Koma* place (*Komeng*).
5. Traditional male circumcision surgery narratives and pictures (lay out how is performed /carried out/ outlined in private and public health and religious institutions).
6. Traditional male circumcision surgery narratives and pictures (lay out how it is performed /carried out/ outlined at initiation school on a mountain, at a river far from communities, in deep valleys).
7. Pictures of initiates, *Mphato,* initiation school area, type of seating arrangement or convoy, layout of initiates' kraal, initiates' attire and utensils.
8. The secrecy (*Koma)* in traditional male initiation (*preparation of novices,* step-by-step procedure of *Koma* activities, *Koma* totems, marking or drawings, *Koma* songs, *Koma* huts' materials, revealing the key *Koma* secret by ethnicity, Koma education).
9. South African history of traditional male circumcision /initiation (1900 to 2000).
10. Bapedi history of traditional male circumcision (1900 to 2000).
11. Bapedi traditional male circumcision history or/and operation (1900 to 2000).
12. (De)colonisation of traditional male circumcision. (Studies decolonising TMC.)
13. Traditional Herbs for circumcision.

All phrases were formulated to find studies which could be used to prove or answer the research question of secrecy in the Bapedi's *Koma* and TMC which is administered far from their communities.

The search used for each of the above phrases was limited to the title, abstracts of articles or books, book chapters and considered their full text only if it is relevant to one of the agreed phrases. The search was limited to different academic studies, books, book chapters and databases, as advised by the university librarian to consider the following electronic search engines:

- PubMed
- The platforms on JSTOR
- Google Scholar
- Science Direct
- Scopus
- Web of Science

7. Results and Discussion

7.1 Results

This section presents the results on how the Bapedi taboos were uncovered in two subsections: the first elaborates on information that reveals what happens at cultural initiation schools and the second, describes what is practised in the public health and religious institutions. The results focused on studies which explain *Koma* in a comprehensive manner that would presumably deter young boys to experience the rite of passage ethnically, through initiation school and traditional circumcision.

Out of 325 studies searched, 265 were filtered out because they use euphemisms for terms to hide taboos; 60 remained, of which 9 did not qualify in either most of criterion listed or fall under one of the phrases categories. Fifty-one most relevant to the criterion and specific phrases remained. At this point, the strict selection focused on the period 1900 to 2000, and 28 fell within this period. Among 28 key studies, the analysis of studies which could help this paper to rule in favour of or against the hypothesis were scrutinised in terms of belonging in most phrases' categories and fit well in several points of the criterion. This resulted in 6 studies, 4 of which are traditionally inclined.

Wheelwright (1905) outlines the processes involving the preparations of novices, initiation schooling and circumcision only, written as the form of notes in 1904. Its history includes the era of king Shaka but focuses on how the process was administered by tribes in the Soutpansberg district. Wheelwright (1905) reported that the extreme secrecy of *Koma* was upheld by all, including those who were dragged to initiation schools by force. The notes from Wheelwright (1905) do not relate beyond circumcision.

Willoughby (1909) concurs with Wheelwright (1905) in his notes where he expresses similar findings in which the Becwana *Koma* was comprehensively outlined. The traditions are like the Bapedi ones, but some terms differ such as

in intervals of 5 years, initiates leave their homes at once until Bodika is completed, no women help in cooking or in anything except during Bogwera; and Bogwera is the second part that lasts for at least two weeks, with Bapedi one.

These notes, reveal Becwana *Koma* with its songs translated, in the same manner as documented by Brown (1921) with the layout sitting of the initiates and the entourage team, which uncover and endanger taboos of Bapedi *Koma*.

Although other notes do not publish *Koma* in a comprehensive manner, such as the circumcision rites of Lunda, Luvale and Chokwe, other elements of *Koma* are published and discussed in White (1953) notes.

The male initiation school BaJok is neither pure traditional nor administered in health or religious institutions as reported by Holdredge & Young (1927).

The information synthesis indicates that Dunsmuir and Gordon (1999) cuts across phrases 1, 3, 5, 7, and 8 except that operations are not administered in a *Koma* setting, as 9 and 12 are. Different pictures of the operated foreskin are displayed professionally depicting the different medical steps and the specific apparatus used for each type of operation.

Although Dunsmuir and Gordon's (1999) study unearth only the male circumcision taboos, the presented information shakes cultural practices but complements scientific research, hoping that inexperienced cultural operators will learn. In view of the literature scooped, the results show that the hypothesis of *Koma* and traditional male circumcision *'s secrecy* status no longer holds as per the Bapedi's proverb.

This paper adds a body of knowledge to the field and indicates to researchers that the comprehensiveness of Bapedi *Koma* is not limited to the actual circumcision that involves the removal of the male's penile foreskin only; not excluding Bapedi Ba Sekhukhune, Manganeng who were not informed. The public may after reading the key 6 studies, offer an alternative hypothesis.

i. Wheelwright, C.A. 1905. Native Circumcision Lodges in the Zoutpansberg District. *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 35:251 - 255.

ii. Willoughby, W.C. 1909. Notes on the Initiation Ceremonies of the Becwana. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 39:228 - 245.
iii. Brown, J.T. 1921. Circumcision Rites of the Becwana Tribes. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 51:419 - 427.
iv. Holdredge, C.P. & K. Young 1927. Circumcision Rites among the Bajok. *American Anthropologist* 29, 4:661 - 669.
v. White, C.M. 1953. Notes on the Circumcision Rites of the Balovale Tribes. *African Studies* 12, 2:41 - 56.
vi. Dunsmuir, W. & E.M. Gordon 1999. The History of Circumcision. *BJU International*, *83*, 1: 1-12.

7.2 Discussion of Results

Since the results showed that *Koma* is being practised as another way for people to identify themselves culturally in a diverse manner, it turns out that Bapedi Ba Manganeng's proverb on *Koma* has lost its secrecy status because no *kgororwana* and *khupamarama* translate to 'no murmuring' or keeping silent and thus that leads to no deep secrecy. In contrast to the Bapedi proverb, the ancient and modern literature still concur that *Koma* is secretive to a certain extent despite the existing unlimited step-by-step procedures performed in health institutions by women across the world; viewed publicly by people of different ages in different formats (in videos and other forms) and through the Internet which is made available today through digitalisation.

8 Conclusion, and Limitations

8.1 Conclusions

On the inferential basis, this paper established that the *Koma* still preserves its secrecy, at a superficial level, despite some of its confidential elements being published in records and media platforms which devalue historic, religious and cultural knowledge to future generations. Its deep secrecy will forever resonate with initiates' experiences, those who graduated in real initiation schools administered in secluded forest-dense-mountains. Currently many mountains lack those forests due to communities' burning of firewood that emits carbon dioxide (CO_2) into the atmosphere (Demirbas 2004). Since CO_2 is a greenhouse gas that contributes at a small scale to global warming (Ritchie *et al.* 2024), the

Koma taboos stand to be thoroughly researched in consideration of deforestation and climate change, to benefit those still aspiring their diverse cultures. Also, the gender resistance towards any little assistance by women might be defeated when replaced by robotic operator in future.

This paper hopes to trigger dialogue in the *kgororwana and khupamarama as they relate* to *Koma* as part of the proverb while also acknowledging cultural diversity and conscientising the reader about the value, preservation, and respect for African culture. It also advocates for participation which documents knowledge that recognises Ubuntu principles in African diversity and informs future research. In conclusion, cultural male circumcision as one of elements in *Koma* will not fade away. It was practised secretively; it will be practised in future across South Africa despite the absence of *kgororwana* and *khupamarama* being publicly revealed. Its purpose as a rite of transition to manhood from boyhood (Meissner & Buso 2007) seems to be strongly valued (Rafapa 2021).

8.2 Limitations and Recommendations

It was difficult to include or exclude relevant studies that would assist in answering the research question explicitly that is, to rule against or in favour of our hypothesis due to the data synthesis which was limited to studies published from January 1900 until December 2000 on this sensitive topic which is still located in most of Bapedi's cheeks (Morton 2012). Literature on topics related to this paper was published after 2000 due to government rollouts of HIV/AIDS prevention (Rosen *et al.* 2022). In addition, a shortage of research on ethnic circumcision published back in time exists.

Conflict of interest
The authors declare no conflict of interest in relation to this paper.

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Data Availability
The searched studies can be made available if required.

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(W)riting Memories of, Nostalgia for the Past: (Re)membering the Venḓa of Yore in Tshivenḓa Poetry

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Abstract

This article analyses the dialectics between the memory of and nostalgia for the Venḓa of yore in Tshivenḓa poetry to underline the Vhavenḓa's attitudes towards issues they deem central to their African experience such as being, belonging, land, home, colonisation, loss and recovery. The article argues that – in Tshivenḓa poetry – pre-colonial Venḓa is depicted as the land of abundance and civilisations to fortify African feelings and memories of ethnic pride across the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial epochs in South Africa. This idealistic image of Venḓa which recurs in Tshivenḓa poetry and gravitates more towards a recollection of pre-colonial Venḓa, argues the article, appears and disappears during the colonial and postcolonial epochs, to be replaced with a more realistic depiction of Venḓa under colonisation and neo-colonisation. The article focuses on three Vhavenḓa poets, Ralson Ramudzuli Matshili, Eddie Thinandavha Maumela and Tendamudzimu Robert Ratshiṱanga, and distinguishes their eight poems into two broad categories based on the poets' attitudes towards Venḓa: those who romanticise the Venḓa of yore and those who reject the romanticisation. Interrogating the disruptions and losses brought by the conquest of Venḓa, the selected poets reconstruct from memory and imagination pre-colonial Venḓa history to reveal the tragic consequences of colonisation and apartheid upon the psyche of Vhavenḓa. The article also points out that in their attempts to confront the oppressive powers which aimed to erase the selfhood of their peoples, the poets explore areas of overlap drama between the turbulent experience of Africans and the cata-

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clysmic history of black Africans in unsettling colonial narratives and creating their own cultural mythology.

Keywords: discourse, home, identity, memory, poetry, Vhavenḓa

Introduction

Africa has been a casualty of misrepresentation since the advent of colonialism (Andindilile 2016). This article, which is fundamentally grounded on textual analysis, examines how Tshivenḓa poetry reflects on the intersection between memory and nostalgia in an attempt to bring about a better understanding of Venḓa as a representative sample of Africa pre-, during and post-colonisation. The article argues that the intersection of memory and nostalgia witnessed in African-language literary discourse is largely a predictable result of the historical happenings, including colonialism and apartheid, that colluded to relegate the continent – as a whole – to subjugation in the Western world of thought, and the response that this reality implored from Africans facing the challenges of the Western concocted modernity. The article examines the writing of some of the pioneering modern Vhavenḓa poets who have attempted to challenge ideas proliferated by the West – in a characteristic Eurocentric tradition – to emasculate Africa and ultimately Venḓa, places and spaces they barely understood. The objective is to show that through poetry, Vhavenḓa were able to reveal more about their thought regarding subjugation than what has been readily acknowledged. In due course, the article shows that, like other forms of creative expression, African-language literatures, including Tshivenḓa poetry, are not merely folksy, domestic, parochial and ethnically exceptional in their scope and reach, but a domain in which individuals experimenting with a variety of literary genres are free to comment on issues that reflect, among other aspects, the dynamics of memory and nostalgia in society at large. Vhavenḓa poets, namely; Ralson Ramudzuli Matshili, Eddie Thinandavha Maumela and Tendamudzimu Robert Ratshiṱanga, largely rely on memory and nostalgia to comment on the bygone, pristine beauty of Venḓa and link their commentary to the concept of African selfhood, and eventually present either a romanticised pre-colonial Venḓa or a contrast of the former in their poetry. Memory, though alterable and at times contestable, is used by these poets as a dynamic process of (re)cognition, (re)creation and (re)invention that is encapsulated in their longings for the past, rituals, images,

performance and narrations in their poetry. The better situate the article, it is important to first reflect on the intersection of memory, nostalgia and literary theory, and secondly present a brief background of who the Vhavenḓa have been said to be and what recent discourses have to say about it.

Memory, Nostalgia and Literary Theory

Memory Studies, according to Milevski and Wetenkamp (2022:197), 'is an international and interdisciplinary field of research that has grown significantly over the past decades', which illustrates that recollection and forgetting are still interesting topics for numerous academics and scientists. Memory Studies is not only an interdisciplinary field, but is also heterogeneous in that it explores objects of study such as paintings, memorials, installations, and what interests the present author in particular: literature. The objects are studied for their potential to represent the past in the present (Milevski & Wetenkamp 2022). There remains opportunities to take the literary text as an object of transdisciplinary research. Certainly, the potential of African-language literary theory to yield a more systematic approach to memory, remembrance and nostalgia has not yet been realised, especially through an analysis of a genre such as Tshivenḓa poetry. Even when analysing the texts in the context of Memory Studies with its numerous methodological requirements, a literary theory should always be at least a reference theory. For instance, the concept of *liminality*, established in Ethnology and Anthropology, as a new perspective to better understand the ambiguous and creative aspects of memory and of literary texts dealing with memory and nostalgia could come in handy. Hence, this article analyses transgenerational memory transfer and narrative devices such as metaphors, narration and structural multi-perspectivity through intertextual and intercultural references and illustrates how these devices stage the liminal aspects of memory and nostalgia in Tshivenḓa poetry. The article deals decisively but succinctly with the role of poetry as a research object for ancient and contemporary memory studies, which mostly focus on relational, dialogical, and intertwined concepts of memory and nostalgia. The most prominent of these theories are Marianne Hirsch's Postmemory (2008; 2012) and Michael Rothberg's Multidirectional Memory (2009), which this article addresses to see where and how they work in literature to subsequently discuss how Narratology as an additional theoretical approach can provide a more solid base for the findings of memory studies with regard to literary texts.

Rothberg's (2009) Multidirectional Memory is preferred in this article

or its insights on the understanding of memory. It argues that the present is characterised by the presence of a comprehensive variety of past narratives, which Rothberg encapsulates in the term Multidirectional Memory. According to Rothberg (2009:3), collective memory is not competitive memory, but subject to cross-referencing, borrowing and continuing negotiation. Rothberg proffers that memory directly determines identity, which to this article is an essential aspect because it seeks to show how Vhavenḓa poets rely on memory to articulate their concept of selfhood. In other words, this article reads the selected Tshivenḓa poetry against the backdrop of this question: 'What does it mean to write and remember from the site of a ruin?' The ruin herein referred and recurrent in some of the selected poems links to places such as Matongoni, Vhukalanga and Dzaṱa, all of which signify the Venḓa of yore that the poets yearn for. On the other hand, that memory and remembrance often occur in medialised and language-based form resonates with Hirsch's concept of Postmemory, especially when considered through the lens of literary studies. For Hirsh, with the regard to the diminishing number of custodians of oral history, its attendant world of yore and the shift from oral traditions to literary memory, the question of memory and remembrance arises: 'What can be said about the world of yore in the present? How can we best carry the narratives of yore forward, without appropriating them, without unduly calling attention to ourselves, and without, in turn, having our stories displaced by them?' Postmemory as a cross-generational reconstructive memory does not refer to the experience of being passively exposed to a bygone past, but rather to the need of the subsequent generations to actively pursue and thus preserve the past of their forebears. Postmemory thereby mixes the inherited (narratives of the past) with the researched (modern poetry). This article regards the selected poems as archives with the potency of transmitting the transgenerational memory and remembrance of the Vhavenḓa's history and concept of selfhood. It is the imaginative and creative power of Postmemory among the selected poets that makes reading their poems so intriguing in literary studies.

Research Design

To further situate the article's argument, the selected poems are analysed through an Indigenous Research Paradigm (IRP) (Chilisa 2012). The IRP purports that research in Africa has a colonial history, which resulted in much research becoming a field of exploitation where research in indigenous communities was not conducted to uplift the indigenous people or conducted

from their perspective (Held 2019:9). IRP then strives to deconstruct this coloniality mentality by according respect to indigenous people and advocating for their equal research rights regardless of gender, race, colour, geographical location and/or socio-economic status (Chilisa *et al.* 2017:326). The IRP is centred on deconstructing the colonial or Western conventional research which marginalised indigenous people (Chilisa & Tsheko 2014:223). Its goal is to introduce a model that is culturally safe, respectful, and done by and for the indigenous people. Held (2019:6) says the IRP refers to a 'research by indigenous scholars on, for, and with indigenous communities, rooted in the respective indigenous worldview, and promotes the self-determination of the community'. In accord, Louis (2007:131) and Keane *et al.* (2017:14) proffer that if research is not intended to benefit the indigenous communities or improve their lives, it should not be conducted. Therefore, the IRP states that research should be considered worthwhile if conducted to benefit and bring change in indigenous communities using the indigenous methods that are respectful.

The IRP is deep-rooted in seeing marginalised people as key contributors of knowledge rather than passive participants because historically, marginalised people were seen only as people to be researched about. Chilisa and Tsheko (2014:223) bring to light that the IRP calls for 'moving away from conceiving the researched as participants to seeing them as co-researchers'. Actually, 'the studies of home, homecoming, exile and migrations are rarely explored in African literature written in African languages' (Mokgoatšana 2021:36). Although the selected poets have covered the themes mentioned by Mokgoatšana here, these poets and their works are yet to receive academic attention. Therefore, in foregrounding their works on themes such as ancestral home, cosmology, being, belonging, space and place, this article attempts to give voice to the voiceless. The article hopes to contribute to the postcolonial discourse on the concept of origin and belonging, real or imagined, by exploring the narratives delineated through poetry. It shows how poets writing in Tshivenḓa comment on Venḓa as a place and as a space in which they conceptualise being and belonging. This article analyses eight poems, namely; *Zwiḽa mulovha* 'Then yesterday' (Ratshiṱanga 1972:34-35), *Venḓa ḽa mulovha* 'Venḓa of yore' (Ratshiṱanga 1972:11), *Matongoni* (Matshili 1972:26), *Ḽa mulovha ḽo tsiruwa* '[Venḓa] of yore is out of sight' (Maumela 1979:3), *Venḓa* (Maumela 1979:11), *Nga ri rende Ṭhohoyanḓou* 'Let us praise Ṭhohoyanḓou' (Maumela 1979:14), *Venḓa thetshelesa* 'Venḓa listen' (Ratshiṱanga 1987:43) and *Mpheni Venḓa ḽanga* 'Give me my Venda' (Ratshiṱanga 1987:16), to

reflect on three afore-cited Vhavenḓa poets' reliance on their memory of folklore traditions regarding ancient (pre-colonial) Venḓa in order to contrast it with colonial and post-colonial Venḓa, respectively.

Analysis

This section analyses the selected poems based on the following themes: the poets' (de)scription of Venḓa as home, Venḓa as a source of ethnic pride, lamentations over the bygone glory of Venḓa and hopes for the restoration of Venḓa. The section commences with the semiology of Venḓa in Ratshiṱanga's (1987:16) poem, *Mpheni Venḓa ḽanga* ('Give me my Venḓa'), which reads thus:

> *Mpheni Venḓa ḽanga ni mphe dakalo;*
> *Mpheni Fundudzi na milambo yoṱhe ya lunako.*
> *Ni nṋee Mangwele na Lwamondo,*
> *Luvhola ndi i vhone kha ḽa tshipembe.*
>
> [Give me my Venḓa and you shall have given me joy;
> Give me Fundudzi and all the beautiful rivers.
> Give Mangwele and Lwamondo,
> And let me mount Luvhola in the south.]

According to Mathivha (1972:9), the name 'Venḓa' was derived from 'Vele-e-nnḓa' (Vele is outside), which means that one of the leaders 'Vele' is outside the original home, which is Mashonaland (Zimbabwe) (cf. Madiba 1994). On the other hand, Ṋeluvhalani (2017:17) says the name 'Venḓa' or 'Venḓa of Yore' is the region prior to Western intervention and it means a country of 'plenty', pertaining to food, natural resources, excellent climate, flora and fauna. The name is derived from maize (*Ḽi**v**e**l**e*) and hunger (**n(i)ḓ**ala), which together mean stiff maize porridge – with more than 350 different traditional vegetables, milk, white and red meat – which appease hunger. In Ratshiṱanga's poem, the Venḓa longed for by the poet resonates with Ṋeluvhalani's definition of the noun Venḓa. The poem connotes a cry for the restoration of a lost place and space and may thus be understood as a longing for a 'return' of a place and a space (More 2002). Here, Ratshiṱanga implies a kind of return of Venḓa to him as a place and space desirable. Implicit in his plea for a return of Venḓa is

the concept 'renaissance' which may be theoretically connected with the semantics of the prefix *re-*, as in re-birth, re-discover, and re-define, re-dress, re-generate, re-awaken, re-invent, re-present and re-turn (Sebola 2022). Ratshiṱanga's poem does not advocate an essentialist mystification of African essence that is *genetically determined* but one that is *geographically-bound*. His main cry is for the restoration of the Vhavenḓa's land. The cry for land brings into sharp focus the effects of social maladies such as displacement and dislocation in the discursive setting of identity politics. The poet's cry for land is basically reflective of the fact that when people are moved from their homes, they tend to be overwhelmed by a forlorn sense of estrangement. This is because people identify with a *place* and feel at one with that *place*. As a result, they are always occupied with the idea of returning to the *place*.

In the above stanza, Ratshiṱanga pleads for the restoration of Fundudzi to him. Lake Fundudzi is viewed as both the place of the Vhavenḓa's origin and cosmic reunion with their ancestors. The lake is a closely guarded arena where various forms of initiations and rituals in Tshivenḓa culture are performed (Sebola & Mokgoatšana 2022). In crying for the return and restoration of Lake Fundudzi to the rightful owners, Ratshiṱanga goes beyond a mere desire for the provision and accessibility of natural phenomena, and further expresses a longing for the restoration of his traditions and rituals. Places such as Mangwele, Lwamondo and Luvhola hold historical and spiritual significance to some Vhavenḓa groups. For instance, Mount Luvhola, which acquired its name from its peak which looks like a bee sting (*luvholela* in Tshivenḓa) hosts the shrines of Vhakwevho, a subgroup of Vhaṱavhatsindi, and Davhana. Mount Mangwele, on the other hand, was used as a fortress by the local residents and their chief, where during war, they could retreat to it because it has caves and beautifully crafted stone walls. Ratshiṱanga demands the restoration of these historical and spiritual sites because they were taken by unnamed invaders. That the sites are in the hands of the invaders is affirmed by the next stanza, which reads thus:

> *Mpheni Madzivhaṅwombe ho dzulaho vhaeni,*
> *Phepho i tshi rwa miṱambi i wane pfulo.*
> *Ni ralo ni nkonanye na avho vhaeni,*
> *Vhunga na u rangani ro konana.*
>
> [Give me Madzivhaṅwombe where visitors settled,
> The cold persisting, so that the flocks will find pasture.

By so doing, reconcile me with those visitors,
The same way we reconciled in the beginning.]

Displacement results in a shell-like hollowness (Mogoboya 2011). This hollowness has occasioned in the poet a feeling of rootlessness and bleakness because his people's home (land) is gone. The poet says that Venḓa is occupied and owned by 'visitors' (European settlers). Moreover, the settlers did not only take the land for residential purposes, they also took the Vhavenḓa's grazing lands and subsequently crippled the Vhavenḓa's means of economic development. Thus, dislocation and displacement fragment and undermine people's life and livelihood, further compounding that sense of hollowness. Displacement and dislocation corrode a people's sense of being and belonging. In the poet's view, the restoration of land is a necessity. In his delineation of the concept of 'renaissance', Ratshiṱanga brings into sharp focus the two-fold nature of the post-apartheid notion of 'return': the first, an Afro-pessimistic idea that understands 'the return' as a relapse to the Hobbesian 'state of nature' (innocence), and thus retrogressive and oppressive, and the second, which is a contrast and understands 'the return' as compulsory, and thus progressive, liberatory politics (More 2002). Ratshiṱanga proposes the latter conception of the return, which compels a liberatory interpretation of his poem, as he is not advocating a conservative, nativist or essentialist return but a reconstruction and rehabilitation of the Muvenḓa person. He reimagines returns of the land because such returns will aid a forging of an identity and authenticity that he thinks is appropriate to the exigencies of 'modern' existence. In the same vein, Ratshiṱanga's (1987:43) poem, *Venḓa Thetshelesa* ('Venḓa, Listen') typifies (re)imaginations of what has been delineated as the Vhavenḓa's ancestral home, Vhukalanga, with a spiritual hub known as *Matongoni* (Schutte 1978). In the poem, Ratshiṱanga says:

Roṱhe ro bva Vhukalanga,
Ra swika Dzaṱa ra fhaṱa,
Govhani ḽa mulambo Nzhelele,
Mirafho ya ṱandulukana ri tshi khwaṱha.
Roṱhe ro bva Vhukalanga,
Ra swika Dzaṱa ra fhaṱa,
Govhani ḽa mulambo Nzhelele,
Mirafho ya ṱandulukana ri tshi khwaṱha.

(We all hailed from *Vhukalanga*,
And arrived at *Dzaṱa* and built,
At the valley of the *Nzhelele* River,
Generations successively came and solidified us.
We all hailed from *Vhukalanga*,
And arrived at *Dzaṱa* and built,
At the valley of the *Nzhelele* River,
Generations successively came and solidified us.)

Ratshiṱanga subscribes to the hypothesis that purports Vhukalanga (Zimbabwe) as the Vhavenḓa's origin, stating that they (read Masingo) migrated from Zimbabwe to *Dzaṱa* (South Africa). Tshivenḓa oral traditions hold that Dzaṱa was extended by the legendary Ṱhohoyanḓou as the capital of Venḓa when Veleḽambeu settled there, and at whose ruins the Masingo still perform their rituals (Sengani 2022). Ṱhohoyanḓou became the capital of the former Bantustan of Venḓa, while Dzanani is the traditional capital of Venḓa and the home of the Vhavenḓa kings. The name Ṱhohoyanḓou means 'head of the elephant' in the Tshivenḓa language, and was the name of one of the Vhavenḓa kings. Ṱhohoyanḓou town was established and built at a large portion of the village of Tshiluvhi in the late 1970s. It was established by President Patrick Ramaano Mphephu who was the Prime Minister of the Venḓa Bantustan. Thohoyandou became the capital of Venḓa when Venḓa was declared a republic in 1979, and became the centre and economic hub of the Republic of Venḓa. For Ratshiṱanga, Vhukalanga represents the Vhavenḓa's history and identity, with the hub of their bygone glory being their ancestral home, *Matongoni*. In the poem, '*Nga Ri Rende Ṱhohoyanḓou*' (Let us Praise Ṱhohoyanḓou) (Maumela 1979:14), the poet says:

Venḓa ndi phambo na vhana vuvhuni,
Vhana vho dzikaho a vha ṱaheli khaḽo,
Mikhwa na mvelele ndi lukuna ri a ḓola,
Muswa na mulala ḽi luludzela vhoṱhe,
Ṱhonifho ndi wone mukano tshakale,
Roṱhe nga huswi nga ri rende Ṱhohoyanḓou,
We a ri khurela luvhanḓe pfurani ḽa shango.
Venḓa ndi zwone ḽi shona vhuyaḓa,
Ḽi bea waḽo muthu ḽi sa mu tshivhi,
Vha ḽi langanaho vhoṱhe ḽi a bata,

Ndi vhulimbo ha murikhuni mibvumbini,
Honevho ḽi tonda vha maḓana u ḓala,
Roṱhe nga huswi nga ri khoḓe Ṱhohoyanḓou,
We a ri khurela dzhavhelo ḽa pfumi muno Venḓa.

(Venḓa is a hen with chicks and chicks in gardens
Children who are calm are never in shortage in it
Morals and culture are an opulence with which we smear ourselves
A youth and an elderly person are both lulled by it
Respect is the actual boundary since ancient times
All of us together let us praise Ṱhohoyanḓou
Who created a platform for us in the fat of the land
Truly, Venḓa cringes at uncleanliness
It exposes its own person without jealousy
All who conspire against it, it seizes
It is the birdlime from a tree in perpetual showers
Those ones it blesses hundreds in their multitudes
All of us together, let us praise Ṱhohoyanḓou
Who created for us a refuge of wealth here in Venḓa.)

The poem above likens Venḓa to a hen, of fowls and guinea fowls and the image of the hen signifies both fertility, prosperity and security. In much the same way that a hen that would have laid numerous eggs and therefore multiple chicks, and further ensure their safety, the poet foregrounds Venḓa as a place of abundance and protection. He further mentions that Venḓa is populated by morally grounded children, which speaks to the Vhavenḓa's strictness on matters related to discipline and ethics. Hence, in the third line, the poet implicates morals and culture as some of the distinctive features of the Vhavenḓa. Venḓa is presented as a place and space in which both the youth and the elderly live in harmony. The poet then proceeds to ascribe this nature of Venḓa's serenity, morality and security to Ṱhohoyanḓou's efforts. Ṱhohoyanḓou, as a representative of the legendary and mythical leaders of Vhavenḓa, is appreciated for the development and progress he initiated in Venḓa, which resulted in almost every Muvenḓa having opportunities to prosper. For this reason, the poet calls upon all people to extol Ṱhohoyanḓou's selfless leadership, irrespective of whether it is imagined or real. A poem about Ṱhohoyanḓou is considered here because this leader is linked to the establishment of Dzaṱa, a place of historical significance in Venḓa. Equally

significant in the Vhavenḓa's oral traditions is Matongoni, which still echoes beliefs in the migration of the Masingo from Vhukalanga to Venḓa. Ratshiṱanga's poem, '*Venḓa thetshelesa*' analysed above makes allusions to Vhukalanga but does not provide sufficient details. On the contrary, Matshili's (1972:26) poem, '*Matongoni*' elaborates on the *Matongoni* metaphor thus:

Matongoni hayani hashu,
Hayani hashu havhuḓi;
Ro dzula hone ri tshi ḓiphina,
Ri tshi ḽa ra posa na tsiwana.

(Matongoni our home,
Our beautiful home,
We lived there in enjoyment,
Eating so much that we also fed the poor.)

The poet identifies Matongoni as both a beautiful home and a place once characterised by such prosperity and abundance that even the poor were fed by the native inhabitants. Matongoni is also depicted as a place worth recreating or revisiting. Returns to Matongoni appear to be a Herculean task, particularly because so much has changed since the Vhavenḓa's supposed migration, that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to recreate the ancient and ancestral home of the Vhavenḓa. Secondly, returns to Matongoni cannot happen because it is traditionally held that *Ṅwali* (the High God of the Vhavenḓa) instructed the Vhavenḓa to leave the place and move to the south (South Africa), as the next stanza confirms:

Tshi dinaho Mwali makhulu ndi mufhumudzi,
Ro thakhwa hani Matongoni hayani hashu;
Ndi tshini tshe ra vha ri tshi lila?
Tshifhefho dzithumbu dzi tshi dzula dzi mirutshe.

(What bothers Mwali, the grandfather is the lack of a comforter,
How spoiled we were at Matongoni our home;
What did we lack?
In autumn, our bellies were full beyond capacity.)

It is not strange that the poet progresses to mention *Mwali* (also known as *Ṅwali*; *Mwari*) along with Matongoni. It is believed that *Mwali* conversed with the Vhasenzi (Vhavenḓa) at Mount *Matongoni* (Khorommbi 1996). Thus, Matongoni also represents the Vhavenḓa's notion of *spiritual connectedness to the place*. The subsequent lines of the poem all reiterate the prosperity and abundance once enjoyed and now longed-for by the poet:

> *Mvula i sa ni vhakalaha vha isa nduvho,*
> *Nduvho ya ṱanganedzwa nga dakalo ḽihulwane,*
> *Ngomalungundu ye ngindi-ngunduu ya unga ḽoṱhe,*
> *Mifhululu ya ṱaha thungo dzoṱhe.*
> *Matongoni marubini ashu,*
> *Haya ha miomva na miṱaḓa minzhi,*
> *Mitshelo ya tshaka dzoṱhe,*
> *Maḓi a shuluwa hoṱhe-hoṱhe.*
>
> (When it was rainless, old men presented propitiations,
> Propitiations would be received [by Ṅwali] with great joy
> *Ngomalungundu* would rumble *ngindi-ngunduu*
> everywhere
> Ululations would spread in all directions
> Matongoni our ruins,
> A place of bananas and numerous fruits,
> Fruits of different kinds,
> Water splashing everywhere.)

Mount Matongoni is believed to be where *Ṅwali* dwelt with his miraculous drum, *Ngomalungundu*, and his obedient son, Tshilume who took the leadership immediately after the burning of Matongoni City (Khorommbi 1996). Mount Matongoni represents the cultural and spiritual worldview of the Vhavenḓa. Ṅwali is approached and appeased by special persons and in special circumstances; hence, *vhakalaha* would do so when there was need for rain. Vhavenḓa have an implicit faith in the powers of *Ṅwali* as a rain-maker and rain-giver. This faith was important, especially during the time when the Vhavenḓa were predominantly agricultural people. This means that water was a significant provision to them as their whole life depended on water. In viewing *Ṅwali* as their rain-bringer, the Vhavenḓa projected their perception of this deity as both immanent and transcendent. He is depicted as being

concerned and involved in the social welfare of his people. *Ṅwali* then is responsible for changing seasons in the Vhavenḓa's worldview. In remembering the Venḓa of yore, represented here by Matongoni, the poet expresses a yearning for spiritual restoration and the bounties that accompanied a harmonious relationship between *Ṅwali* and his people. A sense of spiritual connectedness then manifests here as significant whenever and wherever people remember their home, especially a home that might never return – a home they might never return to. This is evinced in the poem '*Zwiḽa mulovha*' (Then yesterday) by Ratshiṱanga (1972:34-35), which reads thus:

Zwiḽa mulovha ri tshi bva Vhukalanga
Dziṱholi dza Vhaṱavhatsindi phanḓa dzo ri ranga,
Gogoni ḽashu vhoṱhe vhe vhahali khathihi na vhakalaha,
Kha maswuhana na vhavhera hu si na ane a vhanga.
Lwendo ulu lwo vha lwo thoma kale,
Musi ri tshi bva murahu ngei ha vhomakhulukuku,
He zwoṱhe kholomo na mbudzi murahu zwi si sale,
Nga u shavha mihwalo ra sia dzone khuhu.

(Then yesterday when we journeyed from Vhukalanga
With the Vhaṱavhatsindi spies leading us
In our multitude, all were warriors and elderly men
Among the youth and young married men, there was none who quarreled
This journey had started long ago
When we hailed from the past of our ancestors
Where cattle and goats did not remain behind
To minimise burdens, we left behind chickens.)

Ratshiṱanga still links the Venḓa of yore to Vhukalanga. The word *mulovha* (yesterday) in the poem represents a bygone epoch – life in Vhukalanga, which the poet still reminisces about. In affirming the Vhukalanga migratory hypothesis, the poet further implicates one of the Vhavenḓa tribes, Vhaṱavhatsindi. The poet claims Vhaṱavhatsindi spies led the migration even though among them were warriors. He further says that the journey had started a long time ago, implying that this group of the Vhavenḓa had been moving from place to place, although he does not mention their point of origin and first departure. Implicit in this view then is that Vhukalanga is one of the stops that

the Vhavenḓa made as they journeyed south, which contradicts the notion that Vhukalanga (Matongoni) is the original home of the Vhavenḓa. The poet only identifies where the Vhavenḓa travelled from as *ha vhomakhulukuku* (at the forebears' home), a place characterised by an abundance of livestock such as cattle and goats with which they journeyed. While the poet relies on memory and probably oral traditions, there are not only insufficient details about the supposed migration, but also apparent contradictions about the migration from Vhukalanga, especially because Vhukalanga is presented as a station at which the Vhavenḓa stopped from elsewhere as opposed to it being an original home of the said Vhavenḓa. The poet further says:

> *Ho ri musi ro no wela Vhembe ra mbo fhaṱa*
> *Muḓi muhulu ngei Dzaṱa.*
> *Vhangoṉa vhe ra wana zwo ralo ra fhaḓa,*
> *Vhalanda na khosi dzavho vha ḓaḓa.*
> *Nga murahu Mabunyu a Hangwana o ḓo swika,*
> *Vhanna na vhasadzi vha shavhela dzithavhani,*
> *Vhunga ro tata nndwa nga itsho tshifhinga,*
> *Tshihulusa ḽa vha dakalo madavhani.*
> *Mafurukaṉere na one o fhedza nga u tovhela,*
> *Makhado a raloha u a fhaḓa sa ṉowa,*
> *Naho ene khao a songo vha thovhela.*
> *Khuluṉoni ya Tshivenḓa zwigidi zwayo zwo ya Tshaṉowa.*
>
> (After having crossed Vhembe [River], we then built
> A great city there at Dzaṱa.
> The Vhangoṉa whom we found there, we scattered them
> Subjects and their chief were confounded
> Thereafter, 'the Naked Men' from Hangwana arrived
> Men and women fled to the mountains
> Since we avoided war at that time,
> The most important thing was joy in work parties
> Afrikaners also followed suit,
> Makhado then dispersed them like a serpent
> Although to them he never became the king
> Muskets of the Tshivenḓa throne went to Tshaṉowa.)

Upon arrival in Soutpansberg, after crossing the Vhembe River, it is said that

the Vhavenḓa built a great city, Dzaṱa. Here, no mention of Veleḽambeu or Ṱhohoyanḓou is made, only that the construction of the city was a corporate endeavour – 'we built' and not 'Ṱhohoyanḓou built' as claimed by the poem *Nga ri rende Ṱhohoyanḓou*, which was analysed earlier. Interestingly, however, the poet acknowledges that there was a group of people that they found in the land known as Vhangoṋa. Vhangoṋa are the original inhabitants of the land (Ṋeluvhalani 2017). According to Ṋeluvhalani (2017), Vha**ngoṋa**-Ba**kone**-Ba**nguni**, dubbed *Ngoṋa*, *Kone* and *Nguni*, are a one original nation of South(ern) Africa with the same culture, religion and language. Vhangoṋa also identify themselves as *Vhabikwanaibye* or *Vhabikwanaive*; hence, they praise themselves thus: *Mungoṋa mubikwa na ive, ive ḽa vhibva, Mungoṋa a sala* (Mungoṋa who was 'cooked' with a rock, a rock became soft, but Mungoṋa remained unscathed). In so saying, they acknowledge themselves as people who lived and survived at the time when the country and continent were still volcanic and earthquake prone (Ṋeluvhalani 2017). Therefore, Vhangoṋa did not migrate from anywhere, they are the original inhabitants of the land, as the poet attests.

According to the poet, upon arrival, the migratory group invaded the land and conquered Vhangoṋa to secure residence in Venḓa. Thereafter, in the 1820s, there were Nguni invaders known in the oral traditions of the Vhavenḓa as *Mabunyu* (literally meaning 'The naked ones') because of the way the Nguni used to put on clothes (Sikhweni 2016). During the war with the Nguni, Vhavenḓa would ensconce themselves in mountain strongholds in the Soutpansberg as the poet confirms, and were thus in the position to avoid the brunt of Mfecane (Maylam 1986). The poet affirms the notion that the Vhavenḓa are a merciful ethnic group and hardly engage in war without strong reasons for doing so (cf. Sikhweni 2016). The poet concludes the poem by making mention of Makhado's war with the Afrikaners, and praises Makhado for his valour against them, as he never surrendered to him until his death. The last stanza of the poem refers to the disarmament of the Vhavenḓa at the Tshaṋowa Mountain. Oral tradition purports that the Settlers asked the indigenous people of the area to surrender their guns promising to replace them, but instead burned the guns there at the mountain, leaving Africans unable to defend themselves and worsening power imbalance. The poet commences with an acknowledgement of the journeys of some Vhavenḓa clans, alludes to their achievements signified by the construction of Dzaṱa, mentions the upheavals they experienced such as their wars with the Nguni and Afrikaners, and concludes with their disarmament. In this regard, the poet

positions himself as a historian who recalls from memory the life and experience of the Vhavenḓa, implicitly grieving their loss of wealth, land and ultimately power. The poet yearns for the restoration of that power, as further affirmed by the poem, 'Venḓa ḽa mulovha' (The Venḓa of yore) (Ratshiṱanga 1972:11):

> *Mphe mavhuvhu na midavhi ya hatsi vhudala.*
> *Mphe matavha a dzinngwa dza u takadza,*
> *Hu sunyaho mapfeṋe a tshi fha maṱo anga vhugala,*
> *Tsiko iyi ya Muvhumbi i no mangadza,*
> *Ye a tshi i ita ene a itela muthu,*
> *Naho riṋe vhaṋe ri tshi shaya vhuthu.*
> *Mphe mitshelo na masimu a no vhibvisa.*
> *Mphe mavhuwa a phukha dzi no sevhedza.*
>
> (Give me gardens and meadows with green grass
> Give me mountains of precipices that delight,
> Where baboons walk majestically giving my eyes glory,
> This creation of the Maker that astonishes,
> Which when He made, made it for humankind,
> Even we ourselves lack humanity,
> Give me fruits and fields that ripen crops
> Give me treeless grass-veld on mountain tops of animals
> served as relish.)

There remains a longing for the Venḓa of yore in Ratshiṱanga's poem above. In the poem, he yearns for the gardens, meadows, mountains and ploughing fields. Nouns such as *mavhuvhu* (gardens allowed to lie fallow for some years), *midavhi* (meadows) and *matavha a dzinngwa* (mountains of precipices) allude to the beauties and bounties of the kind of Venḓa once occupied by the Vhavenḓa before colonisation. The poet remembers this type of Venḓa and calls for its restoration. By implication, the Venḓa he knew at the time of writing was no longer the same as the one remembered. The Venḓa that the poet remembers entailed fertile and abundant livestock, lush land and traditional rites, as affirmed in the next stanza:

> *Dza mukhaha na dza u hoha basha dzoṱhe dzi dangani,*
> *Matsangaluwa i lile i tshitumbani*

Vha thama na phomo vha tshi ṱwa vhe vumbani.
Mphe domba ḽa deu ya u lapfesa.
Mbilu yanga sutuka i tshi tshipuliso
Tsha musalauno wa vhathu vha u kheluwa
Kha gondo ḽivhuya nga nṱhani ha u sweuwa.
Mphe mahosi a mulovha a mbavhalelo.
Mphe vhutuka na vhusha ha tsumbanḓila,
Zwi ralo ndi vhe na dzhavhelo
Kha swina iḽi ḽi hanaho zwiila,
Muvilinganyi wa u sa londa,
Ngeno Muṋe ene o vha o ri tonda.

(Those that produce curdle and those that pull timber are all in the kraal
Matsangaluwa must bleat in the goat pen
Those who use pods of the semi-woody climber and the black stone spend the day at clay deposits
Give me the *domba* with its long queue
May my heart escape this sorcery
Of the modern people who deviate
From the right path because of immorality
Give me the caring chiefs of yore
Give *vhutuka* and *vhusha* which showed the way,
So that I may have a refuge
From this foe that rejects taboos,
The one who tousles and does not care,
Whereas the Lord had blessed us.)

The nouns *mukhaha* (general term for milk both sweet and sour; curdle), *thama* (pod used by potters for shaping and smoothing earthenware, and in the kitchen for scouring pots clean), *phomo* (black stone like graphite which is mixed with water and smeared on pots to give a shiny black finish), *vumbani* (at the potters' clay), *domba* (pre-marital rite), *deu* (queue), *vhutuka* (puberty rites for boys) and *vhusha* (puberty rites for girls) refer to the prosperity of the land remembered, the Vhavenḓa's economic means of survival and their aesthetic creativity, i.e. clay pots, and their cultural uniqueness and esoteric wisdom, which were largely evinced by their rites of passage, i.e. *domba*, *vhutuka* and *vhusha*, among others. Therefore, in addition to the poet's remembrance of the

fruitful Venḓa of yore, there is also a yearning for the restoration of cultural rituals, which had a significant bearing on the Vhavenḓa's articulation of selfhood.

Vhavenḓa traditional leaders played a critical role in ensuring that rites such as *domba*, *murundu* (circumcision), *vhusha*, *vhutuka*, musevhetho (girls' initiation rite) and dances and songs such as *tshikona* (reed-pipe dance and song), *malende* (a dance that comprises singing, dancing and dramatic action that is accompanied by drinking beer; hence, it is known as 'beer songs') and *tshifasi* (courting dance), among others (Ṋemakonde 2006; Kruger 2007; Loubser 2008; Ratau & Sebola 2022). Hence, the poet implicates traditional leaders in his nostalgia for the past, prior to the advent of a democratic government, which entails a dual system of leadership: traditional leadership and political leadership, which do not always work harmoniously. With the advent of democracy, the power of traditional leaders diminished and with that, cultural practices such as initiation rites and communal performances of traditional dances were no longer done mainly under the auspices of these leaders. For this reason, the poet sees democracy and modernity as deviant ways of life mainly because they either interrupted, eliminated or desecrated certain cultural practices that were essential to the Vhavenḓa's being and belonging in the world. In essence, the poet sees the modern era as characterised by people who disregard taboos and therefore live in chaos, which was not common in the Venḓa of yore. Even though Ratshiṱanga yearns for the bygone 'glory' of Venḓa, Maumela (1979:3) holds a contrary view in his poem 'Ḽa Mulovha ḽo Tsiruwa' (Yesterday has passed):

Ḽa mulovha ḽo tsiruwa,
Ḽa matshelo a ḽi athu runga,
Ni songo tshuwa tshithu,
Ni songo pundisa maṱo,
Ngauri zwoṱhe zwo vhilulaho,
Na zwe zwa vha hone kale,
A zwi tsha ḓo vhuya.
Na maitele a dziṅḓila dzashu,
O vhofhekanywa na zwifhinga zwashu,
Ngauri na zwifhingavho zwi a amba.

(As for yesterday, it has passed
Tomorrow has not yet pierced

Do not be afraid of anything
Do not let your eyes swell
Because all that has hastily come
And all that was there in ancient times
Will never return
Even our behavioural ways
Are tied with our times
Because times also speak.)

Almost as if a rebuttal to Ratshiṱanga's foregoing poem, Maumela cajoles readers towards accepting the present time, as a return to the past will never happen. He encourages the readers to live in the present and not in the past or even the future. According to the poet, there is nothing to worry about regarding tomorrow and there is no need to keep living in the past, as whatever was in the past will never be in the present, including the Vhavenḓa's traditional practices. To the poet, all that happened in the past, all that happens in the present and all that will happen in the future is directional proportional to the demands of that particular time, nothing more, nothing less. For this reason, the poet encourages his readers to make the most of every moment and shift from thinking about what used to be, what could have been or could be. Maumela's primary concern is that Vhavenḓa should use their present time and opportunities to develop themselves and their land. This idea is reiterated in the poem, 'Venḓa' (Maumela 1979:11):

Venḓa ḓivuse nga woṱhe!
Lushaka ri fhaṱe nga roṱhe,
Vhatsinda vha ṱodzimele,
Vha tame vha edzisele.
Mishumo yo fhirutshela,
Vuwani yo ri lindela,
Roṱhe nga ri futelele,
Mvelaphanḓa i vhidzelele

(Venḓa, raise yourself and stand independently
Let us build a nation on our own
So that strangers may peep
So that they may envy and imitate
Jobs are plenteous

Rise up, they are waiting for us
All of us must be committed
And development calls.)

Maumela's poems were published in 1979, the year in which Venḓa attained political independence, which to the Venḓa and its people was a milestone on the road to political development. The prevailing attitude at the time was that Vhavenḓa should work very hard towards the welfare of Venḓa. In terms of Venḓa's economic system at the time, although Venḓa had a large subsistence sector, it was rapidly diminishing, as focus was then on free enterprise and market economy. Against this backdrop, Maumela encourages Vhavenḓa to lift themselves up and build their nation. They should build with such excellence that even strangers will envy and possibly even consult them on how they achieved their successes. Maumela is not concerned about returns to the past but more about progress and development as required by the epoch in which a people lives.

Discussion

The selected Vhavenḓa poets make reference to two *Venḓas* and by extension 'two Africas' (Andindilile 2016:127): the one the West helped to create which has been a subject of a lot of controversy and misinterpretation, and the one that could be called *real* – for lack of a better word – Venḓa (Africa) that exists outside the Western conception, and the Venḓa that still remains least understood (Mafhungo & Dube 2021). This distinction is vital in understanding the premise upon which this article is based because many of the problems that arise in the study of Venḓa and ultimately Africa through various disciplines – including literary analysis, the focus of this study – expose the knowledge gaps, arguably, on the basis of these two Venḓas, the kind of knowledge they represent, and the challenge they raise for those seeking to reconcile the two to end up with a harmonious whole. The concept of two Venḓas can be traced to colonialism and the colonial mentality that made many Europeans interpret Africa from a certain perspective, oblivious to the reality within and amongst Africans themselves. In this regard, some early ethnographers have propagated hypotheses that purport the Vhavenḓa's 'origin and political history' as largely surrounded by ambivalences and ambiguities (Ralushai 1977; Madiba 1994; Khorommbi 1996; Fokwang 2003; Ṋetswera 2012). These ethnographers have both covertly and overtly attributed these

ambivalences and ambiguities to the notion that the Vhavenḓa are a people '[largely] without their own texts' (Mudimbe 1985:175). Indeed, Khorommbi (1996) argues that for the most part, the input of the Vhavenḓa themselves had for a long time remained absent from the discourse on the created hypotheses about themselves (cf. Sebola 2022). Eventually, what emerges is two scenarios of how other people perceive Vhavenḓa (that is, outsiders looking in), and how Vhavenḓa view themselves (insiders looking at themselves).

This article analyses poems written in Tshivenḓa, with particular reference to the two 'Venḓas' – one *invented* and *imagined* and the *actual one* that survives in memory regardless of the misconceptions and denigration of the coloniser. The challenge that Vhavenḓa artists such as poets, writers, philosophers and even academics have faced since the mid-twentieth century appears to revolve around making *real* Venḓa – the Venḓa that is least understood – become known to the outside world in an attempt to correct the largely distorted Western ideas associated with the *created* Venḓa in particular and Africa in general. As such, the article argued that the intersection of poetry, memory and nostalgia in African-language literary discourse appears to be an inevitable consequence of the historical events that conspired to condemn the continent to Western engineered modernity (Andindilile 2016).

The above-cited poems resonate thematically in their quest for reconnection with how things always should have been and should be in Venḓa. Ultimately, the article shows that in their effort to not forget their history and identity, the poets use memory and nostalgia to combat erasure. On one level, the poets seem bound to each other by their common ancestry, habitation and oppression and from this commonality, they share a common attitude and perspective toward Venḓa although with varying passions. On another level, a poet such as Ratshiṱanga embraces the migration theory and hypothesis often used to distinguish the Vhavenḓa clans into those who are autochthonous Vhavenḓa and those who are said to have migrated to Venḓa from Egypt, Ethiopia, Congo, Malawi and Zimbabwe. However, currently, the migratory theory and its suppositions on the Vhavenḓa's origin and political history is challenged vehemently by Ṋeluvhalani (2017) in favour of the multi-regional theory regarding the movements of Vhavenḓa across Africa (Mafhungo and Dube 2021). Owing to a variety of reasons, the poets' experience, be it of colonisation, apartheid and dispossession, has shaped their attitude toward Venḓa and the world. As a result of a protracted detachment from their ancestral home, *Matongoni* (as the analysis of Matshili's poem showed), the poets rely on memory and nostalgia to emphasise the spiritual and

cultural disconnection from their roots. In their poetry, they comment on how the European colonisers and other invasive African tribes deprived them of their heritage, traditions and languages in a bid to impose extraneous cultural paradigms. They write about the Vhavenḓa's degraded culture, rituals and religious beliefs which have been delineated as primitive, inferior and pre-historic by the colonisers, in an effort to advocate reclamations of their traditions. In reading these poems which resonate with Tshivenḓa oral traditions, one notes a shared remembrance of a history of suffering, an ancestral memory of anguish and the complexities ascribable to the experience of subjugation. Although the poems reflect intensities of the history of western and internecine colonisation in Venḓa, the poems, however, emerge as a protest against imperialism. This article then reflects on the longings for a bygone epoch in Venḓa and the resultant identity crisis.

The poetry of Tendamudzimu Ratshiṱanga, Ralson Matshili and Eddie Maumela presents a number of unsettling stories about settler identity and belonging. The three stories concerning what it means to (re)member a home act to inform each other – where they diverge, they also act at a counterpoint; along their meanderings, they also come to intersections. The 'traditional' influences the 'colonial' and vice versa, and the logics of both make their impression upon 'postcolonial' reckonings. This presentation maps the articulation of connectedness to a country as a model of being and belonging in the South African context, and particularly in cases where the claims to belonging of aboriginal and settler populations *collide*, *cross* and *merge.* The analysis sought first to provide an exposition of Vhavenḓa's understandings of what it is to *be* and *belong* to and in South Africa, and second, it strove to illustrate and illuminate how notions of the past – whether they be 'traditional', 'colonial' or 'post-colonial' – can be mobilised in public and academic discourses in South Africa. In doing so, it is hoped that a greater insight can be gained into what Vhavenḓa take as being and belonging and also what they think it takes to reclaim *being* and to *belonging*.

Conclusion

Although this article cannot claim to be exhaustive in its treatment of the issues pertaining to the interface and intersection of memory, nostalgia, identity and poetry in grappling with the subject of Venḓa as a microcosm of Africa, it does raise some poignant issues that illuminate the ongoing discourse on decoloniality (Zondi 2021), particularly by considering how the two 'Venḓas'

and by extension, the two 'Africas', pose challenges to understanding Venḓa and the multiplicities of its peoples, cultures and stories. The analysis of the selected poems demonstrates how memory, nostalgia and poetry emerge as fields of contestations in the discourse about Venḓa in particular and Africa in general. It also reveals how both memory and poetry harmonise in debunking the often parochial, reductive and utterly biased Eurocentric perceptions about the much maligned Africa to bring about a new consciousness and a new understanding about Africa and Africans. Suffice it to say, generally, stereotypes about Africa witnessed in the imposition of imperial languages and cultures, and even in adventure novels such as *Heart of Darkness* (Conrad 1899) that denigrated Africa and its peoples were consistent with the mainstream elevated notions of Europeans. Though changes have occurred and much has been learnt about Africa from African philosophers and contemporary African thought-leaders, theorists, poets, writers, etc., there remains much to be done prior to bridging the gap the *fabricated* Africa – a relic of colonialism and what it begets – and the real Africa that continues to thrive against negative typecasting and thinking about Africa. This means there is still a lot to be done to make the real Africa visible to the rest of the world. In this regard, African poets, philosophers and writers should continue ensuring that the *real* Africa does not get swallowed by the *fabricated* Africa in their efforts to bridge the epistemological gap; otherwise, they run the risk, like Africans who inherited and perpetuated colonial practices against their own, remain complicit in bringing an erasure and a re-colonisation of their peoples' ways of being, knowledge and power (Sibanda 2019). Overall, this article, in a global sense, hoped to show that it is not only Vhavenḓa who are concerned about their status in relation to their past being and belonging, nor that the questions of being and belonging arise only in the context of postcolonial spaces. Theirs is a quest for cosmological, ontological and epistemological legitimisation, as opposed to estrangement from the world through a three-fold mutually-enforced prison of modern alienation: cosmology, ontology and epistemology. Put differently, there is a need to deal with the coloniality of being, of knowledge and of power even through literary analysis to broaden the scope of discourse on decoloniality. And so, in this age of what may be regarded as radical uncertainty, questions regarding the place and destination of Africans in the world seem particularly poignant, and as such, future researchers may consider this article as a springboard into further explorations of African selfhood, belonging and power.

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Protestations against the Continued Inequalities and Suffering of the Marginalised African Communities

Youthful Fantasy and Wisdom of Experience in Mzobe's *Young Blood* (2010) and Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* (2000)

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Abstract

The coming-of-age narrative framework has become the most popular literary form for black writers in the re-imagination of post-apartheid social realities. This paper delves into how Sifiso Mzobe's *Young Blood* (2010) and Sello K. Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* (2000) challenge not only the foundational assumptions of the bildungsroman genre but also the bleak pessimistic vision of the anti-bildungsroman. Both *Thirteen Cents* and *Young Blood* are thought-provoking novels that examine the complexities of identity in a changing society. They both offer a unique perspective on the post-apartheid experience in South Africa and the ongoing struggles faced by young people. They both explore the themes of identity and self-discovery through the narrative perspective of two young black men. However, scant attention has been paid to how these narratives relate to the principles of the bildungsroman genre within the context of the post-apartheid black experience. I argue that the logic of the coming-of-age narrative framework in these two novels defies both the conventional bildungsroman and anti-bildungsroman because they are a symbolic response to a specific historical context. While there have been few references in critical sources to the resonance of these narratives with bildungsroman principles, a comprehensive exploration of how these narratives are rooted in the uniqueness of the post-apartheid black experience is lacking. Therefore, this paper contends that Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* and Mzobe's *Young Blood* demonstrate and illustrate how 'narrative and the imagination become crucial sites at making sense of and alleviating experiences of disenchantment' (Peterson 2019: 348).

Keywords: Bildungsroman, Mzobe, Duiker, postapartheid narratives, youthful fantasy and wisdom of experience.

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Introduction

While the coming-of-age narrative framework has been widely recognized as a productive literary form through which post-apartheid reality is reimagined for most black writers, there has been little attention *paid* to how they relate to the principles of the bildungsroman genre. This genre reveals, in its delineation of the individual's development, that personal identity is a process of becoming. The best examples are Sello K. Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* and *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001), Niq Mhlongo's *Dog Eat Dog* (2004), and *After Tears* (2007), Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut* (2007), Thando Mqolozana's *A Man Who Is Not a Man* (2009), Sifiso Mzobe's *Young Blood* (2010), Yewande Omotoso's *Bom Boy* (2011) and Nadia Davids' *Imperfect Blessing* (2014).

In the specific narratives under study, the narrator-protagonists in both *Thirteen Cents* and *Young Blood* are telling their coming-of-age stories in a social context still deeply affected by the legacy of apartheid. . They both offer a unique perspective on the post-apartheid experience in South Africa and the ongoing struggles faced by young people. They both explore the themes of identity and self-discovery through the literary form of the bildungsroman genre. These journeys take them through various experiences as they try to navigate the complexities of life. Both writers paint a vivid picture of the challenges faced by young black men in post-apartheid South Africa and how they cope with these challenges.

In this article I will investigate how Sifiso Mzobe's *Young Blood* (2010) and Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* (1999) obey and observe the constitutive presuppositions of the idealist bildungsroman and its opposite anti-bildungsroman, but also challenge the very principles that constitute them. There have been casual references in critical sources on how both narratives reflect and embody principles of the bildungsroman but without any reference to the theory of the genre and its relationship to the specificity of the post-apartheid black experience.

The significance of reading these two award-winning debut novels by Duiker and Mzobe through the lenses of the bildungsroman genre is underscored by Fredric Jameson who argues that theory and ideological bias are inevitable in any act of reading:

> [W]e never really confront a text immediately, in all its freshness as a thing-in-itself. Rather, texts come before us as the always-already-

> read; we apprehend them through sedimented layers of previous interpretations, or – if the text is brand-new – through the sedimented reading habits and categories developed by those inherited interpretative traditions (Jameson 1989: 9).

Indeed, both narratives feature narrator-protagonists who exhibit typical bildungsroman traits. Daniel Just's observation about the dilemma at the heart of this genre is evident in both novels: '… Bildungsroman takes as its subject the paradoxical nature of the modern age, namely the socialization of characters who are simultaneously in need of individuation' (2008: 383). The two texts are structured around two opposing concepts which are typical of the bildungsroman genre, that is, individual autonomy and social integration, youthful fantasy and mature sobriety, and individual fulfillment and practical reality. In Duiker's narrative, the youthful hero chooses individual autonomy over social integration, youthful fantasy over mature sobriety, and individual fulfillment over practical reality. In Mzobe's narrative, the youthful hero learns to forego his autonomy in favor of social integration, his youthful fantasy is ultimately tempered by mature sobriety, and sacrifices his fulfillment by acquiescing to practical reality. Duiker's hero attains maturity by deliberately and calculatedly defying social norms, while Mzobe's hero's quest for individual fulfillment is constrained by the need to adjust to social norms as a way of survival. The trajectory of Mzobe's hero is a transformation from anti-social conduct towards a more socially acceptable behaviour as a pathway to maturity. In Mzobe's narrative, the youthful protagonist outgrows the folly of naive hopefulness to embrace pragmatic maturity and practical realism. However, Duiker's narrative depicts a socially disruptive youthful hero whose growth and development resists reconciliation with the conventions of adult society.

While, in Mzobe's narrative the bildungsroman form is embraced and observed, the nature of society into which the individual is supposed to integrate is hardly questioned and the validity of the maturity to be attained is never interrogated, whereas in Duiker's *Thirteen Cents*, the universality and ahistorical nature of the Bildungsroman is disrobed of its innocence and objectivity. In Duiker's narrative the youthful hero's growth and maturity leads him to question society and its norms. Azure's maturity is never attained by adjusting to the norms of society, in fact he attains his growth by rejecting the received wisdom and social norms.

Maturity as Repudiation of Youthful Fantasy in Mzobe's *Young Blood* (2010)

Sifiso Mzobe's *Young Blood* is a novel of education whose important lessons for the narrator-protagonist is that he must outgrow his youthful fantasy and learn to adjust to the world of mature sobriety.

The protagonist's first rebellion against social norms is when he decides to abandon school against the advice of his parents and other family elders. The narrator-protagonist's defies parental authority and expectations regarding school as an essential rite of passage in a life of young black man. He says:

> When I told my parents of my decision to drop out of school, my mother went into a rage that lasted two days. My father promised me a beating to end all beatings. I showed them my F's. After her anger has subsided, Ma listened to my explanations, but it was clear she did not understand. Nothing in class made sense, I told her. I was in grade ten, yes, but the last concepts I had really understood were at grade seven level, and I was average at those. In class, my mind was there for the first five minutes – five minutes in which I focused intently. But for the next thirty-five minutes my thoughts would wonder, lost into a maze of tangents (2010: 7 - 8).

The accepted and traditional wisdom that education or school environment is a space of self-actualisation and self-determination for a young man clash with the narrator-protagonist's experiential reality about school as an unproductive and meaningless experience. For this young man, the school is experienced differently from the parental expectations, as much as the parents are also at pains to understand the young man's explanation of his experiential reality. Before, he even told his parents this how the youthful narrator-protagonist shares his experience of the school environment:

> It was exactly thirteen days to the day that I gave up on my high school education. There was absolutely nothing for me in school. My reports were collections of F's. I was a master mumbler in class. In mathematics I was far below average. Nothing in school made sense, and nothing had since grade one. By grade ten I knew it was not for me. A childish hope of someday understanding had carried me through the lower grades. By May that year, that hope ran out of steam (7).

The mother trying to bridge the gap between her expectations about the potentiality of school environment as space of self-actualisation for a young man and her son's feelings of alienation about the same school environment, reacts as follows: '… Ma shouted, shook me, asked for more explanations; she tried to understand but could not - the same way I tried to understand in school but didn't. She even cried' (8). To her mother's distress, frustration and disappointment, the narrator-protagonist responds as follows:

> 'I don't know what I will do, Ma, but I am not going to school. You see my reports; there is not one subject I pass. I can't do anything right in school. Every day I go there it's like a part of me dies. Ma, you see my reports every year, there is nothing for me there', I explained (8 - 9).

The mother responds by making an impassioned plea to her son but to no avail. She says:

> 'But in this world you don't just give up. You must keep trying', she said (9).

What we witness here is the clash and divergence of views between the youthful experience of the narrator protagonist and the received wisdom of the elders. The experiential reality of the young man about school and what the parents know about school are two contrasting realities. This is the contradiction the parents, learn to live with. They console themselves that at the least the young man informed them before he executed his decision to leave school. However, the mother never gave up on her conviction that her son needs to return to school as we shall see at the end. The narrator-protagonist reflects as follows:

> My parents tried. My uncles and aunts tried. Days rolled on, and their calls dried up. The tension in our house slowly lessened.
>
> 'At least he was honest with us about his decision. We know where he is. At least he is not like the others who pretend like they are going to school when they are not', I overheard Ma say to Dad (2010: 9).

Initiation from Innocence to Experience

Sifiso Mzobe's *Young Blood* is also a story of a young black man whose

ambitions to change his social status leads him to a life of crime. Following his acrimonious disagreement with his parents and relatives about leaving school, Sipho has no plan about what he wants to do. Fortunately, or unfortunately his longtime friend Musa just arrived in the township of Umlazi from Johannesburg to help celebrate the young narrator-protagonist's birthday. During their interaction, Sipho is inspired by Musa who has achieved enviable success through his hustling and has climbed the ladder within the criminal underworld. The narrator-protagonist is therefore enticed into the adventurous and exhilarating life of crime as a way to make a living. Sipho's admiration of Musa is registered as follows: 'He left for the City of Gold with only the clothes on his back. His return from Joburg … was drenched in a glorious "I have made it" glow' (2010: 15). By the time Musa recruits him into his lucrative criminal enterprise it presents the narrator-protagonist with a real prospect of realising and attaining a life of material prosperity which he had never experienced before in his life.

The narrator-protagonist's transition from the world of innocence to the world of experience is captured as follows:

> I knew I was saying goodbye to my childhood, embracing manhood from a different angle. If there was a moment I could point to and say, this is when I left childhood behind, Vusi's phone call was that moment. It was the bridge. Before stolen cars, there was no substitute for soccer in my life. When the ball was at my feet, I was completely free, Soccer made sense to me. Unfortunately, in the township it rarely paid. Car theft was a better bet. I had the luxury of feeling sad for a minute, said a quick farewell to my dreams, spat on the tarmac and went to home and changed. Vusi and the call to get the 740i- that second was the bridge. I chose money over freedom (2010:107 - 108).

In this specific case of the narrator-protagonist the only way a young hero has a realistic chance of attaining material prosperity and changing not only his social status but that of his family as well is through series of tests in which he attains self-knowledge and about his society.

In this regard Sipho undergoes a transformation that has been observed by Susan Suleiman as quoted by Justyna Kociatkiewicz (2008:7).

> we may define a story of apprenticeship (of *Bildung*) as two parallel transformations undergone by the protagonist: first, a transformation

> from ignorance (of self) to knowledge (of self); second a transformation from passivity to action. The hero goes forth into the world to find knowledge (of himself) and attains such knowledge through a series of 'adventures' (actions) that function both as 'proofs' and as tests …. In effect, the hero's 'adventures' are but the prelude to genuine action: a story of apprenticeship ends on the threshold of a new life for the hero which explains why, in the traditional Bildungsroman the hero is always a young man, often an adolescent.

Indeed, the young narrator-protagonist in Mzobe's novel undergoes this double transformation hinted by Suleiman. He is transformed from his childhood innocence through an apprenticeship to a seasoned criminal, Musa, who has attained a rank of a General amongst the 26's gang. Sipho is inducted and initiated into the criminal enterprise of stealing cars by his mentor Musa who says to them:

> I know both of you are serious about money. Well, here is a chance to make it. My friend … no my brother, Sibani, told me about a hustle he has for me and two other people. What we'll do is steal cars – real cars, six cylinders and above – change the tags, engine numbers and colour, and sell them. We'll take them across the borders if we have to. Sibani and I will raise the cash for paperwork and extras. All you two must do is get the cars (52).

To reflect his innocence and novice status within the criminal enterprise Sipho replies as follows to Musa: 'I hear, Musa. I understand you, my brother. The problem is, I have never stolen a car before', I said (53). Musa responds by reassuring his new apprentice by saying:

> It is not the hardest thing in the world, Sipho. Otherwise, there would not be so many car thieves in the townships. The actual stealing is not complicated. Finding the heart to go steal is the hard part. You have to want to do it; that is the only way you will learn (53).

Once he is inducted and initiated into the criminal enterprise Sipho's life is transformed from the passivity towards action as Suleiman asserts. He is transformed from of complaining about why he doesn't like school towards an adventurous, exhilarating and glamorous lifestyle as a car thief alongside his

more experienced partner and accomplice Vusi.

What motivates him further in this direction is his family background especially after he had abandoned school. His father who is a township mechanic and his mother who is a cleaner at the hospital make enough for the family to survive with no prospects of transforming the family's social status. They struggle to make ends meet just to finish the modest renovations they want to make to their township house.

Through his criminal activities the narrator-protagonist suddenly manages to buy a fancy car, can afford the branded clothes he has always dreamed of, he can keep a stash of money in his bedroom, and is on the verge of growing and diversifying his income in the criminal enterprise.

Maturity as Acquiescence to Practical Reality and Rejection of Individuality

His luck finally runs out when he is stopped and arrested on the highway with a stolen car. What makes matters worse, he soon discovers that his mentor and friend Musa was involved in a shootout with the rival gang and later admitted to the hospital under police guard. He later succumbs to his bullet wounds and dies in the hospital. The situation is so tense and risky that he can't even go to the funeral of his friend to bid him farewell. The story concludes with the narrator-protagonist going back to school and leading a normal, less risky life but with no prospect of realising and fulfilling dreams of material prosperity and changing his social status. In short, the narrator-protagonist learns to live with the limitations and restraints imposed on his ambitions by the social environment as a law-abiding citizen. He learns to acquiesce to the dictates of practical reality against his moral, intellectual, and emotional inclinations.

Dennis Washburn describes the essence of coming-of-age novel in a way that is vindicated in Sifiso Mzobe's debut novel: '… the subject matter of a Bildungsroman is the realisation of the protagonist's self-identity through his integration into society and its values' (1995:1). The narrator-protagonist learns through a series of exhilarating adventures and daredevil escapades that it is wise and prudent to heed the advice of the parents not the one gets from his youthful peers in the streets of Umlazi, Durban.

In this way, Mzobe's *Young Blood* also confirms Joseph Slaughter's definition of the Bildungsroman genre as: '… as the didactic story of an individual who is socialized in the process of learning for oneself what everyone else (including the reader) already knows' (2007: 3). In this particular

narrative, it is worth noting that the implied contract between the youthful individual and the statist modernity is that it can either be honoured or disrupted. In Sifiso Mzobe's *Young Blood* this contract which is initially disrupted, is honoured and restored at the end but without witnessing the moral, intellectual, and emotional transformation of the errant tragic hero.

Mzobe's novel confirms how Kociatkiewicz (2008: 9) has interpreted Hegel's definition of the essence and purpose of the classical bildungsroman as the limitation and denial of individual autonomy:

> Focusing on the result of any formation, Hegel saw it as a necessary subjugation of the individual ambition to the external requirements: Bildung is not a development of personality but a moulding of it into a specific pattern approved by the social forces ruling the world and ensuring the perfect non-individuality of its members.

One can't help but think of Mzobe's narrator-protagonist as having forfeited his potentiality and uniqueness by conforming to the established social norms at the end of the narrative. He was more free, more spontaneous, and more autonomous in his adventurous and purposeful life as a criminal than in his mundane and uneventful life imposed on him at the end of the narrative. There is nothing unique or exciting about him as a typical township student seeking a qualification that might not lead to any secure and gainful employment or provision of the means of making a decent living. It is vastly different from the feeling of excitement and adventure the narrator-protagonist expressed when he was newly inducted into the criminal enterprise:

> My life had moved at a higher tempo since Musa's return from Joburg, and I needed to take a breather, a few minutes to make sure it was still me, to maybe pinch myself and ensure that it was not all a dream. I had dropped out of school but was yet to decide what to do with my life. I fixed cars with Dad in our back yard, but it was a hand-to-mouth existence. Musa's plans promised money in large amounts; they also brought endless possibilities to my mind. It was my chance to build something. My chance to break the cycle of nothingness. To step into better things (101).

The safe, socially compliant life he chooses or is forced to lead at the end of the narrative is secure and is done in compliance with the advice and help of

the parents especially his mother but it is a hand-to-mouth existence' offering no promise that his future will be different from that of his parents and has no prospects of any real transformation and social betterment that the criminal enterprise held in store for him which enabled him to dream and imagine a different future and possibilities that are and were seen as within his reach when he used to reflected as follows: 'The air you breathe changes in the suburbs. There are more trees than houses, more space than you can imagine. The silence is healthy, the peace of mind a priceless asset. It is the kind of place you should be in if you want to be the fastest forward' (46).

Megan Jones (2013) in her analysis of Mzobe's debut novel says:

> *Young Blood* and *African Cookboy* are coming of age narratives centered on individual mobility, with a subversive twist emerging in an emphasis on criminality and the material successes it supports. If the principles of the European bildungsroman necessitate the integration of the individual into society via reconciliation of interiority to exteriority, then these fictions appear to unsettle attendant conventions of progressive morality (211).

Jones emphasises the unconventional adherence of Mzobe's narrative to the generic rules of bildungsroman.

A few years later Michael Wessels (2016) perceives the innovative ways in which the novel expresses the lived reality of post-apartheid social reality:

> The novel shows how the spatial arrangements of power and control associated with apartheid are increasingly undermined and reconfigured by new practices of everyday life (87).

The article focuses purely on spatial arrangement in the city of Durban and how they are subverted and undermined by the narrator-protagonist and his crew of outlaws.

Young Blood's narrator-protagonist establishes his youthful identity against his adult social environment by saying:

> I remember the year I turned seventeen as the year of stubborn seasons Summer lasted well into autumn, and autumn annexed half of winter. It was hot in May and cold in November. The older folk in my

> township swore they had never seen anything like it. Winter nibbled on spring, and spring on summer (2010: 7).

The narrative vehicle in the novel is the youthful figure who articulates an alternative understanding of society outside of the conventional adult ways of apprehension. It reflects how this kind of youthful identity arises as a response to a generational crisis and a sense of disorientation when stable formulas of selfhood are subverted by a lived experience.

Mzobe's youthful protagonist seeks to establish his identity and that of his peers by distinguishing himself from the previous generation by saying:

> Both my maternal and paternal grandparents were of the last generation that lived in the same place for their whole lives. Times changed fast. Even, I, bush mechanic that I was, vowed not to die in a township, let alone in my father's house (54).

The narrator-protagonist emphasizes not only the possibilities that are available to them in the current dispensation but also highlights the boldness of their ambitions and irrepressible hopefulness as a distinguishing mark of their generation despite their modest means and humble social stations in life.

The basis of Mzobe's narrative is the tragic collision of desire with the unbending logic of reality or the tempering of youthful fantasy by the sobering reality. The adventure and excitement that came with the growth and attainment of an alternative understanding of the world different from the one dictated to by adult social norms is grasped and registered as follows by the narrative voice:

> I knew I was saying goodbye to my childhood, embracing manhood from a different angle. If there was a moment I could point to and say, this is when I left childhood behind, Vusi's phone call was that moment. It was the bridge (Mzobe 2010:107).

However, Mpolokeng Bogatsu's observation about youth culture aptly captures the ambivalence which characterises Mzobe's narrator-protagonist and his vision in the novel, '… contemporary black youth finds itself straddling cultural spaces. On the one hand, this generation is linked to its collective political and cultural past. On the other, it seeks through conscious innovation to establish an identity apart from (though not free from) its parent culture'

(Bogatsu 2002:2).

Bogatsu's observation is crucial for understanding Mzobe's narrative because it draws our attention to the contradiction and ambivalence that characterises the novel's narrator-protagonist youthful identity about the elders and social norms. Indeed, despite his initial rebellion at the beginning of the narrative when he stubbornly refuses to heed his parents' advice to go back to school, he surprisingly expresses gratitude for having a dad who is his mentor and coach. The narrator-protagonist fondly reflects on the connection he has with his father by saying:

> I had a Dad at home. I was glad there was a man who told me something about life, who put his hand on my shoulder when I took a life and told me the hurt would pass. Who drilled me on engines so that I could also eat. Who showed me the stars on his shoulders and told me 'never'. In his few words, Dad told me all he knew and left out all he wished he never knew. When I thought I was at a dead end, my father took me to a man who told me I would get what I wanted. Dad told me I was in the real world. Money is what I wanted from the real world. My father told me something about life, at least. Most of the people I knew never had this privilege. When Dad told me he did not need to know what old man Mbatha had told me, it was another lesson in the real world. A man keeps his secrets (64 - 65).

These are apt examples of the ambivalence Bogatsu observes as 'contemporary black youth seeking to establish an identity apart though not free from its parent culture'.

According to Franco Moretti, bildungsroman narratives are not just stories of individual growth and development but also reflect broader social, cultural, and historical changes. Franco Moretti defines the logic and rationale for a Bildungsroman in the context of European modernity as follows:

> The Bildungsroman as the symbolic form of modernity: … is connected to a specific material sign [here, youth] and intimately identified with it. A specific image of modernity: the image conveyed precisely by the youthful attributes of mobility and inner restlessness. Modernity as a bewitching and risky process full of great expectations and lost illusions. Modernity as in Marx's words a permanent revolution that perceives the experience piled in tradition as a useless

> dead weight, and therefore can no longer feel represented by maturity and still less by old age (Moretti in McKeon 2000: 555).

Mzobe's narrative observes and emulates the literary form of idealist bildungsroman without true reconciliation of youthful individuality with practical maturity. The mature sobriety attained and calmly accepted by the narrator-protagonist towards the end of the narrative is imposed on him by circumstances against his will and inclination. The achieved growth and development of the youthful protagonist is not a consequence of an emotional, intellectual, and moral maturation but is acquiescence to a sobering reality that leaves him no options.

Sipho the narrator-protagonist reflects as follows: 'November turned into a buzzing December. The trees on my street were covered in lush green leaves. Under cars with my father, I made some cash – not crazy hustler money but survival cash for smokes and the occasional day out with Nana' (227).

The narrative concludes with the narrator-protagonist reflecting and explaining his coerced transformation by saying:

> My mind never again drifted in class. They teach about things of interest to me, I told myself. But, in retrospect, I know that I concentrated in class because of everything I saw in the year that I turned seventeen (228).

It is interesting to observe that the narrator-protagonist gives two reasons for his sudden and inexplicable transformation. His first reason which is perfectly understandable is qualified by the explanation that that's what he told himself. But it is the second reason which he knows in retrospect is the real reason that he changed because of what he saw in that year he turned seventeen. While the first reason sounds voluntary, the second reason gestures towards a choice that has been imposed on the narrator-protagonist against his volition. The transformation of the youthful hero is not linked to the ideological and intellectual conversion to an achieved maturity.

Maturity as Repudiation of Society and its Norms in Duiker's *Thirteen Cents*

Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* is also a novel of education whose important lessons for the narrator-protagonist, is that he must learn to distrust and

repudiate human relations as he attains maturity and achieves wisdom of experience. It is the story of Azure (an allusion to his enigmatic blue eyes) as a homeless and orphaned thirteen-year-old child who makes a living by parking cars and working as a male sex worker. As a powerless and vulnerable urchin on the mean, brutal Cape Town streets he survives by buying protection from various gangster bosses. Azure's struggle for survival against the dominant instrumentalist and materialist values of society is a moral and ethical one. The story of the novel explores the nature of a world run by adults, seen from the perspective of an innocent thirteen-year-old child. The narrator-protagonist shares his subjective observations about the nature of his social environment: 'There is nothing for mahala [free] with grown-ups. You always have to do something in return …. Grown-ups are strange people' (2000: 6 - 7). Azure is torn between a need to survive by appeasing the materialistic values of society and upholding his ethical principles.

For most of the narrative, the protagonist is powerless against the violent and materialist ways of society, which are embodied by gangster bosses, his wealthy clients, and devious female characters. Azure's powerlessness derives not only from his age but also from his estrangement from his ways of living. He constantly expresses his displeasure against the prevailing norms and practices in his environment.

Young Hero's Initiation into Experience

A young solitary figure as a narrative strategy also functions to defamiliarise the world of social conventionality through the protagonist's naïve incomprehension of society. In *Thirteen Cents*, Azure reflects on this healthy failure to understand conventional falsehoods on which society is based by reflecting:

> Joyce understands banks and how they work. Me, I have forgotten even how to hold a pen, so how can I go to the bank myself? Grown-ups ask many questions there. You must remember when you were born and exactly how old you are. You must have an address and that it must be one that doesn't keep changing. Like you must stay in the same spot for say maybe five years and when you move you must tell the bank. They must know everything about your movements. Like how many homes you have and whom must they call when they want to do something with your money. If you ask me, they are a bit like

> gangsters, they want to know everything so that you cannot run away from them. And you must have an ID and a job that pays you regularly (2000: 11 - 12).

The vagabond status of the protagonist enhances and exacerbates the alienation of the narrative consciousness from the conventions of society. He is a solitary adventurer who lives outside of any social routine and predictable habits.

In a telling moment, the narrator-protagonist explains his superficial allegiance to the adult world as a means to survive: 'I am forced to smile. That's what they expect. Grown-ups, I know their games. I smile' (8). However, this precarious compromise is a temporary and uncertain solution. Azure soon gets into trouble with Gerald, the feared gangster boss, and is later betrayed by Joyce. He goes through a series of humiliating and degrading experiences, including a gang rape.

From the outset, the narrative emphasises the protagonist's individualist ethos and his lack of social belonging: 'I live alone. The streets of Sea Point are my home' (2000: 1). Sea Point and the adjacent Green Point used to be exclusively white suburbs during the heydays of the apartheid era. By contrast, these suburban streets are home to those who would not have found homes in houses or flats either before or after 1994. Although the streets are conventionally considered the opposite of home in *Thirteen Cents*, Azures embraces them as homely social spaces.

Despite his marginal social position, he projects himself as a morally upright and ethically sensitive voice in a morally flawed social environment:

> I sleep in Sea Point near the swimming pool because it's the safest place to be at night. In town there are too many pimps and gangsters. I don't want to make my money like them (2000: 3).

The culmination of the protagonist's alienation and estrangement from his social environment is dramatised by his abduction, incarceration, and gang rape. Gerald, who is the protagonist's new boss, explains the rationale for the assault on Azure by saying:

> You had to understand that. You had to understand what it means to be a woman. That's why they did that to you. I know that you understand what it means to be a woman already. You bleed through the anus when you shit don't you? (2000: 71).

Gerald depicts the feminisation of Azure as a process for growth, maturity, and the acquisition of wisdom. Even the protagonist himself acknowledges this fact by saying: 'Grown-ups this is how they teach me to be strong' (2000: 47). The motif of suffering as an uncanny source of insight shapes character development and defines the course of events in Duiker's narrative. Women are portrayed as envious of male power and are constantly conspiring to disempower and dispossess men of their mystical power.

Eventually Azure seeks sanctuary in the mountain where he finds fulfillment and seems to gain agency and control of his social environment. He is inexplicably empowered to overcome his vulnerability and helplessness as a child. He constantly speaks of his yearning for revenge against a variety of adult figures in his life from gangster bosses who tormented him, devious female characters to his wealthy white clients. When he returns from the mountain his tormentor Gerald is unexpectedly dead. Sealy (one of Gerald's foot soldiers), in the meantime, is now the boss of Cape Town's criminal underworld. The closeness between the narrator-protagonist and Sealy, who is now a new boss of the underworld, is noted thus: 'I follow Sealy around wherever he goes. I have become his second shadow' (2000: 150). Sealy informs Azure that: '[I]t's our turn to rule' (2000: 137).

However, the identity of that collective Sealy claims to be part of is never made explicit in the story. Azure, who is unsettled by this unsolicited inclusion in this undefined collective identification, seeks clarity from Sealy by asking: 'Who's we?' (2000: 138). Sealy's answer to Azure's first question is cryptic and to Azure's other question about the 'others', he is equally vague. Azure asks: 'Who's they?'(139). Then, Sealy responds: 'Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, gangsters, the mafia, the government … who else do you want me to name? All of them are looking at you' (2000: 139). What is emphasised is that Sealy's rise to power (from being a mere foot soldier to being newly crowned gangster boss) is linked to a wider contestation over space between the two ill-defined conflicting groups and is also associated with broader social and political change in the city.

Azure witnesses this change in Sealy's character by remarking:

> I slowly watch him change. First, he gets a gold filling in his front teeth and then he starts buying flashy clothes. And the kind with expensive labels. Arrogance grows in his eyes. When he looks at people it is with a sort of hatred. He even stops eating with me. He starts reminding me of Allen but doesn't have Allen's dirty mouth. I don't know who's

> worse. On the streets, they start to know about him (2000: 152).

Azure narrates Sealy's acquisition of power and rise to prominence within the criminal underworld as a symbol of the expected social promise of liberation that is betrayed and aborted by greed and corruption. Indeed, Sealy's newly acquired powerful position does not last. He is apprehended by the police and the residents who stay under the bridge that have formed the foundation of his power are evicted and their dwellings are destroyed. Following Sealy's arrest and subsequent dissolution of his criminal enterprise, Azure seeks refuge in the mountain sanctuary, which he regards as the basis of his miraculous strength and magical powers.

Maturity as a Refusal of Normative Social Norms

Andrew Van der Vlies in his overview of what he terms the 'black fictions of the present' validates the bleak pessimistic vision embodied in Duiker's debut novel by saying:

> Over the past decade and a half, several important voices have emerged, each concerned to engage with the experience of black urban subjects, in particular in novels that offer powerful indictments of the promises of the liberation movement – and of the neo-liberal consensus that has stymied any real socio-economic revolution in South Africa. Representations of the seeming dead-ends to which many young South Africans have been consigned by the legacies of structural inequalities fostered by apartheid and by the accommodations with local and global capital of the post-liberation government … (2017: 153).

The narrator-protagonist in *Thirteen Cents* would seem to confirm this bleak and pessimistic vision expressed by Andrew Van der Vlies above by introduce-ing himself as follows:

> My name is Azure. Ah-zoo-ray. That's how you say it. My mother gave me that name. It's the only thing I have left from her …. I live alone. The streets of Sea Point are my home. But I'm almost a man, I'm nearly thirteen years old (Duiker 2000: 1).

Duiker's narrator-protagonist aptly introduces himself as a solitary figure

alienated from society. Indeed, the trajectory of the narrative highlights the protagonist's sense of apartness from society and refusal to be reconciled with the social norms as part of his growth and attainment of maturity. The novel's narrator-protagonist who is an orphan, struggles throughout the narrative to form durable and lasting relationships.

The solitary and alienated youthful figure in Duiker's novel is a strategy of estrangement that enables a representation of society beyond a familiar and conventional gaze. As Mikhail Bakhtin observes:

> The device of 'not understanding' … always takes on great organizing potential when an exposure of vulgar conventionality is involved. Conventions thus exposed − in everyday life, mores, politics, art and so on − are usually portrayed from the point of view of a man who neither participates in nor understands them (Bakhtin 2004: 164).

This literary device of the marginal position of a solitary narrator-protagonist who refuses to participate in 'vulgar conventionality' by repudiating human relations enables a fresh and unconventional perspective exposing injustices and irrationalities present in the adult discourse on social reality.

Mandla (who is renamed Vincent by Gerald) prefigures the individualist and anti-social ethos which is embraced in the novel when he says to Azure, 'You must look after yourself, bra. Do you understand that? No one's going to help you in Cape Town. You must do everything yourself' (2000: 98). The novel enacts a youthful figure who negotiates and fashions his own unique identity in a hostile adult world. The conflict between an idealistic youthful figure and a problematic society is resolved through an anti-modern pastoral utopia and the apocalyptic demise of the world.

It is this peculiar uneasiness with socialisation in a bildungsroman that is defined by Justyna Kociatkiewicz as Anti-Bildungsroman. Duiker's novel would seem to confirm this model of the coming-of-age narrative which Kociatkiewicz perceives as based on the philosophical and cultural complex of postmodernism by saying:

> The Antibildungsroman as defined by Gerhard Mayer indicates the awareness of the equivocal character of human maturation; individual formation, ideally leading to the accommodation in the society, becomes an ambiguous process in which apparent social gains are juxtaposed to obvious limitations of personal independence and

> spiritual ambition. The evaluation of the benefits and the disadvantages a protagonist's apprenticeship in the art of living, the assessment of his progress toward the fulfillment of his human potential, the revelation of his dubiousness of the human condition- such would be the marks of the Antibildungsroman … (Kociatkiewicz xii).

In sum, *Thirteen Cents* offers valuable insights into the complexities of personal development and identity in the post-apartheid landscape, by observing and imitating the literary form of Anti-Bildungsroman yet refusing its bleak and pessimistic vision.

Textual Deviation and Socio-Historical Context

Fredric Jameson regards textual deviation from the norm, as evident in these two novels, as an entry point of history into a narrative genre and literary form by saying:

> [T]he deviation of the individual text from some deeper narrative structure directs our attention to those determinate changes in the historical situation which block a full manifestation or replication of the structure on the discourse level (Jameson 1989:146).

From what Jameson implies, the textual deviation can be regarded as evidence of how the narratives are transformed from their generic and universal models to respond meaningfully to a specific historical situation and its anxieties. The two bildungsroman narratives cannot be understood only in relation to their conformity or deviation from the generic conventions of the bildungsroman. This paper argues that we need to understand them beyond their adherence or subversion of the bildungsroman generic rules. The uniqueness of these narratives is properly contextualised and aptly clarified by Bhekizizwe Peterson (2019). Peterson notes the significance and role of narrative in black identity formation and lived experience by saying:

> Narrative and the arts function to a degree in ways similar to the unconscious and are therefore important in mediating 'the black collective psyche' in its cultural historical unconscious … (346).

The rationale for the narratives within the context of intergenerational black experience is the production of knowledge, affirmation of identity and

deployment of ideology to organise life's events and experiences into a coherent story. Peterson elaborates further by saying:

> In contexts of subjugation and exploitation, narrative and the imagination also become crucial sites from which the black radical imagination could embark on a wide range of personal and social imperatives aimed at making sense of and alleviating experiences of disenchantment (Peterson 2019: 348).

Indeed, the two narratives, Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* and Mzobe's *Young Blood* can be seen as fulfilling this imperative to make sense of and alleviate the experiences of disenchantment emanating from the new dispensation. It is these specific and unique characteristics which make these two narratives under study ill at ease as atypical Bildungsromans.

Peterson (2019: 356) gives us insight in understanding better the character of the narrator-protagonists in both novels when reflects:

> All of these happenings have profound implications for the formation of subjective and political identities and they also either temper or amplify the dissonances that come with the deferred expectations of freedom.

The character, rationale and purpose of these narratives can be perceived as Bhekizizwe Peterson further observes and elaborates:

> The dilemma then, is how to grasp, narrate and transcend the un-unfinished business of colonialism and apartheid and to lay to rest all sorts of ghosts that continue to haunt post-apartheid South Africa (Peterson 2019: 356).

Conclusion

Mzobe's *Young Blood* and Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* offer contrasting interpretations of key themes typically explored in the bildungsroman genre, particularly individual autonomy versus social integration, youthful fantasy versus mature sobriety, and individual fulfillment versus practical reality. In *Thirteen Cents*, Duiker's youthful protagonist prioritises autonomy over social integration, choosing fantasy over sobriety and personal fulfillment over the

constraints of reality. In contrast, Mzobe's hero in *Young Blood* undergoes a transformation, relinquishing his autonomy in favour of social integration, tempering his youthful fantasies with the wisdom of maturity, and sacrificing personal desires in favour of practical realities. While Duiker's protagonist reaches maturity through deliberate defiance of societal norms, Mzobe's hero comes of age by adjusting to these norms, viewing them as necessary for survival. The trajectory of Mzobe's protagonist reflects a shift from anti-social behaviour towards socially acceptable conduct as a path to maturity, eventually shedding the naivety of youthful hope for pragmatic realism. In contrast, Duiker's narrative portrays a protagonist whose growth defies social expectations, resisting the reconciliation of individuality with the conventions of adult society.

While *Young Blood* adheres more closely to the traditional bildungsroman form, it does not critically examine the nature of the society into which the individual is expected to integrate, nor does it question the value of the maturity that is attained. Mzobe's narrative upholds the genre's typical arc, portraying maturity as an inevitable adjustment to social norms. However, Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* challenges the universality and supposed objectivity of the bildungsroman. Azure's journey toward maturity does not involve conforming to societal norms but rather rejecting them, with his growth and wisdom stemming from this rebellion against the received wisdom of elders.

Ultimately, these two novels resolve the paradox inherent in the bildungsroman genre – between individuality and socialisation – in opposite ways. In *Young Blood*, individuality is sacrificed for the triumph of socialisation and adjustment to practical reality. On the other hand, *Thirteen Cents* celebrates individuality and rebellion, rejecting socialisation and the practicality of adulthood. To fully understand the coming-of-age narrative frameworks of these two novels, we must recognise both their grounding in the bildungsroman tradition and the ways in which they reflect the unique historical and cultural contexts in which they were written.

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Plutocracy and Protest: A Distributive Justice Analysis of Aubrey Sekhabi's *Marikana the Musical* (2014)

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Abstract

In an *Annual Social Justice and International Conference* (2021), delegates acknowledged that South Africa had become one of the most unequal countries or societies in the world, with unconscionable levels of poverty and unemployment. Literature and other arts often expose real socio-political and socio-economic aspects of society. Notably, Sekhabi's play is a representation of the events that occurred in Marikana, August 2012, whereby thirty-four miners were killed by police – this happened in a post-apartheid dispensation, an event that was not envisaged by the citizenry. The miners were protesting for what they called a living wage, and after failing to reach a mutually beneficial agreement with the mine management, they resorted to protest action. This paper explores the theme of fairness and equal distribution in Aubrey Sekhabi's *Marikana the Musical* (2014), thereby challenging structural injustice and arguing for distributive justice as part of decolonial justice. It employs the theory of distributive justice, which advocates for fair distribution of resources and capabilities among members of a society with the intent to ensure equal access to opportunities. The paper argues that South Africa is a plutocracy, and examples to paint a picture for this argument are drawn from the primary text, *Marikana the Musical*.

Keywords: Post-Apartheid Theatre, Decolonial Justice, Distributive Justice, Protest, Plutocracy

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Introduction

Theatre makers represented (in)justice during the unfair days of apartheid in South Africa, when theatre was often used as a way of critiquing the apartheid system. Theatre can be a voice that protests on behalf of the marginalised, exposing unfairness and raising awareness about injustice and other fundamental societal issues. When South Africa finally became a democracy in 1994, many people envisaged a just and free South Africa, where there was equality for all the citizens. Several debates also ensued in the space of creative arts as it became evident that, since apartheid had fallen, protest theatre/art could become irrelevant. The big question was: What subjects and themes would post-apartheid playwrights explore in their creative work? Playwrights had to re-think and immediately create new ways that would remain relevant in the post-apartheid dispensation. During the transitional phase from apartheid into post-apartheid in 1994, there emerged what some scholars termed as reconciliatory theatre. This period was polarised by creative arts that explored the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was commissioned to deal with the aftermath of the apartheid system. The Commission attempted to assist the victims of apartheid to find closure with regard to the injustice that they experienced under the apartheid system. Also, the commission offered the perpetrators of apartheid violence the opportunity to confess their deeds, supposedly enabling a process of restorative justice. The problem with this form of restorative justice, however, was that it did not undo the structural problems and coloniality that lingered after apartheid. As argued by Maldonado-Torres, 'Coloniality refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administration' (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 243).

Decolonial justice is concerned with reversing and re-doing policies, laws, and institutions that perpetuate colonial structures, primarily, in formerly colonised countries. According to Cunneen *et al.* (2023:xxiii) decolonisation is 'a historical and contemporary set of political, economic, social, and cultural processes'. In the preface of their book chapter, Cunneen and friends indicate that they take insights from 'abolitionists who acknowledge that change is not simply an act of pulling down but also simultaneously one of rebuilding' (2023:xxiii). This suggests it will take generative and iterative processes to realise decolonial justice similarly to coloniality, which took centuries to build. As I argue below, in a highly unequal context such as South Africa, where

inequality has been caused by a long history of colonialism and apartheid, distributive justice can be seen as part of the decolonial justice project. The struggle against apartheid was a call for equality and the liberation and integration of all South Africans, particularly black people, ensuring equal access to opportunities and resources in the country. However, almost three decades into democracy, there are still increasing levels of inequality and other forms of injustice. While early post-apartheid theatre explored themes of reconciliation, some theatre makers went on to expose the social and political ills that have characterised the post-apartheid period. Ongoing racial extremism, economic inequality, poverty, unequal access to opportunities, and gender-based violence, for instance, remain problems in post-apartheid South Africa. The effects of coloniality are evident in post-apartheid South Africa and these effects are staged by several playwrights in their theatre productions, stressing the need for distributive and decolonial justice.

This paper will employ decolonial justice as a framework for studying distributive justice in Aubrey Sekhabi's play, *Marikana the Musical* (staged in 2014 and 2015), advocating for continued processes of delinking from colonial structures. The Marikana was an incident of extreme post-apartheid police brutality, which saw the death of protesters who were calling for a fair minimum wage. However, they were met with an apartheid type of policing response, which used live ammunition to disperse the crowd, killing thirty-four miners. In an annual international conference (2022) on social justice in South Africa, which aimed to 'leverage sustainable development goals and a human rights agenda to advance social justice' in the country, delegates were united in acknowledging that South Africa had become one of the most unequal societies or countries in the world (Madonsela & Lourens 2022:2). This fact is supported by Govender who explains that South Africa's inequality grew after apartheid, where it 'runs contrary to the commitments of the South African Constitution and social policy provisions, thereby raising more serious questions of right and social justice' (Govender 2016:237)

As I argue, many of the social problems exposed by playwrights and other creative artists in post-apartheid South Africa are a result of a long history of colonialism and apartheid, which 'brought complete disorder to colonized peoples, disconnecting them from their histories, landscapes, their languages, their social relations and their own ways of thinking, feeling and interacting with the world (Smith 1999:28). This article presents a reading of Aubrey Sekhabi's *Marikana the Musical*, placing this text into conversation with theories of distributive and decolonial justice, demonstrating the challenges of

unequal distribution of wealth and resources. Decoloniality is understood as a process of creating just – or undoing unjust – situations in instances where unjust ones, initiated by colonialism, have prevailed for long periods (Mignolo & Walsh 2018:100). The hierarchies of colonial mindsets, knowledges, and systems of oppression often continues into post-independence contexts, and decoloniality seeks to counter and undo this, by delinking from epistemic structures of coloniality.

To understand what decolonial justice is, it is necessary to look at what colonial justice entails. McGuire (2023:11) exposes what she terms 'complexities of the colonial project'. She notes that colonial justice enables 'settler-colonial goals of assimilation, elimination and control' to flourish through criminal justice systems and other policies of the state. This suggests that colonial justice continues to serve as an enabler of marginalisation and oppression of indigenous peoples after independence; this is done through policy, laws and other societal institutions that perpetuate and enforce structural injustice. To support this notion, McGuire (2023:11) claims that 'today, settler-colonial criminal justice systems serve as a modern mechanism of state control, violence, abuse, and oppression'. If colonial justice is what is exposed in the latter discussion, then what is decolonial justice in this context? Decolonial justice is concerned with the opposite of what is reflected upon in the latter exploration. It is a radical process of de-linking from laws, policies, dependency and other systems of structural injustice, stressing social justice and re-existence of indigenous peoples. As McGuire notes, '[d]ependency on the state for social support maintains racialised hierarchies with indigenous peoples at the lowest end of the social order' (McGuire 2023:12). Post-colonial structures of coloniality use dependency to enable neocolonial settings. In analysis, decolonial justice will assist in framing explorations of distributive justice themes in Sekhabi's *Marikana the Musical*. Finally, the paper will argue that due to the continued structural injustices represented in *Marika the Musical*, South Africa is likely a plutocratic state. A theory of distributive justice will be employed to demonstrate this, with examples from the play.

Frameworks of Justice for *Marikana the Musical* (2014)

Marikana the Musical opens with Vukani, a miner, addressing his fellow miners on their quest for a wage increase. Vukani negotiates with the security staff, indicating that they are not fighting anyone; they just want to talk to the

mine management regarding their request. The miners are calling for what they deem as a fair remuneration package. Unfortunately, Ms Moagi and the management of the mine refuse to meet the workers and their demands, demonstrating a negative attitude towards the mine workers and their demands. As the title of the play suggests, it relives the events of the August 2012 Marikana massacre at Lonmin Platinum mine – this is after a week-long failure to reach an agreement between the mine and the miners regarding a fair remuneration package – which saw the tragic killing of 44 people, including 34 miners who were killed by police while protesting for a wage increase of R12 500.

In a quest to present a balanced exploration of distributive justice as represented in theatre, in general, it is imperative that justice as a theory is understood within the context of this study. Justice, in this study, does not retain the general understanding of prosecution of a crime or the 'crime-arrest-and-verdict' phenomenon. Instead, it is understood from a philosophical point of view. Hurlbert and Mulvale (2011) point out that one of the first definitions of justice was written by the philosopher Aristotle; this notion is supported by Parnami (2019). Aristotle associates justice with 'a cultivated set of dispositions, attitudes and good habits' (Hurlbert & Mulvale 2011). Also, he believes that equals should be treated equally, and un-equals should be treated unequally (Hurlbert & Muvale 2011; Parnami 2019; Okharedia 2005). Another definition of justice is provided by Vallentyne (2003) who argues that justice is usually understood to mean 'moral permissibility' as applied in both social structures and the distributions of benefits and burdens. Considering these definitions, it can be seen that there are varying definitions of justice, which are informed by the varying schools of thought on the subject. While there are varying definitions of the theory, they share similarities in terms of principle. This notion is buttressed by Vallentyne (2003:2) who states that several of the existing definitions are related, 'but fundamentally different'. Taking these arguments into account, this paper adopts Rawls's definition of justice, which perceives the theory as a call for fairness.

In his book *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls (1999) discusses what he terms the fundamental intuitive ideas of the theory of justice and some principles of justice. Rawls begins by describing the role of justice, and later presents justice as fairness. He characterises justice as a social ideal and argues that the specialism of justice is the fundamental structure of society (Rawls 1999:6). This refers to the manner in which significant social institutions 'distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from

social cooperation' (Rawls 1999:6). This argument suggests that justice is connected to society – the study of justice cannot be isolated from a society, and so is the study of literary texts as it mirrors and reflects on society. Rawls' definition of justice as fairness stresses the need for 'proper balance between competing claims from a conception of justice as a set of related principles for identifying the relevant considerations which determine this balance' (Rawls 1999:5). The absence of fairness can be deemed as the manifestation of injustice and imbalance. Complementary to this explanation, Adeyinka *et al.* (2017:155) explain that justice is associated with goodness, doing what is morally acceptable in the society. Reading from Rawls's definition of justice, this paper explains justice as an instrument for measuring the actions and behaviours or attitudes – either good or bad – of a society with the intent to establish fairness. The paper measures the behaviours and attitudes of the characters in the selected texts with the aim of determining representations of (in)justice, advocating for decolonial justice in post-apartheid contemporary dramas. Finally, Atiles-Osaria (2018:350) cites Maldonado-Torres (2007) who argues that 'justice operates through recognition, generosity and the ability to feel for/ with the Other'. The word 'Other', in this definition, refers to considering the feelings and emotions of other people in a manner that is morally sound.

Playwrights of post-apartheid South Africa continue to stage the injustices of inequality with regard to the lack of equal distribution of the country's mineral resources, welfare and opportunities, among other concerns. Distributive justice is concerned with fair distribution of resources in a society, eliminating unjust practices such as unconscionable high levels of poverty and unemployment, as well as structural injustice and unequal distribution of infrastructure development. Resisting the unequal distribution of resources and capabilities can be seen as a quest for decolonial justice. In his essay *Distributive Justice, social cooperation, and the basis of equality*, Andersson (2022) argues that equality is achievable through a moral person. This propounds that morality plays a pivotal role in measuring fair distribution of opportunities to ensure reciprocity. Andersson (2022:1180) understands distributive justice as a 'matter of the fair terms of cooperation among the participants of a system of social cooperation'. Andersson's definition of distributive justice is supported by Lamont and Favor (2017) who argue that the theory is concerned with equal and fair allocation of resources, wealth, welfare and opportunities and other resources among members of a community.

In the case of Sekhabi's musical, the mine workers and the mine management belong to the same community, the mine, and they share similar interests in terms of working the grounds and resources of the mine for financial gain in the form of profit and salary, respectively. A community, according to MacQueen *et al.,* is a 'group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties …. in geographical locations or settings' (2001:1929). The social ties that link the mine and its stakeholders ought to serve as motivation for them to keep their vested interests mutually beneficial. This requires a great deal of morality as argued by Andersson (2022); a sound moral person would expect that the parties would share the gains of the mine in a reasonably equal manner or in a manner that is deemed to be fair. This is not the case at the Lonmin mine.

As Sekhabi explores in his musical, the Marikana massacre comes after a week-long wildcat protest by mine workers who are demanding a wage increment of up to R12 500. The miners believe that their hard work is not being compensated fairly, and that the mine owners and bosses benefit more than themselves, the mine workers, who do the actual work on the ground. The unfair remuneration, which leads to the protest, is linked to unfair structural injustice in the Lonmin mine but also in South Africa more generally. The play opens with the miners singing in unison, appearing from underneath the mine with their headlamps on. They are singing a struggle song that demands the return of the land to black people, chanting that they are fighting for the land, the land of their forefathers. This chant is about land dispossession, which saw the majority of black people in South Africa being stripped off their land by colonial masters. As such, the play points to the ways in which colonialism has a legacy in the post-apartheid era, and to a need for decolonial justice, including the restoration of land to Black people. The miners are Black people, and they are all reporting at the mine as employees; the owners of the mine appear to be white people, and they own the mine. This is seen when Vukani, a miner, tells the security personnel of the mine that he and the other miners want to talk to the white man, referring to the employer. The white man, as a race, represent the colonial masters and their unjust policies and institutions.

> *VUKANI: This security says we must not cross the danger tape. He is trying to find the white man …. We are here to meet with our employer. We want management to come here and speak to us* (2014:6).

The play uses this scene to draw attention to racialised inequality, in the un-

equal distribution of the country's land and wealth. It is clear that the Black majority do not have control of the resources, instead, white people control the means and profits of production as represented in Sekhabi's musical. These are the aftereffects of colonialism, and Sekhabi's representation supports the notion that there still exist some elements of neocolonialism and coloniality in contemporary South Africa. Distributive justice advocates that people ought to share resources and wealth equally, whereas decolonial justice seeks to reverse or oppose the structures of coloniality in formerly colonised countries like South Africa. Both forms of justice would seem to be evoked in this scene.

Ms. Moagi and Vukani argue about the LONMIN management's failure to make time and meet with the miners to listen to their grievances. Ms. Moagi is representing the mine management while Vukani is representing the miners. Vukani explains that they no longer want to be represented by a worker's union as the union, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), has sold them out and they are being exploited. The conversation between the two ends in vain.

The formation and sustainability of labour unions is a strategic perpetuation of neocolonial structures of exploitation through enacted policies that prevent the miners from bargaining directly with the mine management. Decolonial justice entails delinking from these epistemic structures of coloniality.

Sekhabi also presents the Black security personnel as being exploited. In Scene 5, two security guards are away on leave, are forced to return to work in spite of the fact that it is no longer safe to be on site due to the levels of instability at the mine. The two guards express their unhappiness about their forced return to work:

> *GUARD 1: These white people are cruel, I have just been on leave for three days and when I was starting to enjoy my leave, they call me back.*
>
> *GUARD 2: (In IsiXhosa) I was also on leave. They better pay for the over time.*
>
> *GUARD 1: These dogs don't want to pay us. That's why these miners are on strike* (2014:17).

The play thus shows sympathy with both the security guards who were used against the miners by the mine owners to protect white capital. Both the mine workers and the security personnel, including the police force are Black, and

are being exploited in protection of the mine's interest. The conversation between the two guards buttresses the argument that there are widespread elements of exploitation or unfairness at the mine. The mine management is forcing the guards to return to work while they continue to force the miners to return to work, disregarding the protests. Clearly, the mine management maximises profit over the lives and the livelihoods of the employees. The interests of the minority are the ones considered in this case; also, the wealthy elites are employing their political means to maximise their profit through the exploitation of the miners and the other workers such as the security. Tragically, the two security guards lose their lives at the hands in the violence; one is stabbed and the other one is burned.

The oppression of the miners, as represented in the play, is shown to be a form of racialised and structural injustice as it is embedded in social, political and economic structures. According to Young, structural injustice occurs as a result of several individuals and organisations who want to pursue and achieve their envisaged goals and interests in spite the impact that this has on the other parties that are involved (2011:52). Young adds that 'structural injustice exists when social processes put large groups of persons under systematic threat of domination or deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capacity' (2011:52). This was clearly the case for the Black majority under colonialism and apartheid, and it continues in the form of neocolonialism. This is why theorists of decolonial justice stress the need to pay attention to colonial history in considering justice (Cunneen *et al.* 2023:xxiii). The miners seem to believe that structural injustice is at the root of their problems. Sekhabi presents some of the injustices in song:

> *There is no progress in our lives*
> *We come from the villages*
> *We have given up on opportunities to study*
> *And money is made through our sweat*
> *Today we are not going*
> *… Where are the fruits of our freedom?* (2014:10)

The song demonstrates that there are limited opportunities in the rural villages where the majority of the miners come from. Most of the miners are migrant workers. They express that there is lack of progress in their lives, which resulted in giving up their opportunities to study further. This is particularly poignant considering that most schools in rural areas are poorly equipped to

educate Black children, which is a legacy of apartheid and the Bantu Education Act. These expressions of the miners resonate with many South African children from poor backgrounds, especially in the villages. Ongoing structural injustices limit equal access to opportunities. In addition, the song demonstrates that the miners are aware that they are creating 'money' through their labour or 'sweat', but not for themselves, as their labour is being exploited to benefit the mine owners. The song thus draws attention to the need for a type of decolonial justice whereby the delinking project of colonial structures and its policies and laws is made deliberate to ascertain equal distribution of opportunities and wealth in a post-colonial arena.

Protest was used as a form of resistance against apartheid by Black South Africans to demonstrate their disapproval of the unfair legislation and structural injustice of the system, and protest theatre of the apartheid era was part of this struggle. After apartheid, there are still protests and the theme of protest action in theatre has reemerged. Protests about unequal education, for example, appear in *The Fall* (2017), a play created by a collective of Fallist students that explores the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall protests of 2015-2017, which forced South Africa's universities to shut-down, with students demanding fee-free higher education and a decolonised curriculum that would address the needs of Africans. The students also protested for the insourcing of general workers in the universities, citing unfair remuneration conditions and working conditions. In the play, the characters narrate their individual experiences or stories of what happened during the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall protests and the reality of their financial situations and the structural injustice that is embedded in the higher education sector. While the other characters narrate their individual experiences about the protest action, one of the Fallist students, Zukile-Libalele, draws on the promises in Section 8 of the Freedom Charter, as he states:

> *The Doors of Learning and of Culture shall be opened! Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children. Higher education and technical training shall be opened to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis of merit* (Conrad *et al.* 2017:43).

Qhawekazi joins the conversation by adding that impoverished Black students are born into poverty and the system is designed to keep them poor through the provision of NSFAS loans, so that they remain poor and controllable as they

would struggle to pay up the loans (Conrad *et al.* 2017:45). The Freedom Charter was meant to be a blueprint for distributive justice and decoloniality as its aim is to reverse the inequalities of the past. *The Fall*, like Sekhabi's *Marikana the Musical*, also draws attention to the ongoing need for decoloniality and decolonial justice.

Returning to Sekhabi's play, the reality of most miners is that their families are dependent on them as the sole breadwinners. They were forced to drop out of school and join the labour force due to their families' poverty. After the brutal mass murder of the miners, it became evident that poverty would strike in the homes of the slain miners. In the play, Sinovuyo, a wife to one of the miners, explains that her husband supported their four children, eight brothers and sisters and his mother, including herself; he also paid his brother and sister's education (Sekhabi 2014:52). This reveals that the siblings to the miner who is deceased may have difficulty with furthering their studies as he was the sole breadwinner. The colonial strategy of dependency is still being preserved.

Although Sekhabi's musical is a representation of the Marikana events or killings, he also exposes poor service delivery by the government of the day in the rural areas. Old Lady, a character in the play, speaks about the poor road infrastructure in her village. She states that nothing gets to their village easily. She says this at the funeral of one of the miners:

> *…. These young men have to carry the coffin up the hill, in this biting cold. Thanks to their days in the Initiation Mountains, they will climb up until they arrive. Even the young man laid to rest today, he knew, he himself had to carry many more up that hill* (Sekhabi 2014:52).

Thus, Sekhabi demonstrates the lack of road infrastructure in his drama. Through the character of Old Lady, Sekhabi exposes the unfair distribution of infrastructure in South Africa. It can be seen that cars cannot access the area where the funeral is being held as the coffin has to be carried up the hill. The burial on the mountain seems to be a tradition that has been going on for a while, as she refers to the deceased miner as one of the young man who would have carried the coffins of other people up the hill before his death. As represented in *Marikana the Musical*, contemporary theatre makers suggest that South Africa remains one of the most unequal societies in the world today.

Plutocracy

In this part of the paper, I argue that Sekhabi's *Marikana the Musical* represents South Africa as a Plutocracy. I use Mahbubani's argument that a plutocracy is the opposite of a democracy (2022:3). He explains that unlike a democracy, which is structured to cater for the interests of the majority, a plutocracy 'is structured to take care of the interests of a small affluent minority' (2022:3). Although this is not pointed out in the play, it can be read as a problematic aspect of the play. In Sekhabi's musical, the miners beg to have a meeting with the mine management, and the management refuses to meet up with the miners. The miners are a majority while the mine management are the minority. The mine management refuses to cater for the interest of the majority, explaining that an agreement between the mine and the union representers have signed an agreement that pertains to the remuneration package (Sekhabi 2014).

When South Africa became a democracy, most people envisaged a socially and economically equal state after apartheid, where there was a level playing field, and where all could live well and in harmony. However, it seems that the inequalities of the colonial and apartheid periods have persisted and inequality has become worse, though now the country is apparently governed by a small and wealthy Black and White elites. The system largely benefits the rich while the poor majority, who are still mainly Black, continue to be plunged in unjust livelihoods. A complementary comment on the definition of plutocracy is presented by Trask (2004). He explains that plutocracy is concerned with a type of government in which men of wealth use political means to increase their wealth through exploiting workers and the resources of a country (2004:10). In this study, a plutocracy is a system that favours the rich over the poor – one that does not enable the poor to enjoy similar opportunities and resources as the rich. The argument herein is that the unequal distribution of resources and capabilities hinder the poor the opportunity to enjoy accessibility to a just system and processes. Because of this, the poor are forced to continue living in poverty and continue to be exploited by the rich. These sentiments are expressed by Vukani in the play, *Marikana the Musical*, when he commands that the '… exploitation must stop and it must stop now' (2014:8). This supports Mahbubani and Trask's definitions of plutocracy.

Monbiot (2024) states that challenging or protesting against rich corporations often results in people being crushed with heavy penalties. He asks a question: 'Why are peaceful protesters treated like terrorists while the

actual terrorists often remain unmolested by the law?' He argues that prisoners in the United Kingdom who commit serious crimes such as rape and murder are being released from prisons as the explanation is that there is overcrowding in the prisons. Ironically, the spaces of these prisoners who committed heinous crimes are then filled with political prisoners – these are prisoners who dare to challenge the powerful or big corporates in the country. Thus the justice system is used to protect plutocracy. In Sekhabi's representation of the Marikana massacre, the miners are calling for a just course, demanding a fair wage increase, but in so doing, they are challenging a big corporation, a mine. Hence, they are perceived as criminals by the corporation and the state and this is seen through the heavy police presence at the mine. The police Commander (a character who is also known as Major-General Nyoka) receives strict instructions from Commissioner, a senior police officer (Sekhabi 2014:43). It is evident that Commissioner is receiving his instructions from another office to act swiftly as he continuously puts pressure on Nyoka and makes reference to informers who are sending information to him. Commissioner eventually takes over the operation and refuses to engage in negotiations; 34 miners die. Besides the 34 miners who were killed by the police, 259 miners were arrested. This is after the police fired 284 rounds of lethal ammunition. A plutocracy tends to use its police force to protect the rich and their resources or infrastructure such as the Lonmin mine. Before the shooting begins, Commissioner says: 'This thing must end today; it is costing the state a lot of money*'* (2014:44). He says this immediately after taking over as commander of the operation. This supports the argument that a plutocracy tends to protect or serve the interests of the minority, in this case, the minority refers to the mining corporation and the so-called state. Finally, it can be seen that distributive and decolonial justice cannot thrive in a plutocracy as the theory of equal distribution strives towards fairness and redress from the coloniality of the past and present.

Conclusion

This paper presented Aubrey Sekhabi's *Marikana the Musical*, as a call for distributive and decolonial justice, using references to the theme of unfairness in the play. The article argued that theatre makers of contemporary South Africa expose unjust issues that present the country as one of the most unequal societies in the world, an observation that was made by delegates of a social justice conference. It went on to explain justice as a framework that is

concerned with fairness and an instrument that measures the behaviours and actions of people in a society. Ideas about distributive and decolonial justice were placed into conversation with Sekhabi's musical. Furthermore, the aim of this article was to argue that South Africa is a Plutocracy as represented in Sekhabi's musical. In conclusion, the theory of distributive justice can assist in the achievement of equal access and fair distribution of capabilities and fair distribution of resources in the country, thereby ensuring that plutocracy does not thrive.

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Becoming a Musician in Black South African Communities: Domains of Music Learning, Training and Apprenticeship Processes

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Abstract

Music education encompasses both formal instruction in institutions and informal community apprenticeships. In South Africa, formal music education is limited to a specific social class or race, thus creating substantial barriers for disadvantaged aspiring musicians due to resource scarcity and high entry requirements. This makes it nearly impossible for individuals from poor backgrounds without prior school-level music education to enter university music programmes. Despite this, young Black musicians with impressive knowledge and skills are emerging in local communities. Something must account for this development. This research utilised a qualitative methodology to explore the success factors in non-formal, informal and formal music skill acquisition domains. As an empirical study, it relies on insights gathered through interviews and focus group discussions with musicians. Logic dictates that restricted access to formal training for black students must lead to a shortage of high-calibre musicians. However, the rising number of proficient musicians suggests the presence of equally, if not better, alternative training pathways. These pathways often derive from church and family influences. The success stems from blending diverse backgrounds with advancing technology, which democratises music lesson access for self-taught musicians lacking university education.

Keywords: music education, formal training, informal apprenticeship, community-based learning, bandstand learning, self-taught, non-formal training

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Introduction

It is crucial to investigate the interplay between non-formal, informal and formal music knowledge acquisition in the context of Black South Africa. Children are musically socialised while still in their mother's womb (Ullal-Gupta *et al.* 2013; Al-Qahtani 2005), in the homestead (Trehub 2019; Kreutzer 2001) progressing through kindergarten, school and, if privileged enough, tertiary institutions. From the womb to the tomb, African children engage with music, including learning, through non-formal and informal means. Only those who eventually make a living as music educators, or to a lesser extent as performers, encounter some kind of formal music training. This interplay between non-formal, informal, and formal music knowledge acquisition is a continuing subject of investigation, particularly concerning youth music training. For instance, Douglas and Dickens (2016) examined the musical experiences of London's youth in informal, formal, and non-formal environments. Scholars posit that conventional music education may encompass these domains. It is suggested that combining these three methods could enhance popular music education (Ng 2020; Colardyn & Bjornavold 2004).

These are formal, non-formal, and informal music learning approaches. Formal music education is structured and occurs in schools, focusing on music theory, history, performance, and composition. Non-formal music education offers flexibility and occurs in community settings or online, enhancing personal and cultural competencies. Informal learning is unstructured, occurring through personal experiences and self-directed activities, influenced by factors such as age and culture. To the three, I propose the introduction of a fourth domain, namely incidental music learning. Incidental music learning is unplanned and happens through everyday activities (Ellis 1995; Sharples 2019). A pertinent example in the African context would be the accrual of music performative skills by initiates who primarily undergo healing training processes. These four music learning domains are crucial to the successful acquisition of music skills in Black communities in South Africa. The extent to which they are present in the gospel music training spaces was the subject of this research.

It is important to note that music education, as defined here above, is not the sole method of acquiring self-sufficiency. Other forms of music learning are more prevalent and equally effective. Weidner (2018) identifies music apprenticeship as one of the most formidable alternative approaches that involve transferring music skills across various settings within broader

transactional frameworks. Like music education, which is school-based, this approach equally, or perhaps differently, enables 'student' musicians to develop competencies that foster musical proficiencies such as critical thinking, reflexivity and dexterity expected of 'educated' motor skills. The strength of music apprenticeship lies in its broad reach that typically transcends formal, non-formal, and informal boundaries. Apprenticeship generally offers a form of situated and embodied learning, which aligns more closely with professional practice compared to the distanced and theoretical approach often encountered in formal education. This model enables learners to engage directly with experts and the community of practice, thereby providing a more authentic learning experience (Groth 2024).

This paper employs the terms 'music education' and 'music appreciation' interchangeably as they both encompass aspects of the music learning process. The study aims to demonstrate a hypothesis that the apprenticeship model, as it exists within the Black gospel community, is potentially more effective in training musicians. This empirical research adopts an Africa-sensed theoretical approach, integrating various methodologies, including phenomenology and ordinary African musicology philosophy, to investigate music training within the context of the gospel music apprenticeship phenomenon.

Shokane and Masoga (2018) contend that research in and about Africa must primarily be relevant to Africa and her people. Only then will it become beneficial through effective interventions, social change, and knowledge production that respects and empowers local communities. The Africa-sensed approach ultimately seeks to decolonise and transform research methodologies in African studies.

Phenomenology is a philosophical method that investigates human consciousness's experiences and perceptions, focusing on their essences, meanings, and necessary relations. It endeavours to transcend the mind's inclination for abstraction and conceptual frameworks, striving for an unbiased perspective to engage with and examine immediate experiences directly. Insofar as Africa is concerned, Mutema (2003) finds phenomenology particularly valuable for studying indigenous knowledge systems. Phenomenology, when applied to music, emphasises direct aesthetic experiences over naturalistic methods, focusing on engagement with the music. It addresses fundamental questions about the nature, reality, and spatial, temporal, and consciousness-related aspects of musical works (Martinelli 2020; Medova & Kirichenko 2020; Szyszkowska 2018; Dura 2006).

To further localise it to a particular cultural context, Mapaya and Mugovhani (2018) propose 'Ordinary African Musicology' as a philosophical approach to analysis. Whereas a phenomenon can be observed, language would be better used to express ideas and thus form the basic tool for analysis. The combination of phenomenology and ordinary African musicology represents ethnographic qualitative research designs that facilitate the exploration of investigative and contextual questions beyond the scope of a single methodological approach (Krueger 1987).

On the 'non-formal' Music Training/ Apprenticeship

The discourse concerning the informal realm or sphere of music appreciation engenders two institutions that are instrumental in the initial socialisation and training processes, namely the family and the church. The family connection to tradition, culture, and values is a crucial precursor to understanding how and what kind of musical sensibilities prevail in a particular context. Equally significant in expanding musical perceptions is the role of the Church, where mainstream denominations and their Pentecostal and African-initiated Church variations influence the musical direction of aspiring musicians who, by default, belong to one church or another.

Family as a Site for Incidental Music Apprenticeship

Music apprenticeship within the family context is incidental, with no obvious syllabus or curriculum to follow, no so-called trained professionals to provide guidance and no deliberate intent to acquire musical skills or knowledge. The family is the initial institution that initiates a child's lifelong journey of exploration and learning (Dukaļska 2021). As part of this process, children become familiar with family and communal customs and traditions, and music is an important aspect of this unfolding cultural universe. For instance, singing is the soundtrack of all rituals – from soothing the baby to interment (Onwekwe 2019). Accordingly, families, including children, frequently employ aural-oral sustained strategies as a means of transmitting and acquiring music skills across generations. Although the purpose may not be overtly stated, the inclusion of pedagogical suggestions implies a conscious effort to acquire music skills. This is supported by Mapaya's (2011) identification of several family-based music-learning strategies, such as immersion, isolation, imitation, drilling, and coercion, which encompass various stages of a child's

development.

Given their prevalence as typical family and communal socialisation milestones, it is reasonable to assume that all African children undergo some form of music apprenticeship. This is supported by the fact that all community members in African societies actively participate in various music-making performance settings (Barber 1997). Participation in performative music engagements can take many forms, such as *go phaphatha* (clapping complementary rhythms), *go dumela* (singing or humming a refrain musical phrase), *go thekela* (sporadic flirting and decorative dancing), or simply *go letša mphuludi* (ululating).

As per the African worldview, individuals from families said to be 'called' by communal deities into sacred functions such as music-making in rituals are recognised by all, akin to individuals born into royal families, families responsible for divination and healing, or families that are custodians of rainmaking rituals. In most African societies, including among Sesotho speakers, such recognition is often framed in terms of the child having taken after a particular family member(s). The Bukusu people of Kenya believe that '*kalonda kumusambwa kwe bakuka bewe*', implying that the child has inherited the spirit of their ancestors. As a result, it is expected that children from musical families should excel in music-making and performance. This expectation is based on the understanding that musical abilities are genetically transmitted from one generation to the next, despite the presence of a musical apprenticeship environment in such families.

Unfortunately, African family values and customs have been continually eroded by colonial institutions such as the Church, media, invasive technologies, cell phones, and Western-modelled education (Katundano 2020). Consequently, the reliability and durability of these methods for acquiring music skills have become weakened and fragile, rendering them unable to withstand persistent disruptions and erosions. Regrettably, this has resulted in the diminishment of family-based modes of talent nurturing to the point of insignificance.

Non-formal Music Apprenticeship and the Church

In South Africa, non-formal music training and apprenticeship 'pedagogies' are found in most churches, especially the African-initiated churches (AICs) such as the Zion Christian Church, African Israel Church Nineveh, iBandla lamaNazaretha, and churches such as the Holy Ghost Church of East Africa.

In these AICs, singing is influenced by the African performative ethos, and there is typically little emphasis on rehearsals since singing and performance are organic and often spontaneous. During the mass singing, there is no discernible separation between the congregants. Collectively, they form a unified musical entity that occasionally comprises distinguishable subsets, such as male or female choirs. Apart from their musical function, these subsets serve as essential social structures within the church. They contribute to fostering a sense of belonging and significance for those affiliated with the church.

Because musical performances are inherently organic, the acquisition of performative skills is usually incidental. Participation in church activities enables individuals to acquire musical proficiency unconsciously. The traditional method of identifying music leaders involves recognising inherent qualities, which is analogous to the procedures observed within African family and community settings. Natural talent in leadership or singing is identified and then afforded the opportunity to fulfil their designated roles. It is undeniable that music apprenticeship within AICs is informal, reflecting the ongoing tradition of family and communal music instruction.

The mainline Church tradition has a well-established and respected position in formal educational, artistic, and architectural institutions (von Simson 2016). In contrast, the Mainline Church (MC) in South African villages and townships lacks a vibrant music environment, with choral singing being the only form of music-making, to a lesser extent. During an interview, choir adjudicators Nick and Christina Hoffman asserted that African choral music ought to be valued for its own intrinsic merit. They posited that choral singing is as laudable as any other genre.

Formal music education is not always accessible in Black communities, so MCs rely on informal methods, such as apprenticeship or non-formal training, to enhance their choristers' skills. This typically involves forming groups and committing to regular rehearsals. Ideally, the church could hire a trained or experienced musician to teach music skills, such as singing scales, voice production, and tonic-solfa reading, to the groups. However, in most cases, music skills are acquired informally through incidental learning or social needs. Joining the choir is often a social necessity rather than a formal requirement. Even without regular rehearsals or sporadic sharing of musical information, many South Africans possess the ability to sing in a choir informally. Being a choir member is sufficient for managing this type of music apprenticeship.

On the Formal Music Training/ Apprenticeship

The relationship between Western classical music education and Mainline Churches (MCs) is analogous to that between MCs and universities. Western classical music has been employed in religious services for several centuries, thereby establishing a lasting connection. The use of classical music in liturgical services by the Roman Catholic Church is a time-honoured tradition that dates back to the Gregorian chant era. According to John McManners (2003), composers such as John Sebastian Bach, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Georg Friedrich Händel derived inspiration from their religious convictions and primarily composed music for religious purposes.

Notably, this era's extensive body of musical works serves as the foundation for the music education curriculum. From a Chinese perspective, classical music is highly valued in students' music education and holds significant importance in fostering music literacy, particularly in the context of higher vocational colleges (Huifang & Hao 2021). The centrality of Western classical music is entrenched by concepts such as 'musical arts' as propagated by scholars associated with the Pan-African Society for Musical Arts Education. Nzewi (2007) explains the rationale behind the term to frame or integrate music, dance, and what he refers to as plastic art as a single entity. This concept is closely linked to the Western Art Music version. This serves as a prime example of the lingering influence of Western classical music. Indigenous African music is only recognised as such in relation to classical music.

It is widely acknowledged that formal music education is highly valued within the white sector of South African society. This appreciation, combined with their higher levels of financial resources, has enabled the MCs in these communities to employ university graduates as organists, music directors, and music education leaders. It is worth noting that a substantial portion of the music curriculum is geared towards producing concert musicians who can serve as church musicians, thereby perpetuating the cycle.

Kindergarten Music and School Music Education

In South Africa, formal education encompasses kindergarten, preschool, primary, secondary, and high school (Venter 2022). In both countries, students who exhibit exceptional talent and commitment may pursue further education in music by enrolling in programmes at colleges or universities (McPherson

1997). Some children may have been exposed to music at home and may come from musical families, possessing either innate talent or skill. It is crucial to nurture the initial musical aptitude of children (McPherson 1997). Music, like other art forms, can be a powerful tool for teaching various aspects of the curriculum. This suggests that children possess an innate understanding of music. They may all have needed to learn new rhymes.

Learning music for its own sake depends on the teacher's abilities in front of the class. It is crucial that the musical experience, even when directed by the teacher, remains connected to the child's culture. Emphasis should be placed on African rhymes, as Muwati *et al*. (2016) state, 'provide a curriculum of life and living that is indentured to African people's agenda for child growth and human development [while Western rhymes] canalise African children's consciousness along the path of morbid Western traditions and value systems'. Instead of introducing 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star' and 'Baa Baa Black Sheep' too quickly, cultural rhymes from the home environment should be incorporated into play-based activities designed to nurture and enhance social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development. Thus, in using music to learn other subjects and exchanging nursery rhymes, the music education domain remains non-formal, despite the teacher's direction, structure, and mediation.

Music education is primarily offered in white-only schools in South Africa, while townships and rural schools do not offer it at all. Hence, the policy's stipulations regarding music education are rendered immaterial. Consequently, the tradition of high school bands is non-existent. The absence of music activities in schools deprives learners of an essential avenue for emotional and personal development (Ros-Morente *et al.* 2019). Instead of engaging in band activities, learners often turn to DJing as an alternative. However, the usability of DJing in education remains inconclusive. The DJ phenomenon is typically associated with the rap music genre, which is believed to be disruptive (Au 2005). Nevertheless, some scholars argue that rap music can be positively utilised in counselling students (Gonzalez & Hayes 2009). Currently, there is no DJ curriculum or designated space within the music curriculum for the study of DJing in African universities. Although DJing may have social benefits, it remains an area that requires further exploration. Compared to participating in music activities, DJing still has some way to go in terms of establishing its merits.

Traditionally, postgraduate music studies have focused primarily on classical Western music. This has led to the advanced study of Western classical music being situated within the field of musicology. In the 19th

century, the need to align with the colonial project necessitated the development of comparative musicology. For African scholars, the choice of where, when, and with whom to study African music is between ethnomusicology and African musicology. However, the relevance of this level of study to this paper is assumed to be limited, as it is presumed that at this level, we are working with musicians who may have passed their active performing lives or have left performance in favour of an academic career.

On Informal Music Training and Apprenticeship

Informal music training is defined as the self-guided and self-directed study of music or musical instruments in non-traditional settings. This type of learning encompasses concepts such as 'self-taught musicians', 'the bandstand', 'learning on the road', and 'online lessons' (Hess 2020). Informal music training can be an effective way for individuals to enhance their musical ability and creativity. In popular music, informal approaches to instrument learning often lead to innovative and unconventional methods of music creation. Jazz and popular music genres have produced numerous musicians who exemplify this phenomenon, including Wes Montgomery, Thelonious Monk, and Django Reinhardt.

Self-study, which is closely linked to informal music study, is often seen as an alternative to formal education due to the inability to enrol in an institution for 'formal' education. As a pedagogy, informal self-study places the aspirant musician at the centre of their learning. They determine what to learn, when to learn it, with whom to learn it, and how to learn it. Aspirant musicians can choose their own learning path, pace, and content, which is suitable for their career goals.

Similarly, accomplished self-taught musicians are also attracted to the church. It is unclear whether the attraction lies in the gospel teachings of the church, the power of its music, or both. Some churches run large praise and worship ministries that rival many secular music genres.

Gospel music has emerged as a thriving industry in many African countries, including South Africa, attracting musicians from diverse backgrounds. In South Africa, gospel music has become a viable career option, with musicians viewing participation in praise and worship not only as a service to the church but also as a lucrative profession. The growth of the gospel music industry in South Africa can be attributed to several factors, such as: 1) the expansion of the Charismatic Church Movement, resulting in the

establishment of numerous Pentecostal churches in various locations; 2) the large size and impressive scale of these churches, often referred to as megachurches; 3) the support of the corporate sector for gospel music festivals, such as the annual Joyous Celebration concerts led by Lindelani Mkhize and the Spirit of Praise project by Benjamin Dube; and 4) the presence of gospel music on South African television, which has helped to portray the industry as thriving and successful. The annual awards ceremonies also help to raise the profile of the gospel music industry, albeit primarily as a television show.

When compared to the concept of 'big-time evangelism', as described by Gordon and Hancock (2005), the popularity of the music of charismatic churches (CCs) is more readily apparent. This type of evangelism involves large-scale events and highly organised campaigns led by charismatic preachers or leaders with the aim of converting as many people as possible to their denomination of Christianity. One of the most well-known big-time evangelists was Billy Graham, who began his ministry in the 1940s and went on to become one of the most influential religious leaders of the 20th century. His crusades often drew tens of thousands of attendees and were characterised by his powerful preaching style, emotional appeal, and focus on personal salvation (Wacker 2014).

Today, the practice of big-time evangelism is widespread among various religious groups worldwide, with each employing different methods but aiming to spread their message and convert individuals (Bruns 1993). This musical aspect often takes the form of grandiose performances. The Hillsong Church in Australia, based in Sydney, is an exemplary example of this, as it demonstrates substantial investment, branding, and showmanship. The church services are nothing short of spectacular (Wade 2016). Hillsong has significantly contributed to defining the modern blueprint for church music, particularly in terms of attaching glamour to praise and worship. The repertoire is focused on celebratory singing, dancing, praise, and worship, and the harmonic structure of most songs follows the traditional tonic-subdominant functional harmony, which is familiar to most churchgoers. The study of gospel music in South Africa is akin to that in other countries, with the majority of musicians being self-taught and following the patterns established by early crusaders.

Gospel music education is primarily disseminated through informal channels, such as learning from seasoned musicians, attending concerts, or receiving informal mentorship from experienced practitioners. Formal training programmes for gospel music are rarely provided by institutions, whether

operating independently or in collaboration with a church. For those seeking advanced training in gospel music, studying jazz music has been used as a reference, particularly its improvisation and harmony aspects, as noted by Legg and Philpott (2015) and Smallwood (1980). It is essential to note that online music education is a relatively recent, potent, and effective method that has gained significant popularity. Lessons are accessible at any time, seven days a week, from the comfort of one's own space. However, one drawback of this approach is that students cannot observe master musicians at work in the same way they would in a bandstand environment. Additionally, students may not adhere to the demanding learning path required for their development, leading some to adopt a 'noodling' approach (Claxton 2006:352).

Church and the Confluence of Differing Apprenticeships

The church serves as a unique confluence of informal, non-formal, and formal music apprenticeship traditions. Musicians from diverse backgrounds converge in this space, including trained musicians, self-taught musicians, and naturally talented novices. Schröder (2021) identifies a similar trend in American and German case studies, where the church functions as a nexus of music training and apprenticeship traditions. The path to the music ministry may involve studying secular music, which takes advantage of existing music training in formal institutions or may be need-based due to 'musical and pragmatic considerations' (Schröder 2021:210). These different musical skill acquisition paths, experiences, and traditions coexist within the church music-making space, often intersecting and influencing one another, as expressed in the perceptions of those who uphold these traditions.

Hani Mutele, an accomplished musician with a university education, experienced a tense environment when appointed to direct music at his church. He aimed to establish fundamental musical literacy among the band members. However, communication among the band members proved to be more unpredictable than expected. Furthermore, trust between Mutele and his less-skilled colleagues was notably lacking. Although Mutele held a university degree, self-taught musicians, such as Daniel Mamphogoro (personal communication) and Mahlori Chauke (personal communication), a university-trained jazz pianist, criticised certain approaches adopted by schooled musicians. According to Chauke, university-trained church musicians' musicality is constrained by the rigidity of Western harmony curricula's rules governing vertical and static chords. He suggests that schooled musicians can

benefit from replacing the conventional I-IV-V harmonic structures with a movement-oriented playing paradigm, in which harmony is primarily viewed as simultaneous voice movements. This approach, Chauke argues, can lead to enhanced hearing and an abundance of innovative harmonic movements. In this paradigm, the appropriateness of a particular harmony is determined by the ear rather than by imposed rules. As rock guitarist Eddie van Halen famously stated, 'to hell with the rules[!] If it sounds right, then it is'. This perspective on music liberates church musicians, whether formally trained or not, to effectively function in a praise and worship context.

Sifiso Siziba (personal communication), a university-educated musician, argues that self-taught church musicians often overplay their instruments in support of the schooled musicians. These musicians learn from social media and practice in their own spaces, but they tend to be louder and less sensitive to music. Sifiso characterises them as egoistic, but this may not be a fair assessment. For example, Alex Odiekila (personal communication), a self-taught church musician, has acquired enough skills to work as a teacher and musical director alongside his university-educated counterparts. He does not experience tension in the church and instead values the opportunity to collaborate with other musicians, regardless of their training background.

Despite the uncomfortable relationships among some church musicians, the environment is conducive to the effective transfer of music skills. Informal exposure plays a minimal role in the study of CC music. All musicians come from families that have been exposed to informal music absorption. Depending on the church, the skills acquired during this stage can be enhanced or restricted. This modification of the musical future takes place in kindergarten and continues through school, where the demands of a curriculum geared towards a career undermine arts education.

Conclusion

South Africa is currently experiencing a surge in the number of skilled musicians. Although some of these musicians have attended formal music training or hold university degrees, a significant number have taught themselves. When it comes to instrumental proficiency, it is difficult to distinguish between schooled musicians and their self-taught counterparts. This suggests that there are effective alternatives to formal music education. This study aimed to explore non-formal and informal options for music education. The Church plays a crucial role in providing music education by

offering open entry requirements, in contrast to universities' meritocratic systems that accept or reject students. In the church environment, musicians from diverse backgrounds, including non-formal, formal, and apprenticeship, come together to make music, despite potential biases and suspicions. Furthermore, the frequency of music-making opportunities, ranging from rehearsals to weekly performances during church services, provides an ideal environment for studying musicians. This is beneficial because aspiring musicians can develop their musical identities within praise and worship groups. Some go on to establish themselves in the music business, while others become ministers or leaders of churches. However, these opportunities can be expensive if you do not obtain music theory entry grades or tuition fees.

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Sign Language in the Multilingual Space: The Case of English First Additional Language for Deaf Learners in Limpopo Province

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Abstract

Sign Language has been recognised as an important language in the education of deaf learners, meant, inter alia, to redress the neglect of the deaf community. It has been recognised as the twelfth official language in South Africa. This paper is based on the research about the challenges that teachers of English First Additional Language face when teaching English grammar to deaf learners. The research was conducted in four special needs schools in the Limpopo Province in South Africa. A qualitative approach was adopted where interviews with sixteen English First Additional Language teachers who teach deaf learners were conducted. The data collected through open-ended interviews were analysed thematically. Findings revealed that very few institutions of higher learning in South Africa offer Sign Language as a course. As a result, teachers who teach deaf learners were recruited without any knowledge of Sign Language resulting in them having had to learn Sign Language at the schools where they were employed. The main recommendation of this paper is that Sign Language should be included in the curriculum of teacher education if inclusive education is to be realised. This will go a long way into addressing inequalities suffered by differently abled persons in education.

Keywords: English First Additional Language, inclusive education, multilingualism, Sign Language, Sign Language dialect, Sign Language interpreters

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Introduction

The education of the deaf community has been neglected for too long. However, there has been good progress in South Africa after adopting South African Sign Language as the twelfth official language (Mothapo 2023). Nonetheless, there is a need to continuously interrogate pressing challenges encountered in the education of deaf learners. This study is particularly concerned with the teaching of English First Additional Language (EFAL) grammar to deaf learners. This is because whilst sign language is the medium of instruction for deaf learners, all content subjects are taught and assessed in English. This means, even deaf learners are expected to write in English for assessment. Therefore, understanding the challenges faced by EFAL teachers of deaf learners will go a long way into improving the performance of deaf learners.

This study was conducted in Limpopo Province special needs schools that cater for deaf learners. Before reporting the findings of the study, it is important to historically situate the education of deaf people in South Africa. It is equally important to look at sign language as the medium of instruction for deaf learners, and to contextualise the teaching of deaf learners.

Official Languages Pre- and Post-1994

There has been a lot of changes in language policy in the history of South Africa. This history is characterised by the marginalisation of African languages through Dutchification that started in 1652 with the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck, Anglicisation that started as early as 1875 when the British established its colony, and Afrikanisation that gave privileged power to Afrikaans from 1948 (Cele 2021; Makalela 2022). In fact, after the Anglo-Boer war and the subsequent formation of the Union of South Africa, there was a rapid development of Afrikaans which within a short span of time had become a fully-fledged language. This development gave way to a bilingual language policy consisting of English and Afrikaans. This arrangement persisted for the duration of the apartheid regime and was formally dismantled when the apartheid system fell in 1994.

It is obvious that the bilingual language policy operated on an exclusionary scheme as it totally disregarded the existence of African languages (Marjorie 2010). None of the whites had the need or the requirement to learn any African language but all blacks were to learn English and Afrikaans. On the contrary, African languages were used as a tool to divide

and rule where Africans were segregated along linguistic lines. In education, African languages were used to perpetuate the infamous Bantu education, which was instituted to produce Africans that would be hewers of wood and drawers of water (Makalela 2022; Reagan 1987; Alexander 1989).

It should also be highlighted that African languages were not the only excluded languages in the bilingual language policy. Sign Language which is essential for the deaf community was equally excluded (Stemela-Zali Kathard & Sefotho 2022). This means that there was no regard for the deaf community and their education was never catered for. It would therefore be expected that the same marginalisation suffered by blacks in general because their languages were never recognised would be suffered by the deaf (Kelly, McKinney & Swift 2022).

After the dismantling of the apartheid system, English and Afrikaans continued to be official languages (Cele 2023). The retention of these languages meant that no change had occurred. That is, where English was used as the medium of instruction in schools and in higher education institutions, the *status quo* was maintained. Nonetheless, the elevation of the nine African languages into official status restored the recognition of the marginalised languages (Ntombela 2016). However, very little change occurred in the education sector because English (and Afrikaans) continued to be dominant languages of teaching and learning. With regards to Sign Language, the 1996 Constitution mentions it as an important language in the inclusive education policy. It was not listed among the eleven official languages. Nevertheless, as late as 2023, the National Assembly approved the amendment of the Constitution to include Sign Language as the twelfth official language (Mothapo 2023).

Sign Language

Ordinarily, children acquire language from home. When they start schooling, they already have a language with which to access education. Most deaf children are born to speaking parents and it takes time before they recognize that the child is deaf (Lillo-Martin & Henner 2021; Meghdari, Alemi, Zakipour & Kashanian 2019). This usually means that a deaf child does not acquire sign language from home but learns it from school (Lillo-Martin & Henner 2021). There is a marked difference between signed language and spoken languages. However, like spoken languages, sign languages have own variations including dialects and idiolects (Lillio-Martin & Henner 2021). Spoken languages have two modes of output: oral and written. That is, interlocutors who speak, interact

with each other orally and can transfer that interaction into writing, and writing is language specific. Sign language is signed but in the educational transaction, learners must write, and the question is what language do they write because sign language is signed? In other words, sign language is not necessarily isiZulu, Sepedi, Xitsonga or English (Howerton-Fox & Falk 2019). Notwithstanding that, in the education sector, learners who sign would mostly be taught to reduce their writing into English.

Teaching of Deaf Learners

Inclusive education suggests that learners who are differently-abled must not be segregated into own classrooms; they must be part of the mainstream education (Mkama 2021). That means deaf learners would be expected to be part of hearing learners which immediately poses challenges. The idea behind mixed-ability groups is that the majority of abled learners should not regard differently-abled ones as abnormal and the differently-abled ones should not regard themselves as belonging to a different race of humanity. Many teachers who teach deaf learners encounter sign language for the first time (Kelly, McKinney & Swift 2022). As a result, deaf learners do not get maximum attention for their tuition. It might seem that the system was built with the expectation that teachers who teach deaf learners might not be proficient in sign language. This is because there is a provision for schools that have deaf learners to have sign language specialists who are essentially sign language interpreters. Sign language interpreters are meant to act as intermediaries between deaf learners and their teachers, specifically placed to help teachers with sign language (Rogers 2022). However, the reality is that many schools that cater for deaf learners do not have sign language interpreters. But the biggest question is why teachers are not expected to be proficient in sign language prior to engaging with deaf learners?

Deaf learners rely on sign language for tuition (Bintoro, Fahrrurozi, Kusmawati & Dewi 2023). Teaching therefore utilises sign language for input. In this case sign language is a communicative tool that assists interlocutors make sense of the world around them. Deaf learners therefore interact with education matter through sign language. In other words, knowledge is acquired through sign language. However, the expression of the knowledge they had acquired and internalised through sign language is expected to be produced through writing especially in the mainstream educational context (Kellogg 2021). Writing is language specific and is often reflective of the language of

input. For instance, when the medium of instruction is English, knowledge is produced through the medium of English. But sign language is not English or Afrikaans. That is, the grammar of sign language cannot be said to be equivalent to any spoken language as such (Akach 1997). In order for deaf learners to represent knowledge they had acquired through sign language; it means they also need to proceed to learn the language of output. The biggest challenge they encounter is that the two grammars are not synchronised, which often makes the output language incorrectly express what has been internalised. This problem has often made teachers of deaf learners to wear the attitude that deaf learners can never rise beyond high school. And the assessment scheme does not take into account the context of deaf learners' learning.

The normal recruitment route is that qualified teachers are placed at specific subjects to which they qualify. They are expected to have proficient language of teaching and learning; for instance, if the school is an Afrikaans medium school, it would be pointless to appoint a teacher who is not conversant in Afrikaans. It is puzzling that when teachers are recruited to teach deaf learners, proficiency in sign language is never a requirement (Sibanda 2015). This immediately compromises the education that deaf learners receive. If the input language is poor, how can the output language be expected to be good? Another problem is that teacher training does not seem to anticipate that teachers might find themselves teaching deaf learners. Consequently, teacher training does not offer sign language in the majority of cases, yet in the context of inclusive education, they will certainly encounter deaf learners in their careers. This challenge is most prominent in output language education. For instance, the teaching of specific grammar items of English requires meticulous explanations through sign language which the teacher will not be able to if he/she is not proficient, and there is no sign language interpreter.

Research Methodology

The study adopted an inclusive education framework (Mitchell 2005; Walton 2011). In this framework, differently-abled learners are included in mainstream education. This inclusion is in the form of subjects offered to differently-abled learners. In this case, it is English First Additional Language offered to deaf learners. In addition, the study adopted needs analysis framework in order to account for EFAL needs for deaf learners (Johns 1991).

The study adopted an exploratory design which was concerned with exploring the challenges faced by English First Additional Language teachers

in teaching deaf learners. An exploratory research design is used to make preliminary investigations in unknown arrears of teaching (Makri 2020). Therefore, exploratory research design was fit for this study because it allowed the researchers to find new information about challenges encountered by EFAL teachers in teaching grammar to deaf learners.

A qualitative approach was chosen in order to get in-depth information through open-ended interviews about the challenges faced by EFAL teachers who teach deaf learners. A qualitative approach is in sync with studies that are conducted in the natural setting of the phenomenon (Silverman 2011). In this case, the study was conducted in schools where deaf learners are taught. The interviews were conducted with EFAL teachers who taught deaf learners, sign language interpreters and with EFAL Heads of Department.

The population of the study consisted of EFAL teachers who teach deaf learners at special needs schools in Limpopo Province. Three primary special needs schools and one secondary special needs school were purposively sampled. The four sampled schools that cater for deaf learners in Limpopo Province were Tshilidzini (primary school), Sedibeng (primary school), Setotolwane (secondary school) and Yingisani (primary school). However, Yingisani was not able to participate in the study. Both primary and secondary schools were sampled because they both offered EFAL to deaf learners. The study purposively sampled one EFAL HOD, one Sign Language interpreter and four EFAL teachers who teach deaf learners from each of the three sampled special needs schools.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with EFAL teachers, Sign Language interpreters and HODs. Whilst the EFAL teachers and Sign Language interpreters were interviewed at the same time, HODs were each interviewed separately. A total of 18 participants were interviewed. Interviews were recorded using an audio-recorder. Recorded data were then transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis. Needless to say, that all ethical considerations were followed such as informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality. The identities of the interviewees were kept anonymous and only codes were used.

Data Presentation and Analysis

As mentioned, after data were collected, they were analysed using thematic analysis. There are three themes that are reported in this article together with their sub-themes as captured in the table below:

Table 1: Themes and Sub-themes

Theme 1	Challenges of teaching EFAL grammar to deaf learners
Sub-theme	Sentence construction English Sign versus EFAL grammar Lack of SL training and exclusion of SL as teachers' requirement for employment SL multilingualism
Theme 2	EFAL grammar learners needs for successful learning
Sub-theme	Curriculum development for deaf teaching Independence
Theme 3	SL competency in teaching EFAL grammar to deaf learners
Sub-theme	Dialect as a problem for SL competency Lack of SL interpreter Training

Theme 1: Challenges of Teaching EFAL Grammar to Deaf Learners

Sub-theme 1: Sentence Construction

EFAL sentence construction is governed by English rules of syntax. Correct sentence construction is essential for speaking and writing with meaning. It seems deaf learners find it difficult to construct meaningful English sentences because of poor English grammar. The findings indicated that teachers find it difficult to teach sentence construction to deaf learners. This is substantiated by participant 12 who said:

> Our challenge is that even though these learners have primary background, teaching sentence construction is still a challenge. Our learners still continue to use SL sentence construction structure instead of the standard EFAL grammar. They continue to struggle in terms of language usage because their acquisition starts late at school. It is difficult for us to shift deaf learners from SL structures because they use these structures every day and it make sense to them (EFAL Educator 12).

Nunn (2022) underscores that deaf learners use SL as their first language. Nevertheless, the grammar of SL may be reflected in how they speak English.

The English spoken by deaf learners is called deaf English; for example, in SASL the sentence, 'She balls kicks' is acceptable in deaf English, but in EFAL it should be 'She kicks the ball.'

Sub-theme 2: English Sign versus EFAL Grammar

There are differences between English sign and EFAL grammar, which means that English for signing is not the same as EFAL writing. Nevertheless, English sign plays a role in the teaching and learning of deaf learners. The findings show that there is no correlation between English Sign and EFAL grammar. Participant 14 commented that:

> The thing is that even though deaf learners can write, they tend to confuse English Sign and EFAL grammar which at the end of the day affect the pace of teaching and learning especially in matric because from the past, it seems like their EFAL examination papers are marked by people who are not familiar with English Sign and continue to mark their exams focusing only on hearing people English grammar. It is a challenge because our learners hardly make it to tertiary. It is a concern to us as EFAL grammar teachers because our deaf learners are taken as those ones who cannot write using the correct grammatical structures (EFAL Educator 14).

Nunn (2022) indicate that deaf learners are not fully bilingual. This is because Sign language and English language are two different languages, each with its own grammar. The difficulty they face is that they can sign and be understood by speakers of different languages but when it comes into writing, in this case, they must follow the English grammar.

Sub-theme 3: Lack of SL Training and Exclusion of SL as Teachers' Requirement for Employment

For every department to have best performing staff, more effort is needed. Although teachers continue to be trained every year, little is done for those teachers who are teaching deaf learners. Teachers who teach deaf learners including EFAL grammar teachers do not get enough SL training. According to the findings, EFAL grammar teachers find it challenging and frustrating to teach deaf learners as they are not well-trained. Participant 4 confirmed that by saying:

> SL is difficult for us as teachers because we are not trained enough. Some of us came without knowing SL; we learnt it here at school (EFAL Educator 4).

Kis (2005) asserts that quality assurance is not fully followed by the Department of Basic Education because teachers who teach deaf learners do not fully perform their task as a result of lack of sign language training before employment.

Furthermore, different companies, organisations and institutions require suitable and specific qualifications for a position. This also happens in teaching positions in South African schools. On the contrary, this is not happening to those teachers who are employed to teach deaf learners. The findings indicate that SL qualification is never an employment requirement for EFAL grammar teachers who teach deaf learners. This is supported by participant 5 who says:

> Since SL is never a requirement for getting a job, we come here without knowing SL and it is a challenge because we take time to adapt to it as we are used to spoken language (EFAL Educator 5).

If teachers who teach deaf learners are not trained to use SL, deaf learners will not have quality education. This means that deaf learners are taught in a language they cannot understand. Most concerningly, teachers are thrown to a deep end, which is a frustrating experience.

Sub-theme 4: SL Multilingualism

Multilingualism is a continuous reality in teaching and learning. In fact, the language-in-education policy is premised on multilingualism. However, in deaf culture, multilingualism can be a difficult concept to deal with as it does not exist only in signing but in writing as well. The findings indicated that multilingualism in deaf community can affect teaching and learning of EFAL grammar as teachers find it confusing to use different signs in a classroom. Participant 15 confirmed this statement by stating that:

> Since we are the only secondary that accommodate deaf learners in the Limpopo province, we have a challenge is multilingualism in a sense that our learners come from different provinces and they come with

> their SL. It pauses a challenge because we are supposed to teach our SL before teaching EFAL grammar (EFAL Educator 15).

This means that learners with a different SL may believe that their language is not as important as the others', which may result in learners having low self-esteem and low confidence in the classroom. Also, multilingualism affects the relationship between learners and teachers, which may consequently affect the pass rate negatively. Multilingualism is considered as a challenge when teaching EFAL grammar to deaf learners. This is because teachers and deaf learners may have different SL depending on where they were schooling.

Theme 2: EFAL Grammar Learners' Needs for Successful Learning

Sub-theme 1: Curriculum Development for Deaf Learners

Teaching and learning are characterised by continuous development and revision of curriculum. However, this continuous development of the curriculum does not seem to happen in the teaching of deaf learners. The findings revealed that there is a need for curriculum development in the teaching of deaf learners, especially in language teaching. This finding was supported by Participant 3 who said:

> There should be development to develop SL content to proceed the learning teaching of EFAL grammar (EFAL Educator 3).

Sub-theme 2: Independence

In life, there is a stage where everyone is expected to be independent, especially in performing certain activities. Therefore, in a classroom where learners are taught, there is a space for independence especially when doing different activities and tasks. However, the findings revealed that deaf learners who learn EFAL grammar are not independent. This implies that learners cannot do on their own everything that is taught to them. In addition, deaf learners cannot easily do EFAL grammar activities and tasks independently. This means that independence is difficult for deaf learners and it negatively affects the teaching pace of EFAL grammatical aspects. Participant 4 supported this finding by saying:

> They struggle to work independently and they always need help. Deaf learners always need to be told that what they are always doing is correct (EFAL Educator 4).

Theme 3: SL Competency in Teaching EFAL Grammar to Deaf Learners

Sub-theme 1: Dialect as a Problem for SL Competency

Dialects exist in all languages. However, dialects sometimes can cause challenges, especially when it comes to teaching and learning. For example, dialects can be a problem when writing academic activities because there is a standard language that is expected to be used. Just like other languages, SL also has many dialects. The findings showed that EFAL grammar teachers who teach deaf learners have a problem when it comes to different SL dialects. This is because there are different dialects in different provinces and sometimes there is more than one dialect in one province. The competence of SL is not good especially for EFAL grammar teachers who teach deaf learners because they find it difficult to deal with different SLs from different locations and provinces. Limpopo learners from special needs schools come from different provinces and locations. In addition, SL dialects is a problem for EFAL grammar teachers because some try to learn SL on their own and most of them come to these schools without any SL knowledge. Therefore, it is challenging for teachers to teach EFAL grammar to deaf learners and being competent in using SL. There is therefore a need for teachers to be trained on SL. Participant 2 confirmed this by saying:

> No. My SL competence is not good. I will add on that. When I arrived here in Limpopo Province I found that they are using a different dialect of SL from the one I know which is the Eastern Cape SL. Therefore, the materials that we use are made from Western Cape dialect which is the one that is approved for teaching. So it is difficult because I am dealing with three different dialects at the same time and it needs patient (EFAL Educator 2).

Sub-theme 2: Lack of SL Interpreter

Teaching and learning environment require different needs based on the state of learners. In this case, in a classroom where deaf learners are taught there is

a need for assistance. Therefore, many EFAL grammar teachers who teach deaf learners cannot handle the process of teaching deaf learners on their own as their SL competency is not good or does not reach the expectations of teaching deaf learners. The findings revealed that EFAL grammar teachers who teach deaf learners need SL interpreters. This is because most of them cannot teach using SL perfectly or in a way that deaf learners can understand. For this reason, there is a need for SL interpreters for successful teaching and learning of deaf learners. It may be seen that EFAL grammar teachers who teach deaf learners cannot perform different teaching and learning activities without the help of SL interpreters who are the mediators between deaf learners and teachers in EFAL classrooms. Participant 3 confirmed this finding by stating that:

> I have learnt a lot since I came here in 2020. I had SL interpreter. I am still not really fine without SL interpreter even though I could try to teach alone (EFAL Educator 3).

Participant 4 further supported the finding by saying:

> To add on the participant three viewing, I will be interpreting while she is teaching EFAL grammar. She would observe what I am signing and try to sign on her own. She cannot fully do her classes using SL while I am not present as SL interpreter (SL Interpreter 4).

Sub-theme 3: Training

Training is one of the most important things especially for performing different tasks and activities that are work related. In this case, teachers who teach EFAL grammar to deaf learners need to be trained for SL. They must be competent when it comes to using SL. The findings confirmed that there is a need for EFAL grammar teachers to be trained for SL competency before coming to teach deaf learners. Participant 5 supported this finding by saying:

> As an EFAL grammar teacher who teach deaf learners, my SL still needs more training (EFAL Educator 5).

Discussion

Sentence construction is at the heart of grammar. Learners who have learnt a language should be able to write correct grammatical sentences. However,

EFAL teachers face challenges in teaching grammar to deaf learners because of the conflict between English grammar and deaf English grammar. According to Real South African Sign Language (2024), the basic sentence pattern for South African Sign Language is Subject, Object, Verb (e.g., Boy Goat Kill) as opposed to the basic English sentence pattern which is Subject, Verb, Object (e.g., The Boy Kill the Goat). This means that before learners can acquire English language grammar, they should attain Sign Language grammar. These are two different languages that have own grammar. Sign language differs from spoken language in that hands are used instead of voice. Moreover, writing does not follow the same grammar of signing; this means that sentences constructed through sign language cannot be transferred into writing as they are. Learners must learn sentence construction for writing purposes as required for EFAL acquisition. This is where the challenge is.

Another challenge has to do with lack of training and the fact that SL is not a requirement for employment (Sibanda 2015). It is intriguing that teachers who must teach deaf learners are not expected to know SL prior to resuming their teaching duties (Kelly *et al*. 2022). It also does not seem there are training opportunities for SL. Training is imperative because SL is a medium of instruction for deaf learners. This means that learners' prospects of success diminish when teachers do not have knowledge of SL. One of the principal reasons for high failure rate among learners in African countries who are schooled exclusively on foreign language is that they do not understand what teachers are saying (Makalela 2022; Kelly *et al*. 2022). This is expected to be more pronounced on deaf learners who are taught by teachers that do not know Sign Language (Sibanda 2015).

The challenge that EFAL teachers face is that they teach deaf learners who come from different areas with different Sign Languages (National Institute for the Deaf n.d.). This means that they find it difficult to understand each other. In other similar situations, teachers come from different parts of the country with different Sign Languages. Consequently, there is difficulty in understanding one another in class. If teachers and learners sign differently, it means they need to first come to mutual understanding before they could engage in academic subjects. It means that they have to adopt one SL dialect on which teaching and learning is based (National Institute for the Deaf n.d.). Adopting one SL dialect solves part of the problem in that it would ensure that teachers and learners are on the same page when learning the grammar of the English language. Nevertheless, neglecting other dialects of sign language might also go against the aspirations of multilingualism espoused in the South

African Constitution. The best solution is to have good sign language training for teachers so that they are able to include all deaf learners regardless of their sign language dialect.

EFAL teachers of deaf learners face the shortage of SL interpreters. This shortage is not only in education as Abraham (2022) reports that out of 864 courts in South Africa and a population of 4 million deaf people in the country, there are nine permanently employed sign language interpreters and 20 casual South African sign language interpreters. Interpreters are crucial given the fact that many EFAL teachers of deaf learners are appointed without the knowledge of SL. Interpreters therefore act not only as a bridge between teachers and learners but also as a scaffold to assist the teachers until they could stand on their own. Appointing EFAL teachers, who do not have SL knowledge, to teach deaf learners and not provide SL interpreters does not help deaf learners. It should always be borne in mind that English and Sign Language are two different languages. Therefore, any teacher of deaf learners need to be bi/multilingual.

Conclusion

The adoption of South African Sign Language as the twelfth official language in South Africa is one way of redressing the linguistic imbalances of the past. Deaf people have been marginalised for a long time especially in education. The challenge they face in the aspiration of inclusive education is that they are not adequately catered for in their medium of instruction. This study has highlighted the challenges they face in the context of teaching and learning EFAL grammar.

The study has shown that the difficulties of teaching EFAL grammar stem from lack of sign language proficiency by teachers of deaf learners. The result is that deaf learners are not able to learn at acceptable pace. This frustrates teachers who feel that deaf learners require a lot of support because they cannot work independently. However, the better explanation to this lack of independence is probably lack of understanding between teachers and learners. The reason they do not understand each other is that teachers are employed without the knowledge of sign language and they are not provided with enough sign language interpreters.

Even the challenge of sign language dialects can be solved if there is enough teacher training on sign language. this training will make sure that teachers learn various strategies of teaching EFAL grammar to deaf learners.

The high failure rate of deaf learners is caused by using sign language grammar when writing because they have not attained EFAL grammar for writing. In the aspirations of multilingualism, it is important to include sign language as an important language in the training of teachers in general and of teachers of the deaf in particular.

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The Relationship between Traditional Leadership and Local Government on Land Allocation: A Case of Thulamela Local Municipality, South Africa

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Abstract

Traditional leadership and local governments are expected to provide co-leadership in same areas of jurisdiction, in South Africa, without much guidance on how that should be done. As a result, there is constant tension in the relationship and questioning between the two centers of power; tensions, such as those that largely exist around issues of land allocation. This paper was aimed at exploring the relationship between traditional leadership and local governments with regards to land allocation in Thulamela Local Municipality. The paper used explorative qualitative design. Snowball and purposive sampling were used to select participants for this study. The paper was theoretically grounded by the Afrocentricity theory. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The data was then analyzed using thematic data analysis. The study found that the relationship between traditional leadership and local governments on land allocation in Thulamela Local Municipality is largely conflictual rather than complementary. The conflictual relations largely emanate from the lack of clarification regarding each group's distinctive roles regarding land allocation

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and greediness by traditional leader. The researcher recommends the adoption of ubuntu principles by both institutions of leadership and the establishment of clear and definitive roles for both institutions of leadership to play a decisive role in land allocation.

Keywords: Traditional leadership, local government, land allocation, inter-play, conflictual, complementary, Thulamela municipality

Introduction

In 2018, the Limpopo Mirror covered a story in which hundreds of land seekers at Dzwerani Mvelaphanda in the Lwamondo Traditional Council area were likely to lose thousands of rands after buying land from the Traditional Council, which allegedly had already been allocated to other occupants. The case was presented as follows:

> *Problems started in 2015 when some members of the Netshivhale clan lodged a chieftainship claim with the Commission for Traditional Leadership, Disputes and Claims, which subsequently failed. Out of the blue, these people started installing headmen in areas under the jurisdiction of Thovhele Calvin Nelwamondo. In the same year, they started demarcating sites for residential purposes in the Mvelaphanda Ha-Khangale area, which we succeeded in stopping via an interdict. By then, more than 500 sites had already been sold to unsuspecting land seekers, who parted with R10 000 each. […] They sold more than 1 000 sites illegally this year once again. He added that the Traditional Council approached the Thohoyandou High Court, which granted an order stopping all activities in the area. […] The order was granted on 19 June 2018, pending the outcome of the hearing on 7 August 2018, but these people are not adhering to the order. Just a day after the order was granted, the illegal occupants of the land were busy building, and we now have a problem with the law. These people were told to stop all activities in the area, but they are busy disregarding the order. My fear is that they might find themselves having to demolish their expensive houses. For the new residents, it was business as usual. Some were erecting fences, while others were building their new structures. […] Nearly 1000 stand owners might lose out in the*

> *transaction. This is just one example of the many land fights among traditional leaders where, in some cases, the buyers of the land end up as losers* (Tshikhudo 2018).

The case cited above is an indication that land allocation is a significant social issue, not only in Thulamela Municipality but in South Africa as a whole. This may result in potential unmanageable conflict such as the one reported above in the Limpopo Mirror if it is not managed properly. The 'way traditional leaders love money and care very little if at all about their subjects its painful' – argues one study participant (Community member Rofhiwa). Nevertheless, the action of the Municipality equally leaves much to be desired with regards to land allocation in South Africa – as in most cases they tend to bypass the traditional authority who are custodians of our cultural and traditional values within the societies they operate. However, the case presented above shows that some traditional authorities do not respect, engage or comply with local government practices and bylaws. This results in a conflictual and perhaps complementary interpretation of the relationship between traditional authorities and local governments on issues of land allocation. The objectives of this paper were to capture and analyse the relationship between traditional leaders and local governments in aspects like service delivery, developmental issues and participation in the governance structures of the local municipality. The other objective was to zoom into the nature of the relationship between traditional leadership and local governments on land allocation.

Literature Review

This section focuses on literature about the interplay between traditional leadership and local government. Williams (2010:3) argues that the recognition and protection of traditional leadership in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996, has created confusion between the institution of traditional leadership and the State over who controls the people and land. To resolve this, there may be a need for reaching consensus on joint policy implementation. It may be assumed that it was in the quest to resolve this purported confusion that the White Paper on Local Government 1998, granted traditional authorities a role to play in local government, while the Municipal Structures Act 1998, also requires them to attend and participate in the local council meetings. The same Act also demands that traditional leaders should participate in Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and policy implementation.

The 2003 Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework (TLGF) Act, which is a direct result of the White Paper on Traditional Leadership and Governance, opened a window of opportunity for municipalities and traditional councils to work together in the spirit of cooperative governance (South Africa 2003a). This Act has been described as `the most significant document that deals with traditional leadership after 1994' (Tshehla 2005: 2). The Act goes further than any others that preceded it, by obligating the state to protect and promote the institution of traditional leadership. It is interesting to observe that the Act provides for a partnership between traditional leadership and local government, but the same Act does not explain the power dynamics between these two institutions of leadership. The Act does not clearly define the roles and responsibilities of these two institutions of leadership, hence, they are always at loggerheads, especially on land ownership and allocation issues. The study, therefore, sought to explore the nature of the relationship between traditional leadership and local government on land allocation in the absence of clearly-defined roles and responsibilities of these two institutions of leadership in rural communities.

According to Lutabingwa, Sabela and Mbatha (2006) the 2003 Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act is a strong policy statement indicating that the developers of rural communities cannot ignore traditional leaders. However, the Act does not indicate how traditional leaders are to be engaged and what role they should play in the development of rural communities. Lutabingwa, Sabela and Mbatha added that development in areas controlled by traditional leaders would not occur without their full support and participation. This line of thinking was also supported by Phathekile Holomisa (a traditional leader) who indicated that the experience of local government teaches its practitioners that traditional leaders are crucial to successful rural development (Holomisa 2004, 4).

In addition, Holomisa argued that traditional leaders are cultural symbols of the people and they own the land, therefore, this puts them in a better position to promote or impede development depending on how one deals with them (Holomisa 2004: 4). To support this sentiment, elected local government leaders (at the time) such as, Mayor Bhekisisa V. Mthethwa of the uThungulu Municipal District in KwaZulu-Natal stated that Amakhosi are the custodians of our culture, land and history. It is, therefore, clear that they must participate fully in developing their land. Mthethwa (2003) indicated that efforts to improve the relationship between elected and traditional leadership, to improve the delivery of public service and cooperation amongst the partners

and key development players, are critical.

Nyanga Ngubane, the then KwaZulu-Natal Minister of Traditional Affairs, Safety and Security, and Local Government, (who is a traditional leader) observed that:

> *Co-operative rather than antagonistic approach towards Traditional Authorities would contribute greatly to the building of Local Government, predominantly because a very large percentage of our population lives in traditional areas and that elected local government officials operate in these areas* (Ngubane 2003: 4 - 5).

Undoubtedly, these discussions call for shared governance between traditional leaders and local governments. Some cases indicate that efforts towards shared governance are already underway at the local level, but it should be noted that this is happening at a very slow pace. Some examples of these efforts include, the Bafokeng case, Mbonambi and eThekwini. On 12 January 2003, Bafokeng took the historic step of signing the first formal agreement between a community with traditional leadership in the North-West Province and the local municipal government to cooperate on development initiatives (Molotlegi 2003). The researcher chose to use case law in this study because these laws are widely known as illustrations of something or a principle. In this study, case laws illustrate a principle of and efforts towards cooperation between communities led by traditional leaders and the local government.

Bank and Mabena (2011) conducted a study titled '*After the Communal Land Rights Act? Land, power and development in rural South Africa*'; this study provided analysis of a study that was undertaken in the Eastern Cape between 2007 and 2008. The study in the Eastern Cape was commissioned by the Department of Land Affairs as part of a national situation-assessment of livelihoods, land use and management in communal areas. Bank and Mabena stated that the relationship between traditional leaders and elected government officials (councillors) are found across the Eastern Cape. Numerous examples of competition and conflict between these two institutions were recorded, especially, in the way they view development in rural areas. It is within this context that local municipalities and their sub-structures saw themselves as the mandated ones, by the national and provincial government, to deliver services to communal areas. They contend that local municipalities and their upper tier district municipalities had the mandate to provide services, such as water and sanitation, electricity, roads and other

infrastructural and social facilities within their municipal boundaries including in areas that are led by traditional leaders.

Traditional leaders, however, argued that local municipalities are not delivering services and suggested that their role as providers of services should be revisited. They felt aggrieved that they were not properly consulted when municipality officials came into the villages to map out development projects and initiatives. Traditional leaders demanded more powers to preside over development activities in their areas of influence. They further demanded a larger role to play in rural service delivery, maintaining that they could mobilise communities at the local level around service delivery and that there was effective participation in this process.

Local municipalities felt resistance from tribal authorities and mentioned that they often avoid intervening in certain traditional areas. It is, therefore, clear that there are conflictual relations between traditional leaders and local government in this area, particularly regarding rural development. There is clear power contestation and lack of common vision when it comes to what development is needed and how to facilitate it. Rural communities suffer therefore, while the two 'bulls' are fighting for dominance over the development of these communities.

Mhlanga (2012) noted that traditional leaders feel that their role is purely ceremonial and limited only to public ceremonies. This was supported by Shembe (2014:15) who contend that traditional leaders are not allowed to actively participate in council meetings as they do not have voting rights. In addition, Traditional leaders are also of the view that the present democratic government has given too much power to the ward councillors in most of the development programmes. Traditional leaders complain about the lack of proper consultation with them by either local government officials, municipalities or ward councillors before any development is done in their areas, despite the development project being implemented in their areas of jurisdiction.

They further lament that ward councillors and other politicians have no recognition for traditional leaders. Traditional leaders added that municipal officials, particularly, councillors are biased in their efforts to deliver services to the communities; they give preferences to those affiliated to the same political organisation as they are. Meaning that if the councillors come from the ANC, he/she gives services to ANC members that are known to him/her and neglect the rest of the community members. Traditional leaders indicated that these are some of the reasons that causes them to lose interest in working

with local municipalities (local government) (Mhlanga 2012).

Mkhabela (2017:49) after examining the relationship between traditional leadership and local government noticed that some of the traditional leaders, have difficulties in making peace with the clear fact that ward councillors exist and that they have been assigned responsibilities of providing service delivery on behalf of the municipalities as they are representatives of municipalities within communities. Perhaps it is because traditional leaders are still living in the past where they ruled their people alone without interferences. Although the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act 2003 (Act 41 of 2003) provides that traditional leaders should play a primary role of supporting municipalities, they remain unhappy that municipalities provide services without involving them. All these factors must be considered when one is analysing the relationship between traditional leaders and local government, especially, in South Africa.

Bikam and Chakwizira (2014) looked at the interaction between traditional leadership and local government focusing on the Involvement of Traditional Leadership in Land Use Planning and Development Projects in South Africa. They argued that The Municipal Structures Act of 2000 does not provide a clearly defined role for traditional leader in land use planning and development projects. They also argued that traditional leaders and local government officials works together in some instances but in most cases traditional leaders have no decision-making mandate in the process. This led to traditional leaders voicing a concern that they were given a back-seat role of only public participation and not those related to decision making regarding land use planning in their areas of jurisdiction. As a result, the relationship between traditional leaders and local government officials is characterised by conflicts more often than co-operation. To address this matter, Ramolobe (2023) stated that, the institution of the traditional leadership ought to be allowed to lead in cultural and customary practices, and government structures must support it. This was also supported by Koenane (2017) who suggested that political leaders' attitudes should change, which would result in clearer policies promoting rather than marginalising traditional leaders. The above-mentioned study is very important to this paper as it examines the relationship between traditional leadership and local government in land use and planning. However, it is different to mine because mine explores the relations between these two institutions of leadership regarding land allocation and not their roles on land use. This literature is evidence enough to demonstrate that the relationship between traditional leadership and local government have been studied

before. However, majority of studies have been focusing on how these two institutions have effects on each other, the legislative framework that governs one of each or both, how they relate of matters of municipal council, land use and management, their roles on service delivery, leaving a gap on the nature of relationship between these two powers on land allocation which this study is filling. The paper also contributes to the available literature about traditional leadership in general, local government as well as the relationship between these two institutions of leadership.

Theoretical Framework

This study uses Afrocentricity as theory because it provides the opportunity for the study of this nature to zoom into how Africans understand land, how it was allocated and how they value traditional ways of life, as opposed to other theories that only allow for the understanding of land as a commodity that must be bought, sold, and inherited as a property. Mazama (2001) defines Afrocentricity as a theory of social change, centred in resisting the problem of African people's unconscious adoption of western conceptual frameworks, worldview, and perspective. Asante (2003) also defines Afrocentricity as the placing of African people in the centre of any analysis of African phenomena. Chukwuokolo (2009) indicated that Asante who is believed to be the father of Afrocentricity sees Afrocentricity as a manner of thought and action in which the centrality of African interests, values, and perspectives predominate. Asante also indicated that Afrocentricity can be viewed as an exercise in knowledge and a historical perspective that is new. Early, *et al.* (1994) also defined Afrocentricity as an intellectual movement, a political view, and/or a historical evolution that stresses the culture and achievements of Africans. What interest the researcher in all these definitions is that they suggest that there should be change in ways that people view the world, and the proposed change should not be targeting only one aspects of humanity, but it should be holistic change and seek to put Africans and their experiences at the centre.

Research Methods Adopted

The paper adopted an explorative qualitative approach, focusing on the perceptions and opinions of 27 participants who were selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques to gather the views of the people most knowledgeable about the situation regarding the relationship between

traditional leaders and local government in Thulamela local municipality in as far as land allocation is concern (Grinnel & Unrau 2008:153).

It is important to note that Thulamela local municipality was established in the year 2000 in terms of the provision of the Local Government Municipality Structures Act, 117 of 1998 Section 12. The administrative offices of the municipality are in Thohoyandou. The Thulamela local municipality falls under category B of municipalities under the Municipal Structure Act 1998 (Act 117 of 1998). According to the Thulamela municipality's IDP Review (2012/2013), this municipality covers a density of 103.3 Km2 (268 square miles). The Thulamela local municipality falls under The Vhembe District Municipality in the Limpopo Province, South Africa. The greater part of this municipality is rural, meaning that the municipality governs where there is traditional leadership, and the people must cooperate with these leaders for better service delivery in these areas. Based on the currently available data from Stas SA, the Thulamela local municipality has a total number of 497237 residents of this number 493780 are black Africans, 2479 are Indians/Asians, coloureds are 749 and whites are 229. To break this population further, 168496 of the total population are children between the ages of 0-14, youth of 15-34 are 192769, whereas adults of 35-64 are 102497, and elderly of ages between 65 and above are 33475 in total (Stats SA; Community Survey 2016). It should be noted that the situation could be slightly different now in 2024 and the next Stats SA.

People who participated were traditional leaders, local government officials who works on land matters and community members who have knowledge and understanding on land allocation issues. participants were engaged through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. People who took part in interviews were 7 traditional leaders, 3 municipal officials who work on land issues and 3 community members. On the other hand, those who took part in focus group discussions were 7 traditional leaders and 7 community members. Meaning that there were two sets of focus group discussions with 7 people each. Ethically, participants were informed about the tittle, aims, objectives of the study and that their participation should be voluntary and informed consent forms were filled and signed by participants (Vanderstoep & Johnston 2009). For confidentiality, participants were told that their real names will not be used but pseudonyms will be used instead. This means that names that are appearing in the fining and discussion section are pseudonyms of the participants and not their real names. Data was analysed using thematic data analysis and the results of the study are discussed and

analysed below using themes that emanated from the data (Namey *et al.* 2008).

Findings and Discussion

The paper unveiled that the relationship between these two institutions of leadership on land allocation is conflictual but partly complementary. This section starts by summarising firstly the findings on conflictual relations then complementary relations.

Conflictual Relations

The study revealed that the relationship between traditional leadership and local government on land allocation in Thulamela local municipality is conflictual rather than complementarity. According to Matsiliza (2024) It is a fact that traditional leaders in both South Africa and Botswana experience tensions with the local government because they are sharing power in the same space of local communities. Most participants view this relationship as one of the unhealthiest relations they have ever witnessed between institutions of leadership. Participants gave various reasons to support their views, and all those views are presented and discussed below, using sub-sub-topics.

- **Lack of Role Clarification**

Participants indicated that there is lack of clarity regarding roles, particularly of the traditional leaders in local communities. This is like the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Amendment Act 23 of 2009 which does not clearly specify roles and responsibility of traditional leaders on land allocation (TLGFA 2009). The views of the participants are that it is not clear as to which institution between the traditional leadership and local government has the legislative responsibility of allocating land and this is causing these two centres of power to fight against each other, as both want to allocate land in rural communities and sometimes in urban areas. The following views are directly those of the participants' and the interpretation and analysis of these views will come after the quotations.

One participant who works at the local municipality Ms. Rosina indicated that:

the absence or clear definitive roles that clarify the roles of traditional

> *leaders and that of the local government is a major challenge that leads to continuous conflicts between traditional leadership and local government. The roles that are there are not clear in terms of who should allocate the land between the traditional leadership and local government in Thulamela and in other areas within the country. If these roles were clear conflicts between traditional leadership and local government would have been about other things and not about land and even those that would arise specifically on land would have been at minimum.*

Traditional leader Mr. Rudzani also opined that:

> *As traditional leaders we blame the government for not putting clear policies and regulations that gives us power and authority on land allocation because everyone knows that land belongs to the traditional leaders. There is no one who can say they do not know that land belongs to the traditional leaders and that we are we ones to allocate it without any interference from the municipality. Lack of these clear role on who should allocate land between the traditional leadership and local government is the one that brings a lot of conflicts between these two centres of power in Thulamela local municipality. The government must develop clear roles that shows that traditional leaders are the one that should allocate land as this has been our responsibility that was passed on to us by the previous generation of traditional leaders (our ancestors).*

It was interesting and exciting to hear participant showing a great deal of knowledge and understanding on the legislations that talks to the role and functions of both traditional leaders and local government in South Africa. This means that participants are also aware of the gap in the legislation that talks about the roles of traditional leaders and local government. The White Paper outlines the roles to be played by Traditional Councils and one of those roles is land administration. There is, unfortunately, no clarity given in terms of what land administration entails in the White Paper.

The White Paper says nothing about land allocation, therefore, does not allocate any responsibility of allocating land to any sector, including traditional leaders. Lack of clearly defined roles for both traditional leaders and local government when it comes to land allocation issues remains challenging

and a breeding ground for conflict between the two sectors of power in Thulamela Local Municipality, and possibly, throughout the country. This lack of clarity regarding to the responsibility of land allocation leads to different understanding about land.

For Africans land is life because there cannot be life without the earth, but most importantly land is viewed as life because every aspect of human life is dependent on land to survive. Amodu (2021) argued that land is neither a commodity nor an individual possession. This means that according to Africans understanding of land, land cannot be bought, sold or inherited. Advocates of Afrocentricity such as (Quan, Tan & Toulmin 2019) indicated that land does not belong to humans but is a gift from Nature to existence. This was supported by Jacka (2001), mentioned that Africans see land as an inalienable gift embedded in social relations and ritual values, Land is understood by Africans as embracing the ecological, cultural, cosmological, social and the (religion tools) with spiritual function as dual entity within existence and nature. Africans in all ethnic groupings share common philosophical understanding of land and its nature. In addition, Africans also see land as a means of identity.

On the other hand the western conception of land that came with the introduction of local government see land differently and through capitalist lenses. In the capitalist system, individuals and firms own most of the resources, including land, not the government (Mc Connell & Bruce 2005). Begg Fischer and Dornbusch (2003), further state that this extensive private ownership that gives capitalism its name. This right to private property, coupled with the freedom to negotiate binding legal contracts, enables individuals and businessmen to obtain, use and dispose of land as they deem fit. David and Jean (2000), further add that the right of property owner to designate who will receive their property when they die and sustain their institution of private property. Capitalists therefore sees land as property that can be owned, transferred, inherited, sold or speculated (Balchin & Chen 2000).

Traditional Leaders Lacking Respect for the Municipality

An overwhelming majority of community members and municipal official who participated in this study were of the view that some of the traditional leader's lack respect for the municipality and this is one of the factors contributing to conflict in the relationship between traditional leadership and local government on land allocation matter. A community member, Fhumulani stated,

> *One of the participants said that 'in many areas in Thulamela local municipality, the municipality have a formal plan that are surveyed and approved for settlement and business purposes, but traditional leadership goes to those areas and start giving people stands without consulting the municipality as they say it is their area which is a clear act of undermining the municipality in my view. As a result, you will find that people are allocated land that the municipality reserved for building facilities such as parks or schools or any other uses'.*

After going through the transcripts, it became clear that there are some traditional leaders who lack respect for the municipality. These are some of the issues raised that causes the conflict between traditional leadership and local government in Thulamela local municipality regarding land allocation. For the traditional leadership to allocate land without consulting the municipality who are responsible for planning, surveying the land is a clear sign that some of the traditional leaders in Thulamela does not have respect for the municipality and it leads to many service delivery challenges. Baloyi (2016) supported these views by indicating that land allocation by traditional leaders, in certain rural areas, without the involvement of the municipality, also gives rise to unwarranted conflict between these two centres of power.

The implications of this are very serious, for instance, some children walk long distances to go to school and to access sports facilities because there are no schools nearby due to lack of proper planning for the villages which resulted from some traditional leadership lacking respect for the municipality and not consulting its officials them when they do their land allocation in the village. In some areas it is difficult for the municipality to deliver services, such as water and roads because people are allocated rocky places and uphill places, hence, the delivery of such services to such places becomes extremely expensive. Although not disputing that there might be other causes, all these challenges are sometimes experienced because certain traditional leaders lack respect for the municipality.

This undermining of local government officials by some of the traditional leaders is perhaps influenced by traditional leaders understanding of their role which is also backed by the supporters of the Afrocentricity theory. One of the proponents of Afrocentricity Mulemfo (2000) believed that leaders in Africa are facilitators as well as servants to the community and not that community members are the servants of the leaders. It is within this context that leader expected to promote the common good, and to safeguard justice and

peace within the communities they lead. In Africa, leadership is about consensus democracy and people mobilisation (Mbigi 2000). African leadership is the one that consult and engage community members in all issues that affects them and mobilise community towards the promotion of common good.

Undermining the Role of Traditional Leadership Structures

Some participants are of the opinion that there are elements of undermining the role of traditional leadership structures, especially, by the municipal official and the government at large in South Africa.

Community member, Ms. Tshinakaho clearly stated that,

> *the municipality allocate land without the involvement of traditional leaders in some areas. When they allocate, they do not even ask people where they were staying before and why are they coming to stay here? what is wrong with here they are staying? They do not think of asking these questions and to do the investigation in the spirit of protecting their subjects in that area. Land allocation without the involvement of traditional leaders limits their role of protecting their subjects and that seeks to undermine their power in general.*

These views indicate that one can be allocated land in Thulamela Local Municipality without the involvement of the traditional leadership. Meaning that, there is no need to respect the chief because in the municipality one does not need '*vhamusanda'* to abide by the rules. It implies that in some areas where there is involvement of the municipality, a person can get a stand without traditional leaders and in that regard traditional leaders' positions are unimportant with regard to land allocation. The community members and traditional leaders indicated that the constant interference of the municipality on land allocation even in the rural areas continue to undermine the role of traditional leadership structure on land allocation. Traditional leaders believe that land is theirs and it has been theirs since time immemorial and the fact that local governments were introduced recently and were given powers to allocate land in certain areas can be seen as an effort to undermine the role of traditional leadership structure in Thulamela Local Municipality. According to Matsiliza (2024) It is a fact that traditional leaders in both South Africa and Botswana experience tensions with the local government because they are sharing power

in the same space of local communities. Proponents of Afrocentricity are calling for African researchers and historians to write African history from the perspectives of Africans mainly because, European historians and researchers in South Africa have tirelessly and consistently tried, though so far unsuccessfully, to paint a picture that tells a story of a country that has been unoccupied before colonialism (Marks 2014). This implies that land allocation should be understood from the perspectives of Africans including traditional leadership and the involevement of traditional leadership on land allocation issues becomes crucial.

Where the municipality allocates land without involving the traditional leadership, no questions asked provided those who want to be allocated land can pay for it. The buyer could stay anywhere, they want. On the other hand, where traditional leaders allocate land, they do investigations prior allocating it to strangers. They ask the person who is looking for land questions like; who they are, where they come from, why they are coming to stay here and most importantly why they are leaving their former place. They also send someone to the areas where the person is coming from to get more information about that person before the land is allocated to them. This was done as a security measure to ensure that people who come and stay in their areas are credible and good citizens and not criminals to guarantee the safety of their subjects. Some rifts occur where the municipality allocate land between traditional leaders and local government in Thulamela local municipality as traditional leaders blames local government officials for criminal activities that take place in such areas.

The above information demonstrates that traditional leaders lead within the context of Ubuntu principles because they need to be secured just like they want to be. The Ubuntu philosophy allows leaders to see themselves within the context of the society they lead. Thus, they lead with compassion, love and. Meaning that they lead in a way that they would like to be led. Leaders are bound to be transparent and accountable because of the philosophy of Ubuntu inherent within them. They understand that they lead people, and they account to them, and this makes them to lead in a transparent manner.

Complementary Relations

The study revealed that although the relationship between traditional leadership and local government, is mainly conflictual, it is also complementary in some respects. This section presents a summary of finding regarding

the complementary nature of the relationship between traditional leaders and local government on land allocation in Thulamela Local Municipality. The summary discussions are guided by the themes that emerged during data analysis.

- **Established System on Land Allocation**

The study unveiled that traditional leaders and local government do cooperate with each other on land allocation processes. Major cooperation occasions between the two institutions on land issues are recoded in the allocation of land for business purposes. A participant voiced that.

> Ms. Rosina explicated that; '*Good relations between the municipality and the traditional leadership is more evident in the process of land allocation for business purposes. A person cannot just go to the municipality to register land for business purposes without starting at the traditional leaders. To show that the person started at the traditional leaders the person must bring letters from the traditional leaders and failure to do such, that person cannot register the land, especially if the land is located in rural areas where traditional leaders are controlling*'.

It is commonly understood that people who are need land for business purposes, should start from the headman in the village and pay '*Nduvho*' after which they are given letters to take to the chief. The chief will then demand a certain amount of money in the name of '*Nduvho*' and after that the chief will provide another letter to the person who wants land, to take to the municipality. These are the letters that a person must take to the local municipality to register the land after paying what is prescribed by the municipality. Participants were aware that failure to pay '*Nduvho'* to both the headman and the chief means no letter issued for the businessperson take to the municipality. This means should a person from the village go to the municipality to register land for business purpose, without a letter from the chief, he/she would not be assisted. Similarly, if a person brings a letter from the chief and the that person does not pay is the fee prescribed by the municipality, the stand will not be registered in his/her name until such payment s done. This is one area where a good working relationship exists between the traditional leadership and Thulamela local municipality.

There are some headmen and chiefs who do not want to follow this

process. However, they know about it and agree that it is the way things should be done. Both institutions have established these kinds of process to avoid unnecessary conflicts between the two institutions. This process established different roles and responsibilities for the traditional leadership and local government regarding land allocation. about the concern is that these processes, are not written anywhere and they are not guided by any legislation in the country or anywhere else. They are, therefore, prone to manipulation and violation as they do not bind anyone legally because they are just verbal agreements known to only traditional leadership and local government in Thulamela Local Municipality, and they might not apply in other local municipalities in South Africa.

Conclusion

It is evident that the relationship between traditional leadership and local government regarding land allocation in Thulamela local municipality is more conflictual than complementary. Although there are legislations developed by the democratic government in South Africa, there is no clarity on the roles and responsibilities of traditional leaders and local government officials on land allocation throughout the country. Many participants registered this as a major source of conflicts between the two institutions of leadership.

The study also concluded that lack of respect between traditional leaders and local government officials is also a source of conflict between the two powers in Thulamela local municipality especially regarding land allocation. At times traditional leaders are found to be selling land without consulting the municipality even in rocky, wetlands and mountainous places. This makes it difficult for the municipality to provide services such as water, electricity, sanitation, housing and roads this causes a serious rift between traditional leaders and local government in Thulamela local municipality. The study recommends that there should be clearly defined roles between traditional leadership and local government on land allocation and conflicts will be minimised. The study further suggests that traditional leaders and local government should respect each other and adopt Ubuntu principles with each other and when dealing with the communities they lead.

In places where the municipality allocate land without the involvement of the traditional leadership there were no questions asked provided the buyer has money, he/she can stay anywhere, they want. On the other, hand, where traditional leaders allocate land, they do investigations first before they allocate

land to strangers. They ask the person who is looking for land questions like, who they are, where they come from and why they are coming to stay here and most importantly why they are leaving their former place. They also go beyond asking the person concerned but also send someone to the areas where the person is coming from to get more information about that person before the land is allocated to his/her. This was done as a security measure to make sure that people who come and stay in their areas are credible and good citizens and not criminals for the safety of their subjects. The fact that this does not happen where the municipality allocate land causes some rifts between traditional leaders and local government in Thulamela local municipality as traditional leaders blames local government officials for criminal activities that take place in such areas.

The above information demonstrates that traditional leaders lead within the context of Ubuntu principles because they want people they need to be secured as they themselves would like to be. The Ubuntu philosophy allows leaders to see themselves within the context of the society they lead. Thus, they lead with compassion, love and respect to the people they lead. Meaning that they lead in a way that they would like to be led. are leaders because. Again, leaders are bound to be transparent and accountable because of the philosophy of Ubuntu inherent within them. They understand that they lead people, and they account to them, and this makes them to lead in a transparent manner.

In summation, it is evident from the study that the relationship between traditional leadership and local government regarding land allocation in Thulamela local municipality is more conflictual than complementary. Although there are legislations developed by the democratic government in South Africa, the lack clarity on the roles and responsibilities of both traditional leaders and local government officials on land allocation not just in Thulamela local municipality but throughout the country. This has been seen by many participants as a major source of conflicts between the two institutions of leadership.

The study also concluded that lack of respect between traditional leaders and local government officials is also a source of conflict between the two powers in Thulamela local municipality especially regarding land allocation. At times traditional leaders are found to be selling the land without consulting the municipality and in rocky, wetlands and in mountainous places. This makes it difficult for the municipality to provide service delivery such as water, electricity, sanitation, housing and roads to be delivered and these causes a serious rift between traditional leaders and local government in

Thulamela local municipality. The study recommends that there should be clearly defined roles between traditional leadership and local government on land allocation and conflicts will be minimised. Again, the study suggest that traditional leaders and local government should respect each other and adopt Ubuntu principles in their relationship with each other and when dealing with the communities they lead.

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Mental Health, Wellbeing and Healing in Modern Day (South) Africa

Dreams and Mental Illness Management: A Phenomenological Study with African Indigenous Healers

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Abstract

Ditoro or dreams are a highly respected encounter for African Indigenous Healers (AIHs) because they serve important psychosocial and spiritual functions. One notable purpose of dreams for AIHs is that they can 'dream on behalf and for the benefit of others'. The present study used a qualitative phenomenological research methodology to explore this phenomenon. Participants were 26 African Indigenous Healers, who were sampled using purposive and snowball sampling methods. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, while Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used to generate meaning from the data. The findings revealed that dreams are a highly spiritual encounter and play an important role in the traditional treatment of mental illness. The three main themes that emerged are: a) The Symbolic Nature of Manifested Dreams; b) The Conversational Nature of the Dream Experience; and c) Dream Interpretation and Mental Illness Management. The findings suggest that in traditional African thought, dreams are a spiritually mediated process that involves the continual reciprocal interaction between ancestral spirits and African Indigenous Healers for the

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benefit of mentally troubled patients. The study concludes with several theoretical, clinical, and research implications.

Keywords: Dreams, symbolic interpretation, traditional health practitioners, Africa, mental health

Background of the Study

Over the years, Western psychology has offered valuable insights into the intrapsychic ontology of dreams. Although this is the case, dream phenomena in which people can 'dream on behalf and for the benefit of others' have never been taken into account. This phenomenon is known to African Indigenous Healers (AIH) in the African context (Bernard 2013: 138; Bogopa 2010: 1; Machinga 2011:8). Generally, dreams are often viewed as a personal encounter, and dreamers often consult with trained dream analysts to interpret the dream experience. It was Sigmund Freud who had suggested that dreams originate within, or dreaming is an 'intrapsychic phenomenon' (Caperton 2012: 11), revealing psychic fears, wishes, needs, or unresolved traumas of a dreamer (Kryger *et al.* 2011: 639; Roberts 2018: 182). Freud's protégé, Carl Jung, went on to suggest that dreams provided the dreamer with an opportunity to spontaneous self-portrayal in a symbolic form that reflects the activities of the unconscious mind (1967). When left unaddressed, some dreams could overwhelm the dreamer, resulting in a state of psychological distress (Moorcroft 2013: 2349). It is in this regard that the psychoanalytic tradition encourages dreamers to engage in a therapeutic dream-analytical process intended to uncover the hidden or latent meaning of dreams. Success in this process is met with catharsis by the often-stressed dreamer (Sandford 2017: 91). While this intrapsychic-orientated explanation of dreams is important, it lacks the ability to explain a phenomenon in which dreams are not only regarded a personal intrapsychic phenomenon but also a spiritual communal encounter in which AIH are able to 'dream on behalf and for the benefit of some community members'. The present phenomenological investigation seeks to explore and explain this phenomenon.

In the psychoanalytic tradition, dreams are analysed and interpreted for the dreamer with a view to helping the dreamer gain insight into the meaning of the dream experience, including how best to address unresolved psychic needs and conflicts. Psychoanalytic and, by extension, psychodynamic

understandings of dreams have dominated the field of mental health over centuries. Freud's work on dreams has historically shaped the science of dreams in psychology, despite being criticized for not being empirical and falsifiable (Moorcrof 2013: 2349; Menczer 2014). However, Freud's work has continued to influence the conception and management of mental health problems in the professional field of psychology in both Euro-American and African contexts (Van Rooyen *et al.* 2015; Gilbert 2020). Although this has been the case, other perspectives, such as the African perspective of dreams, have not been fully explored (Nwoye 2015: 305). One reason for this, especially in African academic contexts, has been the continued dominance of Western philosophies and perspectives while negating the experiences and cultural understanding of local people (Caperton 2012: 11; Moorcroft 2013: 2349). A hegemonic phenomenon that has continued to receive criticism from scores of decolonial scholars who advocate for what De Sousa Santos (2024) calls the need for global cognitive justice.

Within the African context, dreams are an important tool for indigenous healers. It is understood that AIH can also dream on behalf and for the benefit of others. That is, before some clients make official consultations with healers, visits that include how their presentations should be managed are often revealed in dreams to healers (Moshabela *et al.* 2017). How this process of dreaming about yet to consult patients is possible is the subject of interrogation in this paper. Generally, dream work by AIH has remained largely elusive. Nwoye (2017: 22) puts it succinctly in saying that 'one neglected perspective is the African psychology of dreams.' Empirical research highlights that while dreams are understood to be a spiritual encounter (Nkosi; 2012; Sodi 2009: 60) and serve various healing purposes for people of African ancestry (Tshifhumulo 2016: 175), their use in the management of mental illnesses is neglected (Nwoye 2017: 3).

For indigenous Africans, dreams are considered an important factor and a natural encounter for people (Ngobe 2015; Bartholomew 2017; Standford 2017: 91). Contrary to western thought, in African thought dreams are understood to be some form of spiritual encounter. Dreams are a portal through which messages from the spiritual realm are communicated to the physical world (Nell 2014: 122). This implies that dreams are conceived as channels of communication between the visible and invisible dimensions of the social world (Menczer 2014). Dreaming is made possible by God through the ancestors, who will in turn cascade down the information to the intended recipient/s through the process of dreaming. Messages can be transmitted

directly or indirectly. Directly when an individual person dreams about matters pertaining to their own life or indirectly when dreaming is about others or life events in general. More often, as was evident in previous studies (Bakow & Low 2018: 436; Ngobe 2015; Menczer 2014), ancestral spirits communicate messages through dreams to shape dreamer's future life affairs. Apparently, Tshifhumulo (2016) found that among the Zulu and Venda cultural groups of South Africa, dreams foretell future events.

Several other empirical studies (e.g., Bakow & Low 2018: 436; Menczer 2014; Thorpe 199: 1) have supported the notion that dreams are indeed a spiritual encounter in which the ancestors are conveying messages to healers. Healers will go on to affect or shape the lives of people, including some of their own patients. It is in this context that, unlike Western thought, where dreaming is mainly an intrapsychic phenomenon, in African contexts, dreaming is also a spiritual-communal affair. Dreams originate from the spirit world, are transmitted to the physical world, and more often are transmitted through more spirited people such as indigenous healers (Nwoye 2017: 3; Tshifhumulo 2016: 175). Dream interpretation is largely informed by traditional African values and beliefs (Caperton 2012), but often community members rely on indigenous healers to interpret and decipher the hidden symbolic meaning of dreams (Nwoye 2015). Up to this point, it is evident that dreaming is a common encounter for African people and is also used by indigenous healers in the diagnosis and treatment of health-related conditions (Bernard 2013: 138). Although this is the case, little attention has been paid to the dream phenomenon by AIH in their work with mental health care users. A phenomenon we understand as 'dreaming on behalf and for the benefit of others', which has never been explained by previous dream theorists and scientists. Given the scarcity of research in this area, especially within the African context (Nwoye 2017: 3), the present study sought to fill the identified gap by exposing the nature of dreams experienced by AIH, including their embedded meaning and benefits when experienced during their healing practice. The main research question that orients the study is: 'What is the nature and essence of the dream experience of AIH in the context of the management of mental health conditions?'

Theoretical Framework: Philosophical Concept of Moya

The present analysis is anchored by the African philosophical concept of *moya* proposed by Baloyi and Ramose (2016: 12). *Moya,* or spirit, is the life force of

creation. All of existence, that is, that which is felt and experienced, both vertically and horizontally, reflects the greatest influence of *moya*. As typified in the hierarchical structural model of the African worldview, the hierarchy of creation is determined by the amount of *moya* or life force concentrations at the various levels of the cosmos (Mkhize 2004). For instance, God, the progenitor of all spirits, is in the macrocosm. Immediately after God are the ancestral spirits located in the mesocosm (Mkhize 2004), and all of creation, located in the microcosm. The hierarchical classification of creation thus reflects the spiritual order and importance of creation including the point at which all of creation interface and influence each other. If all creation reflects the hierarchical influence of *'moya wa modimo'* or 'the spirit of God', then all phenomena of human experience, including dreams, are first a spiritual encounter prior to being a physical or psychological reality. In essence, human experiences such as happiness, success, bad luck, illness, or even dreams will always be explained in terms of the harmonious or disharmonious interaction of the physical, psychological and spiritual forces (Baloyi & Ramose 2016; Sogolo 2003). Traditional Africans will therefore reason that while dreaming is a personal affair, it is also a spiritual phenomenon, whereby AIH are better placed to aid in dream interpretation. In this sense, healers are highly regarded by their communities as custodians of African spirituality and indigenous knowledge systems (Ngoma *et al.* 2003; Mokgobi 2014). In their communities, their role is that of a physician, psychologist, psychiatrist, and spiritual counsellor (Mufamadi & Sodi 2010: 253; De Roubaix 2016) because their approach to healing is renowned for being holistic (Neba 2011; Nkungwana 2005; Tlou 2013). It is against this philosophical grounding that taking the *moya* informed perspective is imperative for the holistic analysis of dreams as an African experience.

Research Methodology

Study Design

The present study used a qualitative research methodology. Epistemologically, the hermeneutic phenomenological design helped generate knowledge. Qualitative research focuses on studying and understanding the importance that people or groups attach to a social or human issue (Cresswell 2014). The approach adopts a person-centred and holistic viewpoint with a view to develop rich knowledge and insight while giving a vivid picture of the reality

and social environment of the participants (Holloway 2005). This form of study is frequently characterised as a situated activity that locates the observer in the world (Parkinson & Drislane 2011). In this study, the researchers aimed to understand and analyse the subjective experiences of participating AIH in relation to the function of dreams in their company, as well as the significance they ascribe to these experiences (Bryman 2012).

Participants and Sampling

Twenty-six (n = 26; 19 women) AIH were sampled for participation. The participants were purposefully sampled followed through by snowball sampling. The AIH who were interviewed were of the Northern Sotho tribe, which is a dominant cultural group in the study area. The study was carried out in the Blouberg Municipality area of Limpopo Province. Most of the participants (85%) had formal schooling up to grades 11, while 11% had tertiary education. The majority (42%) of the participants were aged 60 years and older, followed by those aged 41-60 years (38 %), then those aged 20-40 years (10%). In Blouberg Municipality, 90 AIH are registered with the local Traditional Healers association.

Data Collection and Procedure

Participants were interviewed using semi-structured interviews to acquire information about the importance of their dreams in diagnosing and treating mental illness, as well as information about their dreams and traditional healing methods. The interviews were audiotaped and verbatim transcribed. Additionally, the generated transcripts were quality checked by senior qualitative researchers, that is, authors 2 and 3.

Quality Criteria

In this study, the researchers attempted to establish the trustworthiness of the findings in a variety of methods. The researchers engaged in a discussion with the text, using audio tapes and transcripts, in order to confirm its credibility. The researchers ensured transferability by providing a detailed description of the sample population. To ensure dependability, researchers made sure that conclusions, interpretations, and suggestions are supported by data. For

confirmability, the researchers also emphasised that field notes were taken throughout data collecting. These notes were reviewed throughout the explanation of each interview and used as a foundation for observations and a recall of key occasions during interviews to ensure conformity (Anney 2014). These procedures are deemed to have increased the trustworthiness of the study.

In essence, the researchers attained trustworthiness by guarding against any preconceptions that may have impacted the study's conclusions during the data gathering and explanation stages. This means that the researchers rejected, inhibited, and disqualified all previous knowledge and experience commitments, as Moustakas advocated (1994). Second, all the descriptions, meanings extracted, and interpretations produced from all the interviews were done so that the participants' lived experiences could be informed without the researchers exerting undue influence.

Data Analysis

Interpretive phenomenological investigation (IPA), which focuses on the analysis of how participants make sense of their personal and social worlds, was used to analyse the data. IPA seeks to investigate in depth how people interpret their personal and social worlds (Smith 2017). The primary currency of an IPA research is the participant's interpretation of certain experiences and events. The technique is phenomenological in that it involves a thorough analysis of the life world of participants. It is concerned with an individual's perception of an item or event, as opposed to an endeavour to make an objective description of the object or event itself, and one of its goals is to investigate personal experiences. IPA emphasises that research is a dynamic process in which the researcher plays an active role. The generated results in the relevant section below demonstrate that we engaged in the double hermeneutic process of the IPA.

Data analysis included researchers listening to the recordings several times before transcribing, and then transcribed the tapes while listening to them. During this phase, the researchers made sure to suspend as many meanings and interpretations of the phenomena under investigation as possible and to immerse themselves in the world of the one-of-a-kind person who was questioned. The first reading was to obtain a feel of the overall tone and quality of each participant's interview, and the second was to begin the more precise analytical process. After listening to the interviews twice, the researchers

began transcribing each of the participant's interviews. The researchers also recorded the linguistic, paralinguistic and non-verbal features of the interviews while transcribing them. Researchers began a parallel evaluation process after receiving all translated interviews, in which the Sepedi and English transcripts were examined for any loss of meaning that may have occurred throughout the translations. The researchers recaptured the substance of the sentences where a loss of meaning was detected by listening to the original audio interviews again.

Ethical Consideration

Before conducting the study, ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the University of Limpopo Research (TREC / 96/2019: PR). All participants were required to sign an informed consent. The participants were assured of privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity.

Findings of the Study

The Symbolic Nature of Manifested Dreams

The study findings revealed that dreams play an important role in traditional mental illness management. For AIH, dreams experienced were in the form of dreaming *'... about ancient people that I [they] do not even know; I [they] even dream about beautiful snakes, untidy babies and wild animals'* ***[Participant 26, female, 56 years]***. Saying that the dream content can be about '*ancient people*' is revealing that, the dream phenomenon also entails dreaming about ancestral spiritual entities. This is supported by **Participant 10** who said *'... when I am asleep, [they] show me a butterfly...'* ***[Male, 81 years].*** Saying *'they'* further expresses the dream content to entail ancestral spirits. The nature of dreams experienced by healers is further revealed herein.

> *... Sometimes a person can dream of water or a snake ...* ***[Participant 15, female, 62 years]***
>
> *... dreams are felt in your spirit. I dream of patients and medicinal plants ...* ***[Participant 24, female, 87 years].***
>
> *I will see in dreams, a patient being naked ...* ***[Participant 7, female, 36 years].***

A further analysis of preceding participant extracts characterises the true nature of the dream experience, and that dreams can be in symbolic form. This finding supports that dreams are indeed a reality for AIH, in which ancestral spirits through direct or symbolic language can communicate to healers.

The Conversational Nature of the Dream Experience

Some participants described dreaming to be a conversational process between their ancestors and their spiritual selves. The dream experience was described as some form of conversation in that *'... when it comes to helping mentally ill people, my ancestors just talk to me while I sleep; they tell me that this kind of patient is coming and help them in this way'* ***[Participant 11, female, 53 years]***. The 15th participant offers further support in saying *'... I dreamt of sick people, and in those dreams my ancestors were telling me what to do to help them'* ***[Participant 15, female, 65 years]***.

The above phenomenological accounts highlight that dreaming for the benefit of others is a spiritual encounter between healers and ancestral spirits. Through dreams, the ancestors communicated or revealed to healers, patient difficulties, medicinal plants, and related messages to manage ill health. It was also noteworthy in the results that 'yet to consult patients' would be revealed through dreams before physically presenting at the healing facility. The extracts below further enumerate this finding:

> *... dreams reveal to me the people who will be coming to seek help. Ancestors show me that a person is coming, and they also describe the person and alert me to use particular medications to treat them* ***[Participant 4, female, 84 years].***

> *When I am sleeping at night, I see a man in my dreams coming wearing beads ... a voice will say a person wearing these beads will come, and tomorrow that person will come, and I will already know the mental illness they have. I will just throw the bones as a procedure* ***[Participant 4, female, 50 years].***

This finding signifies that dreaming is a portal of spiritual communication, that is, dreaming is a conversation between a person (IH) and his ancestors. It is a sign that '*something may happen, or it shows things that could happen'* ***[Parti-***

cipant 26, female, 56 years]. In essence, the treatment of mental illness is evidently a spiritually mediated process made possible by the reciprocal interaction between ancestral spirits and healers for the benefit of patients. Ancestral spirits are the mediums through which dreaming and healing is possible.

Dream Interpretation and Mental Illness Management

The preceding theme illustrated that dreaming is a phenomenon of experience whereby in some instances, the intended meaning is easily accessible by AIH. However, some dreams have hidden meaning. In such instances, interpretation becomes necessary to help uncover the covert meaning. This is captured by Participant 15 who highlighted that '*sometimes they* [dreams] *have* [direct] *meaning, while sometimes they do not'*. Further support is provided below.

> *Sometimes I [AIH] can dream of water or a snake, so according to the interpretation of dreams, snake and water* ***have something*** *to do with ancestors* ***[Participant 15, female, 62 years].***
>
> *Some appear as fighting people in dreams, which just show that this person is troubled …* ***[Participant 20, male, 50 years].***
>
> *Sometimes I can dream about a person walking down the street, so it means that the illness is influenced by the satanic spirit* ***[Participant 10, male, 81 yrs].***
>
> *... seeing a butterfly or butterflies flying above my head, I know that an abnormal person will come [****Participant 10, male, 81 years].***
>
> *... when I see clothes, it means that the person is stressed. And/or the person will come dressed in this way* ***[Participant 8, male, 43 years].***

The preceding excerpts demonstrate extensively on the types of symbolic dreams experienced and their embedded meanings. What is also evident is that healers also deployed *'di taola'*, that is, divination bones for dream interpretation,

> *… when a person consults, I use the bones to confirm if the person is indeed the one, I dreamt about ... I see them with bones. I take the bones and throw them* ***[Participant 3; female, 26 years].***

> *... I confirm with these divine bones. Even when you see that this person has a mental illness, I will not heal the person without throwing the bones. I will call the person and throw the bones and check if it is true or not that this person has this mental illness. We use these divine bones to confirm what we saw in the dream …* ***[Participant 4, female, 84 years]***.

In this study, the results evidently suggest that dreaming is a critical and necessary ontology of experience for AIH in that dreams help facilitate mental illness case assessment, diagnosis, and treatment formulation. More important is the role of ancestral spirits that make dreaming possible. While this is the case, the mechanisms involved in the experience, manifestations, and interpretation of dreams appear to be better explained through the African spiritual perspective.

Discussion

This qualitative study explored from an insider's perspective, the characterisation, role, and embedded meanings of dreams particularly when experienced by AIH in the management of mental illness. Like previous studies (Bartholomew 2017; Moshabela *et al.* 2017; Ngobe 2015), the present study supports that dreaming is a spiritual encounter for AIH, and it is made possible by ancestral spirits. Past empirical studies by Edward (2011) and Nkosi (2012) also found that many African dream narratives imply that during sleep the dreamer achieves some communication or engages in dialogue with a spiritual or an ancestral agent whereby the communication is not only verbally limited, but may also include signs, pictures, and places to locate divination bones and medicinal plants. Although dreaming is a spiritual encounter (Nell 2014; Menczer 2014), in the context of traditional healing of mental illness, dreams can also be thought of as diagnostic and management tools (Bernard 2013). In this study, through dreams, ancestors communicated to AIH, patients with problems, and medicinal plants to use for their care. It follows that the phenomenon of 'dreaming on behalf and for the benefit of patients' has been proven correct. While this is the case, the mechanisms through which such a process is realized are better explained through the lenses of African spirituality.

In traditional African thought, dreaming is a spiritually mediated process involving the reciprocal interaction between ancestral spirits and the living. Through spirit, ancestors forewarn, foretell, and prepare the living of

future events (Tshifhumulo 2016; Bakow & Low 2018; Ngobe 2015; Menczer 2014), including guiding healers in the management of mental health problems. The language of dreams can be direct or symbolic, and with the latter, healers are better positioned to interpret symbolic dreams with the aid of *ditaola* or divination bones. The use of divination bones by AIH has been widely reported (Petrovska 2012; Mokgobi 2014; Sodi 2009; Sandford 2017). For example, in this study, divination bones were deployed to confirm the mental health problems of patients, including the validation of dreams. Therefore, within this context, dreams are a necessary tool that facilitates the assessment, diagnosis, and management of mental illness.

Sogolo (2003) supported by Baloyi and Ramose (2016) were right to point out that for typical Africans, human encounters such as death, ill health, dreams, and so forth, are always conceived through primary and secondary elaborations. African indigenous healers think of dreams, firstly, as a spiritual experience (i.e. primary explanations) intended to relay an important message to warn, prepare, or benefit the livelihoods of people in the world (i.e. secondary explanations) (Tshifhumulo 2016). It is within this context that the central thesis of this paper is strengthened, that is, the dream experience of some AIH is intended to improve the livelihoods of some community members (Ross 2010; Moshabela *et al.* 2017). At this juncture, it is worth reiterating that, while we accept that this notion might baffle traditional or empiricist scientists, for culturally oriented Africans, it is a relatable life experience.

Study Implications

In this study, dreams were characterised as psychospiritual phenomenon rather than a purely psychophysical experience. Consequently, the present study suggests that traditional etic studies will always be limited when studying dreams because the phenomenon interfaces between the physical, psychological and spiritual realms. It follows that a better analysis of dreams will always require a holistic or pluriverse approach. Therefore, more studies adopting this approach are warranted toward an improved understanding of the benefits of dreams in this context. With the understanding that some western trained clinicians reject or conceive of notions of spirituality as non-scientific (Gilbert 2020), such an attitude will continue impoverishing a psychology that is people centred. Consequently, with misunderstanding and underservicing of some clients and African clients in this context, an unethical conduct on the part of the service providers (Baloyi & Ramose (2016). Openness to

pluriversality as opposed to universality of human experience can be the antidote.

Limitation of the Study

Hadebe (1982) has long observed that the most difficulty encountered by researchers is that some participants believe that the researchers are a police officer investigating something. The same was observed in the present study. The aim of getting healers to speak openly about their dreams and healing experiences was met with some resistance by some. This may be reasoned to the notion that traditional healing is sacred and is guarded by ancestral spirits (Sodi 2009). Some healers' guardedness may have limited full exploration of their inner worlds of experience as it relates to the dream phenomenon. Translation of the generated data into English, including producing this report in the same language, could have compromised the quality of the studied phenomenon. Future studies may need to better navigate ways around the sacredness of spirituality matters, including language limitations. In addition, future researchers should evaluate and make comparative analysis of the role of dreams in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illnesses by AIH vis-à-vis vis Western methods.

Conclusions

The study of dreams has a long history, and in psychology, dreams have been understood predominantly to be an intrapsychic experience. The present study adds another dimension through the lenses of AIH, in which dreams are also a spiritual experience important in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness. The study underscores the influential role of ancestral spirits in traditional healing. The main finding of the study succoured our central thesis, that is, within the context of indigenous African healing, AIH can dream for the benefit of fellow community members (Moshabela *et al.* 2017), which is contrary to intrapsychic formulations. Understanding the dream experience in the African context requires familiarity with African spirituality and traditional healing.

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Perceptions of Black Pentecostal Pastors on Potential Collaboration with Mental Health Care Professionals: Insights from South Africa

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Abstract

The debate regarding the relevance of religion and spirituality in mental healthcare has remained vigorous overtime. Religious and psychological studies have supported the view that Mental Healthcare Professionals (MHCPs) and Pastors share the same commitment towards the alleviation of their service users' suffering. However, it is not well known as to what extent are these parties willing to collaborate their services for the mutual benefit or common good of service users. This qualitative study sought to explore and describe Black Pentecostal pastors' views regarding possible collaboration between themselves and MHCPs. A Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual (BPSS) framework was used to guide this study. A total of 19 participants were selected through purposive sampling and interviewed using semi-structured interviews. Data were analysed through Thematic Analysis approach (TA).

From the analysed data, three major themes emerged, and are as follows: (a) Pastors' expressed willingness to collaborate with MHCPs; (b) Pastors are willing to collaborate with MHCPs of all religious backgrounds; and (c) Pastors considered several factors before referring service users to MHCPs. Evident from the data was that some pastors had already made referrals to MHCPs while others had ongoing informal collaborations. In the main, it was found that Black Pentecostal pastors, although they held varying perceptions regarding collaboration, mostly held a positive attitude towards collaborating with MCHPs, especially those of a Christian background. The

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major implications of this study are two folds; a) from Black Pentecostal pastors perspective, there's room for collaboration with MHCPs, however, the latter should also be willing to collaborate, and b) there's an urgent need for the government to guide strategy on achieving this collaboration. These are considerations which could impact positively on service users' access to holistic mental health care services in contemporary South African context.

Keywords: Black Pentecostal pastors, MHCPs, Collaboration, intervention programme

Introduction

Documented evidence underscores the relevance of Christian faith and pastors in mental health care (e.g., Koenig 2012:15; Lloyd *et al.* 2023:352). Pastors have historically been entrusted with the responsibility of addressing fellow community members' spiritual and mental needs. Regarding mental health care, there are a several studies (e.g., Dein 2017; Kumar 2018; Koenig *et al.* 2019; Luchetti *et al.* 2021) proving on the positive contribution of religion to mental health and wellbeing. Koenig and colleagues noted that religious beliefs aided in the improved recovery from depression. Luchetti *et al.* (2021:7627) maintain that despite the noted significance of religiosity in mental health by previous researchers, a gap still exists regarding pastors' formal involvement and contribution in the mental health care delivery. Specifically, pastors have been rarely viewed as partners in community mental health care (Murambidzi 2016:3). In fact, some MHCPs have argued that religion has no place in mental health (Vergese 2008:233), an attitude which perhaps could account for studies (e.g., Janse van Rensburg, *et al.* 2014:43) which tended to suggest that most medically oriented professionals are less inclined to collaborate with pastors.

Even though collaboration rarely happens between pastors and MHCPs, it is common knowledge that when individuals experience mental health challenges, they prefer to consult with their pastors first before consulting MHCPs (Jackson 2017:18). For pastors, care for their service users experiencing mental health problems is usually informed by the Christian faith and methods (Murambidzi 2016:74). While such religious interventions have some value, they may be limited when used alone considering that health and wellbeing are influenced by an interplay of biopsychosocial and spiritual factors (Mauda 2022: 205). Therefore, managing congregants with mental

health problems may require formal collaborations between all important mental health role players. In the context of this study, it thus suffices to have pastors and MHCPs collaborate in the care and treatment of their service users. This is because more often, MHCPs and pastors use different methods and resources in the process of helping those who consult with them. Given the above, there is a need for both pastors and MHCPs to acknowledge each other's expertise and shortcomings if collaboration is to be realised (Mabitsela 2003:97). The present study sought to explore black Pentecostal pastors' views regarding possible collaboration between themselves and MHCPs.

Religion and spirituality are still to a great extent left out in the conception and management of mental health problems (Koenig 2012:14). A practice which is in stark contrast to reality on the ground as was highlighted in the preceding section. The neglect of faith and its influences to mental health has continued to limit the delivery of integrated or holistic mental health interventions. In a typical hospital setting, multi-disciplinary mental health care panels lack the participation of any type of spiritual practitioners including pastors (Greyvenstein 2018:4). Empirical studies (e.g., Hefti 2011; Saad *et al.* 2017) have supported their inclusion in such teams to help achieve holistic care of service users. Faith practitioners are also experts and sources of information required for efficient delivery of holistic health services (Greyvenstein 2018:4). Undeniably, there are valuable lessons that all involved in mental health care delivery could learn from each other if they were to collaborate. Mohr (2011:552) sustains this argument by indicating that to integrate spirituality into treatment, western trained health care practitioners needed to be open, sensitive, and willing to learn about the role spirituality plays in their patients' lives. Given the above, a culturally competent therapist, should, at the very least, be willing to explore and address the influences of religious and spiritual beliefs on patients' health and wellbeing (Henderson 2018: 22).

Literature Review

Collaborative studies have tended to yield varying results overtime. Previous studies have demonstrated that Pentecostal pastors held varying attitudes towards collaborating with MCHPs. For example, while in the USA and UK pastors seem to be willing to collaborate with MHCPs (Leavey 2010: 18), in some African countries, the position seems to be different. A study by Kpobi and Swartz (2018a: 2) in Ghana displayed a strong desire to be formally recognised for their work and abilities, suggesting that they perceived

themselves as equally knowledgeable and skilled in mental health issues. Based on that understanding, many of them envisioned a system in which they worked alongside doctors to provide services to patients in hospitals. The study by Kpobi and Swartz (2018a : 2) also found that although Pentecostal pastors acknowledge the place of biomedicine, they held a view that their methods work better than biomedical methods. While this is the case, documented evidence also suggests that, unlike MHCPs, some religious and spiritual professionals are open to collaboration (e.g., Hardwick 2013: 154; Okello, Sirera & Otieno 2021: 37-38). As for pastors, while studies continued to yield varying views, but it is evident that they are more open to collaborating with MHCPs of the Christian background (Hardwick 2013), yet not open to do so with African spiritualists (Mulutsi 2021: 59).

Regarding collaboration between MCHPs and pastors, a study by Kamanga *et al.* (2019:51) revealed that pastors believed that there was no trust between doctors and pastors. Equally, pastors were suspicious that doctors undermined them for they lacked knowledge regarding the pathophysiology of mental illnesses. Doctors were also perceived to lack faith in the power of God. For instance, a pastor who took part in Kamanga and colleagues' study specifically said: *'Health professionals and pastors do not trust each other hence it is difficult to work together and refer patients to each other for more holistic care'*. A 2022 meeting convened by the American Psychiatry Associations' foundation brought together 'leaders of multiple faith traditions, psychiatrists, and mental health professionals to discuss how they might better work together to promote well-being among patients, members of various faiths, and themselves' (Carr 2022: 1). Essentially, despite the various barriers and widespread scepticism between healers from each end, formal collaboration seems to hold a promise including expanding reach of mental health care (Ae-Ngibise *et al.* 2010; Carr 2022;). What is promising is that most Black Pentecostal pastors acknowledge that there was a need for themselves and MHCPs to collaborate (Ae-Ngibise *et al.* 2010).

Pentecostal Pastors' Preferences Regarding Collaboration with MHCPs

Studies exploring pastors' views regarding collaboration in the South African context are generally lacking. One study discovered that pastors advocated for faith-based treatments to be included in mental health care, whilst they also showed preference towards intra-collaborations with Christian oriented health

professionals (see Kruger 2012: 68). Likewise, in America, Stanford and Philpott (2011: 288) found that Baptist senior pastors were likely to refer their congregants to MHCPs they knew to be Christian. While these studies help shed some light on this phenomenon, both are outdated. Another limitation, regarding Kruger's 2012 study is that, the study was carried out in an urban and affluent setting with Afrikaans speaking church leaders who possessed at least a Bachelor's degree in theology, something which many Black Pentecostal pastors lack. As such, Kruger's study cannot be taken to be representtative of the voices of all pastors operating in the South African context.

A recent study by Okello and colleagues (2021:38) in Kenya revealed that pastors indeed preferred referring people with mental health problems to other pastors, something coined, intra-referral. This study replicated findings of an earlier study by Ae-Ngibise *et al.* (2010:563), which revealed that many of the traditional healers and faith healers (pastors) shared the sentiments that they would normally refer a patient to another healer when they found the condition very difficult to manage. Another picture was painted earlier by Mabitsela (2003:93), whereby it was revealed that Black Pentecostal pastors collaborated with some categories of MHCPs. Specifically, Mabitsela's study revealed that Black Pentecostal pastors collaborated only with social workers and police officers as compared to psychologists. The participants in Mabitsela's study cited the following reasons for their reluctance to collaborate with other categories of MHCPs. Firstly, professional psychological services were seen as very expensive for most of their members. Secondly, majority of congregants (service users) were not familiar with western orientated mental health care services. Thirdly, psychological service facilities were not readily available in township and rural settings.

Pentecostal pastors seem to accuse psychologists of ignoring the influence of faith in mental health care but only concentrate physical and psychological factors (Mabitsela 2003:94). Although Mabitsela's study provided some insights into views of Black Pentecostal pastors, it was limited in terms of the sample size that was used and the place wherein it took place (Soshanguvhe, Tshwane, South Africa). As such, the findings cannot be extrapolated to the entirety of the pastoral population in South Africa yet the study was conducted almost twenty-two years ago. Certainly, there could be some paradigm shift regarding Black Pentecostal perceptions regarding collaboration with MHCPs. Generally, in the South African context, studies documenting the views of Black Pentecostal pastors' views on collaborating with MHCPs are scanty.

Theoretical Framework

This study was carried out within the Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual (BPSS) framework. The BPSS model of mental illness acknowledges the importance of biological, psychological, social, and spiritual factors as determinants of psychopathology (Sulmasy 2002:6). Thus, the BPSS model represents a much more acceptable and inclusive model of understanding mental illness**.** It is an extension to the widely used and existing Bio-Psycho-Social model coined by George Engel in 1977 (Hefti 2011:612). For this study, the model was chosen because it integrates religion/spirituality as a fourth dimension (Hefti 2011: 612) to interpret, assess, diagnose, and treat mental illness. According to Winiarski (1997:6-7) the BPSS model assists us in incorporating knowledge from other disciplines.

Moreover, the BPSS model provides a platform for various professionals to share and exchange knowledge, work in collaboration and above all displays their expertise for the common good of the patient. The BPSS model's multidimensional strategy aligns with contemporary ideas and intervention frameworks like the Task Shifting and Collaborative models, which advocate for enhancing mental health services by acknowledging and including non-specialist mental health providers (Murambidzi 2016:104).

Research Methodology

This study was undertaken under a qualitative research methodological approach. Qualitative research seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population it involves (Mack *et al.* 2005:1). The exploratory research design was thus found appropriate since the study sought to explore and describe how Black Pentecostal pastors' views on regarding collaboration in mental health care. Participants for the present study were selected through the purposive sampling strategy. Participants were recruited by the first researcher, whose himself a Black Pentecostal pastor and a licenced clinical psychologist, through networks of leaders of the Limpopo Pastors' Fraternal body and the Polokwane United Pastors. Only the pastors who were willing to participate in the study were interviewed.

The participants were selected regardless of years of experience, size of congregation, educational qualification, gender, or socio-economic status of the church to ensure that there was variety with respect to the key factors in this study. Pentecostal churches are led by noticeably young pastors as compared to their counterparts in the mainline churches such as the Orthodox, Catho-

lics, Anglicans, and Lutherans (Kgatle 2022:5). Data were gathered using semi-structured in-depth interviews. A total of nineteen (19) pastors were interviewed. Thirteen of the participants were interviewed in English as their preferred language while six were interviewed in Sepedi, the dominant local language in Polokwane. Amongst the 19 participants, Sixteen (16) of the participants were male, while only 3 were females. Each interview took approximately 45-60 minutes.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted in a non-directive style and a semi-structured interview guide facilitated the interviewing. The guide consisted of open-ended questions which were used to elicit the participant's views regarding collaboration. Data derived through the semi-structured individual interviews were analysed through Thematic Analysis (TA). TA is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. The audio-taped interviews were transcribed by the researcher and in the process, listening to each interview, typing out each word verbatim. For validity checking, some of the participants were telephonically contacted to verify what they had said during the interviews. After the initial transcriptions, the transcripts were reviewed by an independent reviewer.

The Sepedi interviews were first transcribed in vernacular language by research assistants and were then translated to English by an experienced language translator and senior lecturer. Subsequently, the interviews were analysed through TA which is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. In the process, the researcher adopted the following steps of inductive data analysis as adopted from Braun and Clark (2006:79). This method enabled us to: familiarise ourselves with our data, generate initial codes, searching for themes, review them and define and name them. The last stage was for the researchers to summarise the principal themes, analytic narrative, and data extracts and produce a report.

Ethical Considerations

Permission for the Study

For the purposes of this study, permission was sought and obtained from University of Limpopo's Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) prior the commencement of the study. Permission was granted on the 20/02/2019 and the project number as TREC/02/2019. The researcher also approached the Limpopo Pastors' Fraternal for permission to interview their affiliates. The

researcher was then sent a data base of the Limpopo Pastors' Fraternal and Polokwane United Pastors (PUP) affiliated pastors.

Informed Consent

Research participants are entitled to full information regarding the reasons, aims and purpose of an investigation (Christensen, Jonson & Turner 2014: 260). When contacting the potential participants for this study, the researcher fully identified himself with the study participants and the participants were briefed about the nature and purpose of the study. The participants who accepted to participate in this study were requested to sign a Consent Form to ensure that they agreed to participate in the study. Furthermore, prospective participants were informed that participating in this study is voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time they wished to during data collection. The researcher also openly discussed with the participants the potential benefits and risks associated with participating in the study and that there were no monetary gains for participating in the study. In addition, the participants were also informed of how data from the study would be used in the research.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Coffelt (2017:1) defines confidentiality as separating or modifying any personal, identifying information provided by the participants from the data. Thus, the researcher has the responsibility to protect the participant from harm by altering any identifying personal information that may be revealed during the interview. The issue of confidentiality and dissemination of information was discussed with the participants before the interviews were conducted. Further, participants were assured that their names and identities will remain anonymous and confidential throughout the research process. In this study, the researchers did not mention names of the participants or the names of their churches or location. Instead, Code names were used. Furthermore, all audio tapes and recordings were destroyed after the analysis of results was concluded. Research data was always stored on a password protected computer which was kept in the researcher's office. To ensure privacy in this study, the participants were interviewed privately in their church offices and homes. Thus, the participant was not interviewed in a group setting.

Debriefing for Participants

The researcher was aware that the research could lead to discomfort and some emotional reactions by some participants. In an event where any of the above happens, affected participants were to be referred for debriefing to psychologists in the local hospitals. In addition, the researcher would debrief participants who report being distressed by the interview process. However, besides some occasional emotional comments on past experiences with mentally ill persons, neither overt nor covert emotional distresses were registered and none of the participants opted to end the interview due to the increasing distress.

Findings

The aim of this study was to explore and understand the perceptions of Black Pentecostal pastors regarding possible collaboration with MHCP in the treatment and management of mental health problems. A total number of 19 participants took part in this study. Of the 19, 16 were males while only 3 were females. Three major themes emerged from the data. The themes were as follows: (a) Pastors' expressed willingness to collaborate with MHCPs; (b) Pastors are willing to collaborate with MHCPs of all religious backgrounds; and (c) Pastors considered several factors before referring service users to MHCPs.

Pastors' Expressed Willingness to Collaborate with MHCPs

An overwhelming majority of participants held a positive attitude towards collaborating with professionals in mental health care. Evident in the data was that some pastors had already made referrals to MHCPs yet others had ongoing informal collaborations. What is also evident in the data is the one-directional nature of referrals, that is, pastors were the only ones referring patients. It is in this regard that the participants emphasised on the need for bi-directional referral systems for improved care of service users. Furthermore, the most indicated that MHCPs were scientific experts endowed with special abilities to treat mental illness by God, hence they were willing to collaborate with them. This finding is echoed by the pastors' voices herein:

> *I have no problems with professionals. They are doing their job. And they must do their job. That is why I said, as for me, If I pray for*

> *somebody, if I see that this person is healed, I want her to go back and be checked by the doctor so that she can also have confidence that she is fine* **(Participant 8, Female, 46 yrs).**

> *I will refer them to those people because they are educated to help people's lives, we are …. in fact we are working hand in glove as a unit* (**Participant 1, Male, 35 yrs).**

> *… I don't have a problem …. Even if it were not mental illness, I could still send them to hospitals because I think those are the relevant people that can assist in those areas* **(Participant 9, Male, 35 yrs).**

While it is evident in the data that pastors held a positive attitude towards collaborating with MHCPs, a few others had some ambivalence.

> *There is no need for us to work together or collaborate. You know why? As a pastor, I do not force a person that I should pray for them* **(Participant 3, Male, 32 yrs).**

> *Yes, for something like an accident or physical injury, but I have never seen a case that I would say I had to refer to the hospital* **(Participant 19, Male, 50 yrs).**

Pastors are Willing to Collaborate with MHCPs of All Religious Backgrounds

It also emerged that Black Pentecostal pastors were willing to collaborate with MHCPs irrespective of their religious background. While this was the case, some pastors maintained that if the MHCPs and themselves shared the same faith, it even had some added advantage. The following extracts lend support:

> *Our faith, whether you believe in what we believe in, is not a factor. But if we happen to find that s/he is one from our faith, then that is an added advantage, but that is not what we pursue. That is not our criteria* **(Participant 17, Male, 49 yrs).**

> *To be honest. I really do not care (giggles) whether they are in the same faith with me or not* **(Participant 7, Male, 51yrs).**

> *I wouldn't necessarily want to say that I do that, or those issues of religion or faith. There are doctors that are not Christians but are particularly good in what they do* **(Participant 14, Female, 31 yrs).**

> *No, many are times, I do not look at the fact that the professional is from the same faith with me. It is just a matter of saying, 'Go to health professionals, they will help you* **(Participant 16, Male, 38 yrs).**

The data also revealed that while the pastors were willing to collaborate with mental health providers who did not practice their religion, they still preferred those of their religious background.

> *We prefer to send those people to those with the same faith as we have. We prefer to send them there because we do not want different knowledge. We want the same knowledge that we have for those people to give them the same material that we have* **(Participant 5, Male, 31).**

> *I always prefer to refer to those who are of the same faith because, when you refer someone, instead of criticising or destroying the individual because of where the referral is coming from, they will be keen to help* **(Participant 4, Male, 39).**

> *There is a specific person that we know that they will understand both the spiritual and the psychological. So, we refer, and we also help as we refer, we talk to that person* **(Participant 10, Female, 52 yrs).**

> *Yes. I do. I normally prefer medical doctors that are born again because those who are not born again, they do not understand that there are demonic attacks* **(Participant 11, Male, 47 yrs).**

> *Yes. In the same faith because I do not think I can take somebody to a different faith from mine* **(Participant 12, Male, 53 yrs).**

> *Yes, the one I work with is a pastor. We share the same faith. Even when he is treating people, he also understands that he will pray first before counselling the people, before doing anything and will even advise family members that, you see such cases, I am a medical officer, I have this profession but you see, because I am a pastor and*

> *I understand these things, such cases sometimes need prayers* **(Participant 13, Male, 29 yrs).**

Pastors Considered Several Factors before Referring Service Users to MHCPs

Several factors were reportedly influential to pastors' decision to refer service users to MCHPs. More amplified were the influential role of families of service users, accessibility of MHCPs relative to the church's geographical location, understanding that mental illness resulted from an interplay of factors, and cost of professional health care services. The following extracts amplify the determining factors influential to pastors referral of service users to MCHPs:

> *It all depends on the family like I said, because they are the one who incur the costs. We give the family that latitude. But we just say to the family take them to the psychiatrist. We may not have the list of them. But we just in]dicate to the family that this case needs a psychiatrist* **(Participant 7, Male, 51yrs).**

> *If it is somebody reachable, then I can recommend that one. But if they are no reachable, I can recommend to any* **(Participant 9, Male, 35 yrs).**

> *And, health professionals are supposed to play a role, since they can know and are experienced a lot. Above all, mental illness has multiple causes* **(Participant 18, Male, 54 yrs).**

> *I think it is a good thing because like I said, not everything is totally spiritual. As a lay person, you will only know a few things but when you take somebody to health professionals, you find that they are helpful* **(Participant 10, Female, 52 yrs).**

The study data evidently reveals that Black Pentacostal Pastors have a positive attitude towards collaborating with MHCPs in the management of mental health. More obvious in the data, is their willingness or preferential attitude towards collaborating with MHCPs of the same religious background. Whilst this is the case, numerous factors went onto influence their decision making process.

Discussion of Findings

The aim of this study was to explore and describe Pentecostal pastors' views regarding possible collaboration with MHCPs. In the main, study findings revealed that Pentecostal pastors held mixed views regarding collaboration with MHCPs, even though most supported the move towards formal collaborations. While some pastors have started referring service users to MHCPs, the latter were not reciprocating the referrals. The study findings replicate previous findings regarding Pentecostal pastors' willingness to collaborate in mental health care inspite of a few not in support (Hardwick 2013: Okello *et al.* 2021; Kpobi & Swartz 2018a). What seems to influence the positive attitude towards collaboration is that pastors have long understood that mental illness is influenced by an interplay of biological, psychological, social and spiritual factors (Kruger 2012:66). It is in this regard that some pastors operated within the confines of the Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual (BPSS) paradigm of mental illness, which could also explain why some are reported to have been referring their service users to their counterparts (Stanford & Philpott 2011: 288; Mabitsela 2003;93).

Further support comes from Payne (2009:362) who has long reported that pastors who are able to utilise their spiritual expertise, and refer out when needed, prove to be extremely effective service providers. Meanwhile, the demonstrated negative attitude towards collaboration by some pastors could be revealing of their limited insight regarding holism and mental illness causality explanations. Regretably, such pastors akin to MHCPs who have previously been reported to have a negative attitude towards collaborating with other stakeholders (Kmanga *et al.* 2019; Sullivan *et al.* 2013), could potentially sabotage efforts towards formal collaborations while hindering optimal or holistic interventions for service users (Payne 2009 : 363). Besides, what may appear as a negative attitude towards collaboration may as well be a defensive strategy revealing their lack of insight regarding the influences of belief and culture in mental health. Previous studies (e.g., Kamanga *et al.* 2019; Sullivan *et al.* 2013) lend support to this assertion. For instance, a study by Osafo (2016: 498) revealed that MHCPs lacked knowledge on the influence of belief and culture on mental illness and management. It therefore becomes prudent that efforts be targeted at addressing this weakness. It is necessary for both pastors and professionals to continue sharing spaces and champion the collaborative imperative to help bridge the knowledge gap (Rogers *et al.* 2013; Rudolfsson & Milstein 2019).

More importantly, professional training programmes needed to revise their curricula to include the influences of religion, spirituality and culture. Specifically because the influence of belief and culture needed to be considered from the point of assessment to treatment planning and intervention (Grossklauss 2015:34). Several researchers and health practitioners (e.g. Janse van Rensburg *et al.* 2014:44; Hefti 2011: 612) have noted and advocated the same before. This is crucial in that formal collaborations have the potential to improve mental health care delivery and close the widening treatment gap especially in South Africa and other LMICs where available mental health services are inadequate.

The BPSS model emerges as a promising framework to guide mental health care provision in modern times (Moteiro 2015:86). Essentially, the BPSS model acknowledges diversity of cultures and religions (Monteiro 2015:87). The multidimensional nature of the BPSS model resonates with current thinking and intervention models such as the Task shifting and Collaborative models which posit the scaling up of mental health services through the recognition and involvement of other non-specialist mental health providers (Murambidzi 2016:104).

Collaborative conversations between all important mental health stakeholders need to be sustained especially with governments taking a leading role. This will help inform policy and strategy development while also responding to any challenges that could seek to regress efforts towards achieving holistic mental health care systems of care (Carr 2022; Ae-Ngibise *et al.* 2010). Such efforts could also help bridge the divide between service providers including mitigating the existing intra-and-inter stigmatising attitudes (Sullivan *et al.* 2013:10). Another factor worthy of research attention is the significance of collaboration on the basis of homophily, i.e., like mindedness or similar beliefs (Hardwick 2013; Okello *et al.* 2021:38). As was evident in this study, while the pastors were open to collaborating with MHCPs irrespective of cultural background, it was evident that they preferred Christian oriented health practitioners. One argument that was offered for this preference relates to the fact that like-mindedness constituted an advantage for all sharing the same faith in mental health care (Hardwick 2013:3; Kruger 2012:66). The argument of whether sharing similar beliefs constituted an opportunity or challenge requires further scientific investigation. Equally, how factors such as the costs of professional psychological services, inaccessibility of MHCPs especially in rural areas, and service user socio-economic status influence collaborative efforts (Murambidzi 2016:83; Mabitsela 2003:94) require

continuous interrogation, with government having to play an important role.

Conclusion

The present study established that Black Pentecostal pastors although they held varying perceptions regarding collaboration, they mostly held a positive attitude towards the imperative. While several challenges (i.e., practitioner negative attitudes towards each other, preference on the basis of shared belief, cost and accessibility of professional services) still confront efforts towards collaboration, through cross-functional knowledge sharing practices and government support the challenges can be mitigated. In this study, the findings signify a clarion call for MHCPs and pastors including other stakeholders to work together for a common course. In light of the study findings, MHCPs should be willing to share with pastors some basic knowledge about mental illness and treatment from biomedical perspectives. Similarly, Black Pentecostal pastors should avail themselves to educate MHCPs about their Christian approaches towards understanding and managing mental health problems. Such efforts could help inform policy, mental health curricula, and strategies, all of which, could contribute towards expanding reach of mental health care or ushering in holistic mental health care systems.

Study Recommendations and Implications

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that the South African government should be playing a leading role or facilitating the collaboration agenda. Clear policy and strategy are necessary seeing that on the pastors' side, they support collaborations with MHCPs. Through relevant government departments and institutions, there should also be monitoring and support to enhance a move towards collaborative interventions in mental health care in South Africa. Educational spaces between all important stakeholders particularly health care providers should be encouraged and sustained. These could be important avenues for attitudinal change and cross-functional knowledge sharing to be achieved. Future research could also be conducted with pastors and other mental health stakeholders to help inform best practices and a responsive mental health curricula. Essentially, the major implications of the present study are two folds; a) from Black Pentecostal pastors perspective, there's room for collaboration with MHCPs, however, the latter should also be willing to collaborate, and b) there's an urgent need for the government to

guide strategy on achieving this collaboaration while also making it possible for mental health care services to be easily accessible and affordable. These are aspects which could impact positively on service users' access to holistic health care services in contemporary South African context. The BPSS emerges as a promising framework to guide policy, strategy, and formulation of holistic mental health interventions. More collaborative studies employing the BPSS as the guiding framework are recommended. Such a consideration could also help test the theory's explanatory power.

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Competing Interests
The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper**.**

Disclaimer
This paper represents the opinions of the participants who took part in the main study, and is the product of professional research. It is not meant to represent the opinions of the authors or the NIHSS.

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Users' Perceptions of the Effects of Instagram's Lifestyle Posts on Mental Health among South Africans

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Abstract

Globally, social media posts are a common way of social expression and communication among the users of these sites. Social media users often use these platforms to share their views about a wide range of issues including lifestyle, fashion trends, business, entrepreneurship, etc. Additionally, Insta-gram is the platform commonly used to communicate countless messages among its users. Some studies have shown that this platform has serious ramifications on mental health, particularly among teenagers and young adults. Most of these studies were conducted in the United States of America where the downside of Instagram is well documented. In this paper, the focus is on the users' perceptions on the effects of Instagram posts on the mental health among its users in South Africa. The theoretical underpinning of this paper is anchored by social identity theory and the uses and gratification theory. Also, this study centres around adults from the ages of 18 to 65 years. Qualitative research approach was adopted, and the data collection process was restricted by data saturation. The researchers used semi-structured interviews to collect data from the purposefully selected participants. Accordingly, reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyse data. The study found that some Instagram posts have

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serious ramifications on the users' mental health. In addition, the participants posited that lifestyle posts have negative effects on their mental health. The study recommends that the users of this social media platform should consider using certain features such as filters and time restriction to circumvent the negative effects of Instagram posts on their mental health. The study further recommends that users of this online platform experiencing some mental health challenges should consider professional help to deal with these rippling effects.

Keywords: Effects, Instagram, Users, Mental Health, South Africa

Introduction

The culture of sharing lifestyle content is common among Instagram users. The users of this blogging platform share a variety of lifestyle content such as wellness, fashion, entertainment, beauty, and tourism (Nabonik 2019:10; Asmal 2022:22). Often users with a plethora of followers share picture-perfect images based on their lifestyle. In addition, this content is likely to influence the other users on this platform. However, it should be noted that the social media content is shared on multiple platforms (Zsila & Reyes 2023:19). This means that the Instagram content can be shared by the content creator or their followers on other platforms i.e., TikTok, Facebook, WhatsApp, X etc. This trend has the potential to magnify Instagram content on other platforms. Also, the footprint of this content is no longer restricted to a single platform (Åström 2021:40). Thus, the content is more likely to influence a larger audience in a short space of time (Boer, Van Den Eijnden, Boniel-Nissim, Wong, Inchley, Badura & Stevens 2020:95). In other words, social influencers thrive in these communities. According to Nesi (2020:118), social media influencers are individuals who have more than 5,000 followers on a single social media account. Notably, most of the influencers have multiple accounts on the Web 2.0 platforms. Accordingly, this elevates the status of the influencers. In some instances, the same followers generate revenue through clickbait, particularly the number of likes per post shared on Instagram.

The monetisation of the social media posts has amplified the influence of the influencers. Noteworthy, the elements of advertising have also transformed how influencers create and share their content. Often, the influencers create their content based on their lifestyle. The nature of the content generated by the influencers presents an expensive and flamboyant lifestyle. Most of the

influencers share posts enjoying expensive beverages in the upmarket restaurants. For Mda (2018:109) and Valkenburg (2022:105), the attributes of some of the social media posts are the macrocosm of instant gratification and conspicuous consumption. These aspects are pivotal in the context of this paper. The influencers represent fundamental aspects of these concepts as explicated by Mda (2018:109). The literature highlights the essence of these factors about the effects of Instagram on mental health issues. Thus, both instant gratification and conspicuous consumption play a role in mental health issues.

Literature Review

Lifestyle is a way of life and refers to how individuals curate their lives anchored by their values, attitudes, habits, social behaviour, and consumption patterns. According to Couldry (2012:11), this is influenced by culture, religion, personal preferences, and environment. It underscores both intangible and intangible factors. 'Tangible factors relate specifically to demographic variables, i.e., an individual's demographic profile, whereas intangible factors concern the psychological aspects of an individual such as personal values, preferences, and outlooks' (Couldry 2012:12). Notably, the public platforms such as mainstream media as well as social media represents a myriad of lifestyles. In the context of this study, lifestyle is restricted to personal behaviour, habits, and consumption patterns.

Social media is imperative in exposing its users to various lifestyle content cultivated by the users. However, algorithms play a huge role towards the promotion of some lifestyles (Giedd 2020:130). Most of the common lifestyle content on social media focuses on luxury and opulence, health, fashion, social events, and photography. These aspects are mainly expressed through vlogging and photography. Blogging sites control the consumption patterns of users by feeding them similar content without any guidelines to circumvent adverse effects. Often the excessive consumption of similar content can trigger adverse or positive effects on the users.

Instagram is a content-sharing site owned by Meta Platforms (Hinshaw & Eddy 2023:290). It is also known as a social networking site that allows users to publish photos and videos to their audience. In addition, this platform allows users to interact with content generated and shared by their fellow users. They can like, share, and comment on the uploaded content (photos and videos). The platform has included a story feed that allows users to post their stories (Asmal 2022:38). Other features on the platform include reels and lives.

In recent, times the platform has been under the spotlight for negatively affecting its users' mental health, particularly teenagers. Most of the studies that discovered this demise were conducted in the USA. Thus, this study seeks to explore the effects of this social networking service in the South African context.

In the United States of America, a study was conducted to investigate the impact of social media on mental health issues (McCall 2021:3). This study revealed that teenagers and young adults are susceptible to mental disorders emanating from social media usage. They also discovered that the intensity of the use of Instagram can lead to elevated stress levels, depression, and anxiety (McCall 2021:3). The intensity of consuming online content of this ilk on Instagram has a bearing on stress levels among the users (Kasirye 2022:10). Some of the mental health problems are caused by pressures to achieve physical appearance standards perpetuated by the influencers (Lukose, Mwansa & Ngandu 2023:305). Weight loss content is prevalent on Instagram as the users share pictures and videos on this blogging site. As such, physical appearance issues trigger mental health problems among the users. The posts on this platform promote weight loss through exercise and other methods such as liposuction. There is a myriad of self-proclaimed fitness trainers who regularly post gym workouts and weight loss routines. In some instances, the same fitness trainers encourage the other users to follow their fitness programmes. Thus, studies underscore that content of this nature is likely to cause mental health harm. Some users fail to reach their weight loss targets and they subsequently plunge into depression and other mental health problems (Lin, Zou, Hsu & Chen 2023:11). Nonetheless, similar content that promotes fitness can improve the mental health of the followers of these influencers. It has been discovered that most of the users give positive feedback regarding fitness content.

In terms of instant gratification, some of the social media content compels the users to try to achieve their personal goals instantly (Makananise & Malatji 2021:89). Realistically instant satisfaction of buying the exorbitant attire that you admired from the influencers on Instagram. In contrast, the lack of affordability due to financial constraints can trigger mental disorders. In this context, the forex traders have a propensity to sell the same idea of instant gratification. They use this weakness to attract investors on Instagram. It is worth noting that some of the influencers create positive content that encourages other users to deal with their mental health problems (Åström 2021:11). In other words, these influencers highlight the ramifications of luxurious content on Instagram. This aspect amplifies the significance of Instagram towards galvanising their followers about mental health. Nonetheless, the commercial

nature of this platform overshadows the positive wellness content. As highlighted in the purpose of this study, lifestyle posts are more prevalent on this vlogging site. Accordingly, this factor is also influenced by the algorithms. Malatji and Lesame (2019:84), posit that majority of the social media users prefer sharing their personal experiences with their friends, and followers. Similarly, most social media users are fond of consuming the lifestyles of their fellow users. The influencers generate revenue through adverts and ambassadorship that are amplified through clickbait. Thus, this phenomenon has an impact on the algorithms (Boer *et al.* 2020:95). This, then, means that most users are likely to experience trending content. The intensity of Instagram content consumption exposes users to mental disorders. Furthermore, some studies underscored that the ramifications of online content trigger alcohol abuse among users. In the South African context, alcohol abuse is one of the social ills that contribute to other detrimental issues such as road carnage, violence, gender-based violence, and crime. The literature explicates that the intensity of Instagram usage has a bearing on binge drinking. It is well-documented that alcohol advertisement is popular on the social media platforms.

Both celebrities and influencers promote lifestyle content that glorifies alcohol brands (Alhabash, Mundel, Deng, McAlister, Quilliam, Richards & Lynch 2021:561). Instagram is not an exception as far as advertising alcohol through influencers is concerned. Social media experts suggest that the consumption patterns are not the same on Instagram (Jin, Muqaddam & Ryu 2019: 572). First, some users engage with Instagram content to pass the time without any form of intensity. This group of users hardly invests their emotions in the blogging content. Second, intermittent users with low intensity are not influenced by Instagram's lifestyle posts. This constituency visits their Instagram accounts after a while. In other words, they are not addicted to the platform.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts both the Social Identity and Uses and Gratification theories to expound on the effects of Instagram posts on mental health among users in the South African context.

Social Identity Theory

According to Islam (2015:450), Social Identity Theory (SIT) expounds on the way individuals categorise themselves based on their social experiences and

belief systems. It also posits that issues of self-identity are not restricted to in-group and out-group components. However, it underscores that people can cultivate their own identities. In addition, Islam (2015:450) states that 'SIT is a classic social psychology theory that attempts to explain intergroup conflict as a function of group-based self- definitions'. This theory is apt in the context of this study as it captures psychological aspects of self-definitions and socialisation. Furthermore, the theory magnifies the essence of interrogating the effects of lifestyle posts on mental health issues among individuals who belong to the meta-community. Meta community, in this regard, extrapolates the key aspects of in-group and out-group which are imperative in this research. The social identity theory expounds on social definitions and socialisation (Fourie 2010:200). Thus, this canon highlights that Instagram is one of the popular social media platforms that permits its users to shape their identity and the trajectory of socialisation. This aspect unfolds in different categories ranging from pop culture, education, entertainment, wellness, and socialisation. This component of the theory is linked to social integration within uses and gratification theory. Both canons accentuate that Instagram like other social media platforms shapes social definitions and socialisation among its users. Also, these elements inform the users of the kind of content they engage with on Instagram. Furthermore, these underscore the content they produce on the same platform. Moreover, social definitions and socialisation encapsulate how Instagram affects the mental well-being of its users as far as lifestyle posts are concerned. This is the salient point that is argued in this paper.

The Uses and Gratification Theory

The Uses and Gratification Theory analyses how people use different types of media for different purposes (Fourie 2010:78). Also, this theory posits that media audiences trigger different facets of their personal needs from media content. According to Fourie (2007:78) and Kasirye (2022:10), the uses and gratification theory is rooted in three psychological components. *First*, it deals with the need for personal identity which underscores how people use media to identify with the content and the group it represents. *Second*, it applies integration which is rooted within the attributes of social integration. Also, this is what triggers how some media audiences use the content for social integration (Malatji & Lesame 2019:84). *Third*, it expounds on social interaction and escapism which is the major function of mainstream media. According to these three components, the uses and gratification theory is pertinent in the context

of this study. It highlights how social media users use the content for personal identity in terms of the status of the lifestyle posts that they engage with on Instagram. *Additionally*, this theory highlights cardinal aspects of this study as it addresses integration of the social media users. This is in terms of the kind of content they engage with to be part of a specific social group. Furthermore, social interaction and escapism are also the canon that needs to be highlighted as far as this theory is concerned in this study. Often, social media users particularly on Instagram use this platform for different purposes as accentuated in the three components as highlighted in this theory. Accordingly, the data collected through semi-structured interviews would respond to some of these aspects as explicated in this theory. On one hand, the intensity of using social media in this case Instagram, will also correlate with personal identity. On the other hand, the social integration aspect is infused through the kind of Instagram content that the users engage with, which is a salient aspect of this study. It also covers how social integration affects the mental well-being of these users. Moreover, in terms of social interaction, this component contextualises the data by zooming in on the social engagement facet between the users and the producers of the Instagram content. Thus, these aspects demonstrate that users and gratification theory are essential in the context of this paper.

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research approach which is considered ideal in exploring the effects of Instagram's lifestyle posts on the users' mental health. Thus, the qualitative approach underscores that human research is cardinal when exposing and studying elements that need human beings to reflect on their behaviour, identity, culture, creed, and languages (Creswell & Creswell 2022:44). In this context, the focus is on how social media particularly Instagram affects the users'mental health which needs their reflection and perceptions. In this case, the participants were sampled through scientific methods that are in line with this research approach.

Research Design

In this research, exploratory research design was employed to explore the effects of Instagram lifestyle posts on the users' mental health in the South African context. In addition, this design is pertinent as it highlights the key facets of how digital media affect human behaviour.

Sampling

South Africa has over seven million Instagram users (McInnes 2024:102). It is worth noting that Instagram is the fourth most used social media platform in South Africa. For the purpose of this study, purposive sampling was used to select and contact 30 participants, aged 18-65 years. Purposive sampling is a non-probability technique where researchers select volunteers who will aid the study in achieving its objectives by using their experience (Leedy & Ormrod 2019:32). In addition, the use of this sampling technique to select relevant participants included the of use direct messaging on Instagram to contact some of the potential participants to take part in this study. Participants responded through the same direct messaging channel. Thus, the researcher shared the consent letter with these individuals, and they were willing to take part in this study. Also, ten of these participants indicated that they could only take part in this study through virtual platforms and the other 10 were available to participate in this study physically. Accordingly, arrangements were made with those who were willing to take part online and interviews were conducted virtually through Google Meet platform. As such, the proceedings were also recorded on the same platform. The individuals that were available to be interviewed in person were contacted and apt arrange-ments were made for them to participate in the interviews. It is worth noting that the number of participants that took part in this study was also informed by data saturation. From the 20 participants who took part in this study both virtually and physically, the researchers were satisfied that the data saturation had been reached. Additionally, this aspect was informed by the quality of responses from the participants after participant 18 the subsequent participants proved that the data collection process was redundant as they were repeating similar responses. Although this was initially reflected in participants 14 and 15 the researcher had to proceed with the process to ascertain that the following five participants were not yielding any new information based on their responses.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data. According to Creswell and Creswell (2022:124), data collection methods such as semi-structured interviews are employed to gather qualitative data. They entail a dialogue between the participant and the researcher, facilitated by an adaptable framework of subjects and open-ended inquiries. An interview guide with a list of questions was used to moderate the interviews. In this regard, the focus of

the semi-structured interviews was informed by the aim and objectives of this research. Primarily, the questions that were posed to the participants during the data collection process underscored how Instagram users rely on this platform for information, education as well as entertainment. The major attribute of these participants was that they are Instagram users. In addition, both in-person and online face-to-face interviews were recorded using a recording device. Subsequently, the recordings were transcribed and ventilated for the process of encoding the gathered data.

Data Analysis

The reflexive thematic analysis was employed to dissect the qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews. According to Braun and Clarke (2006:90), reflexive thematic analysis refers to a qualitative research method that captures a systematic process to generate codes as well as theme data. This kind of analysis is integral to reflecting on issues that are pertinent to qualitative data (Braun & Clarke 2006:90). In this regard, the researchers transcribed data to address the questions raised during the interviews. In addition, the researchers applied reflexive thematic steps to familiarise themselves with the data by going through the transcripts. A recording was verified to ensure that all critical components of this data were accurately captured. Subsequently, the researcher highlighted the themes that correlate with the aim and objectives of this study. In this process, the major themes were underscored to ensure that they respond to the objectives of this study and to point out the relevant sub-themes. Additionally, this process was informed by both the objectives of the study as well as the emerging themes from the data itself. Thus, this tedious process dictated that the researchers should zoom in on the salient aspects that capture the essence of the study.

Presentation and Discussion of Findings

This section focuses on the presentation and discussion of the findings. It also expounds on the extracts from the data in the form of responses from the interviewees.

Relationship between Intensity and Mental Health Issues

[P1]: *The kind of content I regularly browse and engage with on*

Instagram affects my mental well-being. Sometimes, I envy the kind of content I come across on Instagram because I follow a lot of celebrities on these platforms and celebrities as well as influencers so that shapes how I think about issues and it. Also, it has some element of giving me pleasure to by the kind of things I see these celebrities displaying on their Instagram accounts, so some of these individuals that I followed shared stories of their holidays and the kind of places that I always wanted to visit as a holiday destination so those are some of the elements that give me pressure and sometimes that that level of pressure because I can't afford and that the lifestyle that I see on Instagram it affects my mental health. Also, the kind of content that I follow on Instagram contains strikes inspirational quotes and then these inspirational quotes are important for me to handle issues differently and that is when it is good for my mental well-being, and with the kind of content and the time I spend and browsing and engaging that content indeed it really and affects my mental being both negatively and positively (22, female).

[P3]: *Honestly, I browse and follow fashion pages on Instagram just to learn the latest and efficient trends and with the fishing trends it is not necessarily following individuals or celebrities so that doesn't affect my mental being so in other ways I don't stress about what I see there I just want to see the latest fashion trends although sometimes is fish and plants on these pages they use and celebrities particularly on Instagram they sometimes use international musicians and that sometimes affects my how. I perceive how I present myself as far as my dress codes are concerned but the primary purpose of engaging on Instagram is to see how different brands present there and their latest offerings especially international and fishing brands so I don't focus on the lifestyle of certain individuals although I don't regularly visit these pages sometimes when you browse you see content that is aligned to a fashion because whenever I'm on Instagram I always check those kinds of pages so following individuals that are living lavishly it is not my consumption pattern on Instagram because also I don't share a lot of content on this platform so it is easy for me to how void being stressed about what other people are posting and sharing and liking on this platform but I like this platform to engage with the latest fashion and trends in in in South Africa and across the globe (27, female).*

> [P5]: *The lifestyle posts on Instagram are really what I just browse for passing time and I don't pay attention to the kind of content that people share sometimes I browse the musicians because I like Amapiano so I will just try to check some of the piano artists and they are posted there because I also use other platforms like TikTok that's where I check the latest dance challenges and enjoy and music on these platforms but with lifestyle to post on Instagram I don't pay attention to that (37, Male).*

According to the findings, there is a relationship between the intensity of the usage of Instagram and the negative effects of mental health issues. This finding is consistent with the finding by Boer *et al.* (2020:95) which reported that adolescents are adversely affected by posts on social media. Also, Hinshaw and Eddy (2020:291) posit that digital media has the potential to influence the mental well-being of the users negatively or positively. Individuals who spend more time on the platform reflected that the posts are likely to affect them mentally. Nonetheless, the same group has not linked this problem with a specific mental health issue. On the other hand, some participants stated that Instagram posts do not affect them since they use the platform to pass the time. Most of the participants highlighted that they spend less time on the platform as they log in intermittently.

Influence from the Influencers

> [P5]: *Yes influences are affecting how I perceive and how I am really and if you are sitting aspects of life because with what they post normally they share their lifestyle on Instagram and they use the same platform to promote sitting products can be body lotions and latest expensive phones and other gadgets so that like really affect how I feel like I fail in life because I don't own the kind of items they display on and Instagram although sometimes I know that they are not owning some of the things they are just promoting those items but it affects how I view life and then sometimes I can feel that it stresses me a lot because I can't and achieve half of the things that I see these influences and sharing their on Instagram sometimes I just console myself by saying some of them are places them bless us they take them to Dubai today out for holidays and yeah but I think it is not good for my mentality because I envy what they share their lot.*

> [P2]: *No way I don't influencers don't affect me I think anyone can be an influencer these days honestly because you can be influenced because you are talented and primarily your talent makes you famous on Instagram you are a good singer you can sing there on the platform share your videos share your audios and people might start liking you a lot so and that's why I'm saying in one can bring influence based on what you are doing in your life in your space and yeah that's why how I see it so whoever is saying they are professional influencers I don't know necessarily care about them I follow people with talents and people that are doing well with their lives over achievers that that is my focus so I don't necessarily regard them as influencers because honestly the whole concept of influence us influences some of the people online it is overrated that's how I see it.*

> [P6]: *I think this is a dangerous trend mainly because the people who try to influence them are not projecting their real life so that is a problem you may find that you envy people who are on Instagram sharing their different lifestyles with opulence and that stresses because some of us we can't and like buy those things we can't afford that kind of a lifestyle becomes a problem and yes no it's a problem because they share a lot there they show everything they share their clothes their attire very expensive some people show Louis Vuitton some people so Gucci very expensive or clothing items I think the whole thing is so bad because it stresses a whole lot of people I don't think I'm the only one who's stressing out because I also like that lifestyle but I can't afford it, it's a problem and I think it is really bad and I like coming to think of it affects my mental being.*

The findings suggest that Instagram influencers have a huge influence on other users. According to Åström (2021:40), social media platforms influence social integration and interaction among users. Hinshaw and Eddy (2023:290) corroborate this finding as they discovered that adolescents are negatively influenced by the intense usage of Instagram. First, some participants stated that they follow more influencers on this platform. Second, the same group mentioned that they also consume a lot of content from the influencers. Third, they indicated that these influencers share different lifestyles on Instagram. Fourth, most of the participants explained that the influencers display a perfect life surrounded by flamboyance and opulence. Some of the interviewees

pointed out that the luxurious lifestyle shared by the influencers gives them pressure to try to meet the same standards. One of the participants mentioned that they plunged into depression after failing to afford some of the expensive items that were flaunted by the influencers.

Physical Appearance Posts

[P4]: *That is a problem that is a problem because many people share their physical appearance posts they promote weight loss and products you have a life and the likes but not everyone and you may find that that person didn't necessarily use those products and they affect how I see myself because I also want to lose weight and when affect me I feel like I'm failing to meet those standards and that has been affecting me for many for many years now.*

[P1]: *Yes, the physical posts on Instagram they are sometimes misleading because some people fake and edit their images and mostly there are individuals that edited and filtered their images to look the setting way and you may find that this person because you don't know them in real life outside Instagram they post that uh I feel that image and the percent to be a perfect because that is the main goal to look to look perfect on Instagram to post a perfect pictures and everything should look nice and attractive and that it's really a problem for me it doesn't really in that directly affect me but I can see that it has some elements of affecting how other people see themselves and maybe wanting to achieve the same thing because the whole thing boils down to what kind of a device are you using because some phones don't have those sophisticated tools to filter the images which really means Instagram put trials problem in terms of the consumers and people that share them can really affect some people mentally and maybe they can have social pressures to meet those instructor standards.*

[P5]: *As I've said in the other question I just browse to pass the time so I don't pay attention to how people look on Instagram but what I've observed is that some people fake their images they fake how they look and like, in short, I can say there's too much fake content Instagram fake lifestyle fake looks fake success and there's a whole lot of things that people are faking to look good to feel good and to change how*

> *they are perceived by people or only to attract more clicks the whole thing of clickbait is affecting what people post because they want more followers they want more likes on their posts so the whole thing of wanting to have more followers and more likes for your post is making people share a lot of fake content and fake lifestyle.*

According to the participants, the Instagram posts amplify perfect physical appearance. On one hand, the participants indicated that most of the posts they see with many likes' present picture-perfect physical appearances. This reflects the similar finding from Lin *et al.* (2023:11)'s report which enunciated that Instagram influences the well-being of the users. Similarly, Hinshaw and Eddy (2023:290) claim that Instagram affects how they perceive their physical appearance based on the posts shared on the platform. They also indicated that some of these images are used to promote weight loss and fitness. In addition, these interviewees stated that most of these lifestyle posts on Instagram are edited to sell a specific idea to the public. One of the participants averred that fitness photos pressurised her to lose weight since the content suggested that her weight was not good enough. She stated that this issue triggered severe stress as she could not meet Instagram's standards of beauty. On the other hand, some of the participants posited that they fathom certain standards of beauty and physical appearance only exist online since the content is edited. This group also mentioned that such content does not affect them.

Number of Likes and Comments

> [P8]: *It is stressful sometimes when you upload a post or you share a picture of yourself on Instagram and then you don't get more likes let's see you get three or four likes and it feels like it's a rejection from the Instagram community particularly your followers on the side and that that is problematic and it is stressful to see that what you have shared people are not commenting or no one is engaging with your post at all.*

> [P3]: *Generally I don't I don't have a problem with a lack of comments against my posts on Instagram because I know I'm not a celebrity people like to follow celebrities and like posts from popular individuals and influencers and what stresses me a lot is negative comments on my post I find that people are ridiculing comments it's a picture and the*

> *comments are not good that gives me problems and it is quite stressful for me and sometimes um the people that are the community you can't point them out because you don't know their real identity and some of this person who comes with nasty comments they don't use their real names they use seed or names so that is also a problem because now you don't know the faceless person is just insulting you it's just insulting what you have posted on Instagram which is bad.*

The participants revealed that the number of likes against their content can cause anxiety and stress. Some participants stated that a lack of likes affects them mentally. They indicated that fewer likes or no likes when they post their selfies trigger some mental health issues. One of them posited that when the post does not generate many likes it feels like a rejection from the Instagram community which is tantamount to stress. According to Åström (2022:22), the number of likes and comments dictates how the users judge lifestyle posts on Instagram. It was also stated that when their content does not generate decent likes they end up deleting it. In addition, some of the participants highlighted that sometimes their posts are met with negative comments from their fellow users which negatively affects their mental well-being.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Social networking services are the centre of socialisation in the 21st century. Social identity components are shaped by the trends and modern activities widely shared on these Web 2.0 platforms which has a major effect on health mental. All spheres of life are captured and reconstructed through social media commentary. If an issue is not widely magnified and disseminated on social media individuals consider it irrelevant. Accordingly, Instagram possesses the same attributes that mostly what is captured affect the perception of users. Thus, the users of this platform are advertently and inadvertently influenced by the content they consume on this platform. According to the findings of this study, more often than not, the users of this application are exposed to harmful content rooted in the dynamics of algorithms. To some extent, algorithms exacerbate the excessive consumption of Instagram content which is psychologically harmful to the audience. While social and identity and uses and gratification theory provided a valuable insight, it is important to highlight factors such cultural differences, socio-economic status, and access to mental health resources that influence mental health issues among South African

Instagram users. Additionally, the study has simplified the complex relationship between social media use and mental health by focusing solely on Instagram posts. It was crucial to take a holistic approach when studying the effects of social media on mental health, considering the multitude of factors at play.

There is a need to sanitise the manner in which this platform has positioned itself in the digital media space. The social media literacy model should be intricately designed to circumvent the ramifications of the multifaceted content. According to the findings of this study, the users of this social media platform need to take into cognizance of different features that would allow them to circumvent the negative effects of the platform on their mental well-being. There is a need to inculcate the culture of digital literacy among the users of social media platforms such as Instagram to negate some of the adverse effects that come with intensive consumption of the site. Furthermore, this study recommends that the users of these platforms who experience some mental health problems should consider seeking professional help to manage the mental ramifications of consuming content on the platforms. Moreover, the users of Instagram need to exploit some of the cardinal features available on the platform.

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Examining the Framing of the Illicit Drug Scourge in the South African Press: A Content Analysis Approach

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Abstract

Studying media reportage of issues on drugs is an important step toward understanding public perceptions of drugs, drug use, and public concerns about drug policy imperatives. Hence, the key objective of this paper is to determine how the press namely *The Sowetan*, *Daily Sun*, and *The Citizen* newspapers frame news reports on the coverage of the illicit drug scourge. The study draws from the media effects theoretical proposition namely the framing theory. The study adopted qualitative content analysis to analyse the framing of the one hundred and sixteen (n-116) news reports on the coverage of illicit drugs in the selected newspapers. Some of the study's findings yielded frames such as the crime-violence frame; race, gender, and class frames; and the scare-alarmist frame. Although the scourge of drugs is a topical and prevalent issue among South African youth, the findings illustrate that there is a lack of intervention from the media, communities, and government to create awareness of the dire effects of drugs on humanity.

Keywords: Framing, illicit drugs, news reports, press, scourge, South African newspapers,

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1 Introduction

Drug abuse has been a long-standing issue, it remains a major public health and social issue, destroying individuals, families, communities, and national economies. It has the potential to cause harm that extends beyond the health of users, as users may become perpetrators or victims of violent crime (National Drug Master Plan 2019-2024). Although the South African Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act No. 140 of 1992 was recently amended to decriminalise cannabis use, illegal drugs such as nyaope, heroin, cocaine, and ecstasy, have been determined to be a significant benefactor to the high crime, violence, and mortalities in the country (South African Crime Statistics 2021/22).

United Nations Profile (2019) posits that South Africa is unquestionably the key industry for illegal drugs entering the southern African region. The drug trade and abuse have risen significantly in the previous years with the tipping point traceable to the ensuing years of the country's first democratic elections in 1994. The country has seen a concurrent relief of stringent regulations on land, air, and maritime coastlines, an increment in global trade and commerce, and an emergence of fresh cultural attitudes among the more advantaged segments of the populace in recent years (ibid). This has necessitated the need for the press to galvanise public interventions to combat rampant drug abuse, particularly among the youth.

Subsequently, framing of illicit drugs in newspapers, encompasses the process by which media organisations select, emphasise, and present particular aspects of drug-related issues to shape public perception, discourse, and policy. According to Entman (1993), framing involves selecting 'some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation'. When applied to illicit drugs in newspapers, framing can influence how readers perceive drug use, users, and associated policies. For instance, frames might portray illicit drugs as a public health crisis, a criminal issue, or a moral failing, thereby affecting attitudes toward interventions, such as rehabilitation or punitive measures.

Even though changes in behaviour as a result of South African media coverage of illegal drugs have not been proven, the press provides a narrative through their representation of drugs and drug abuse and serves as a guide for interpreting various situations through specific framing (McCombs 2013). Newspapers have always been a powerful source for the public because people read them as meaningful texts. This might explain why the press has always

been able to influence the opinion of the masses about the scourge of drugs. In light of the foregoing, studying press reportage of issues on drugs is an important step toward understanding public perceptions of drugs, drug use, and public concerns about drug policy imperatives. As a result, the study determines the framing of news reports on the illicit drug scourge in the selected newspapers in South Africa.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Newspapers' Framing of Criminal Justice Issues

The press has become an increasingly powerful institution in framing and responding to criminal justice issues in the age of the 24-hour news cycle (Cunningham & Turner 2016). Newsmakers and the sources they cite wield considerable power over what information is disseminated by selecting elements to make them more visible to audiences (Entman 1993). It is well documented that, far from serving as 'messengers of truth', the press frequently presents criminal justice issues in sensational, biased, and inaccurate ways. The question then becomes, how will such coverage affect audiences?

One example is newspaper reporting on illegal drugs. More than 25 years of research has recorded media imbalances of the risk and threat posed by drugs to society, inciting assumptions that media coverage has triggered moral panics about addiction issues, intensified fear of drug use/drug users, and promulgated a lack of appreciation for the causes, context, and effects of drug use in society (Elliott & Chapman 2009; Miller 2010). However, previous research into press reporting on illicit drug issues has been media-centric, ignoring issues such as audience engagement with and interpretation of news media. This is a critical oversight. According to media and communication theories, audiences can filter, interpret, decode, and even reconstruct media messages in ways that are unrelated to the intentions of message producers (Teece & Makkai 2000).

2.2 Newspaper Framing of Drug-related Discourse

News reports have commonly portrayed stereotypical conceptions of drugs and drug related activity, portraying drug users as 'outsiders' and stimulating stigmatisation and misconceptions of drug issues and policies (Taylor 2008). These depictions have perpetuated the stigma associated with those who use or sell drugs, portraying them as immoral, irresponsible, and predisposed to

criminal conduct (Taylor 2008).

The press routines and structural limitations have influenced how the public perceives and discusses drug policy. For example, Beckett (2015) proposed that the punitive tone used by media outlets over the last century has exacerbated the public's perception of drugs as a criminal problem. Furthermore, McGaw (1991) noted that the drug war metaphors popularised by politicians and the media in the 1980s focused attention on law enforcement and punishment while marginalising or excluding alternative policies, contributing to the public's perception of drugs as one of the nation's most serious problems at the time. The press's portrayal of illegal drugs has also influenced risk perceptions, limited the prospect of a fuller insight into drug issues, and limited support for drug policy reform (Lancaster, Hughes, Spicer, Matthew-Simmons & Dillon 2011).

A study by Alexander (2010) argues that the implications of framing restricted drugs in this way have been far-reaching. The discourse and miscommunication that permeate drug-related discourses contributed to public support for ill-advised drug laws in the United States, which were notoriously harsh in comparison to other developed countries. These harsh drug laws were not only ineffectual in terms of reducing drug sales and consumption, but they also created deep rooted issues such as mass incarceration (ibid). Furthermore, drug laws have been unfairly imposed, with racial minorities being incarcerated more frequently and receiving harsher penalties than White drug offenders, with impoverished communities bearing the brunt of the consequences (Alexander 2010; Sirin 2011).

2.3 Newspaper Framing of Drugs and Social Behaviour

Throughout decades, newspaper messages lambasting and misconstruing various drugs were widely circulated in the United States America. For example, news sources reported that cannabis was a 'drop-out drug', affecting users' motivation and patriotism (Orsini 2017), and that LSD (Lysergic Acid Diethylamide) caused severe birth defects (ibid). The press reported that phencyclidine gave users 'superhuman strength', and that cops needed new equipment to deal with those under its influence (Bargent 2013).

Furthermore, other prevalent drug problems included the prescription sedative methaqualone, colloquially known as 'ludes' due to the brand name 'Quaalude', about which many newspaper and magazine articles were published (ibid). During the 1970s, President Richard Nixon of the United

States of America's eagerness to exterminate the opium poppy attracted a lot of attention (ibid). Nixon referred to narcotics addiction as an 'infectious disease', and heightened public outrage by referring to heroin addiction as an 'epidemic' and 'Public Enemy Number One' Despite a lack of evidence, news reports discussed heroin use among children as an epidemic (Orsini 2017:56). The framing of illicit drugs serves as a valuable tool for consistently assessing the prevalence, patterns, and impacts of drug use and misuse, as well as the broader drug-related challenges within South African society. Additionally, this approach can contribute to persuading readers to recognise the consequences of drug abuse and addiction among citizens.

3 Theoretical Framework

This study was premised on the framing theoretical proportion. The media focus attention on specific events and place them within a field of meaning, according to framing theory (McQuail 2004). The way the media frames an issue or event can influence how audiences interpret it. As a result, a media-constructed frame is a central organising concept for news content that provides contextualised meaning through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration (Kamalipour 2010). The media creates this frame by introducing news items with predefined and limited contextualisation. Frames can be used to improve understanding or as cognitive shortcuts to connect stories to the bigger picture. Frames highlight certain aspects of a complex issue (e.g., health risks, crime) while downplaying others (e.g., socio-economic causes, harm reduction) (McQuail 2004). Erving Goffman introduced the concept of frames as interpretive schemas in his work *Frame Analysis* (1974). He argues that frames structure how people make sense of their experiences. Understanding framing theory's application to illicit drugs helps analyse how societal attitudes and policies are shaped and contested, revealing opportunities for more balanced and effective approaches. To that end, the study employs the framing theory to explain the framing of the scourge of illicit drug consumption in the press, thereby influencing the South African public's perceptions of the dire effects of drug abuse.

4 Methodology

The study employed a qualitative research approach. The researcher adopted Creswell's (2014) proposition that qualitative research is a research metho-

dology rooted in the interpretivist tradition that takes an open, flexible, and unstructured approach to inquiry with the goal of exploring diversity rather than quantifying data about the phenomenon under investigation. For the purposes of this article, qualitative research aimed to discover and comprehend the framing behind news reports on illicit drugs in the press.

The study used a descriptive qualitative design to gather news reports on the scourge of drugs, and then described what has been observed in the news reports. In addition, the study espoused the design because it was suitable for the description of frames on news reports on the scourge of illicit drugs in the press, where limited or no prior information exists. This study's population is a selection of the South African press, in particular, daily newspapers. The sample refers to The *Sowetan*, *Daily Sun*, and *The Citizen* newspaper editions, and news reports on illicit drugs in the newspapers. Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling, was used to collect data and to examine the content of South Africa's three daily newspapers regarding illicit drug news reporting.

The study selected a total of one hundred and sixteen (n-116) news reports published between 01 January 2017 and 31 December 2017, a time when illicit drug-related news reports were aplenty and made headlines as a result of the rise in drug-related crimes in South African communities.

Data were analysed using thematic content analysis. According to Anderson (2007), thematic content analysis (TCA) allows the researcher to describe the themes identified in the data analysed. By reading through the news reports, it was possible to highlight the relevant information and then formulate discursive interpretations.

The study particularly examined the evidence as it relates to a) the lexical choices evident in drug news reports; b) the contextual connotations in these reports; c) the oversights or omissions of empirical facts about specific drug-related incidents; and d) the limited debates that journalists employed to report the news. These topics of analysis were used to generate the related content themes of drug news reporting.

The themes that were developed are, 1) the framing of violence as crime, due to illicit drug use; 2) the scare-alarmist frame, that supposedly impacts fellow drug users negatively; 3) the foreign national scapegoat frame, that deploys negative ethnic and ethical labels; 4) the framing of government interventions in the drug scourge as forms of failure; and 5) the interventionist frame that seeks to capture forms of public (police) and medical (treatment) intervention to curb the illicit drug scourge.

Overall, the study generated articulate thematic analyses; a clear,

structured, and expressive approach to identifying, analysing, and reporting themes within this qualitative data. This involved systematically examining data from news reports that can be formulated into clear findings and conclusions on coverage of the illicit drugs scourge.

5 Results

The study analysed fifty-five (n-55) news reports in *The Citizen*, thirty-two (n-32) in the *Daily Sun*, and twenty-nine (n-29) news reports in *The Sowetan* newspaper. Subsequently, the study noted that the drug scourge news reports adopted frames such as the crime-violence frame, the scare-alarmist frame, the foreign national scapegoat frame, the government failure, and the interventionist frame.

5.1 Crime-violence Frame

- **Lexical Choice of Drug News Reports**

The choice of jargon in the news reports determined the crime-violence frame of the news reports. An example is *The Citizen's* 03 May 2017 news report titled '*Killer waiter remorseful'* where words and phrases such as *killer*, *steal*, *murder*, *drug* and *gambling addict*, *stabbing*, *ill-gotten gains*, and *deceased* were used. The journalist employed these words to inform the reader of the murder committed due to drug abuse. This agrees with how Bell (1989:85) paid particular attention to news media's use of language, for example, asking whether the language used is emotive or impartial. He argued that analysis of language reveals information about a journalist's choices, which reflect pre-existing social discussions or can powerfully condition new ways of speaking about events and phenomena.

Furthermore, the news report in *The Citizen*'s 22 February 2017 titled '*Son on trial for mom's murder*' the *Daily Sun'*s 18 January 2017 '*Four bust for stealing ARVs at the clinic'* '*Addicts smoke human ashes*' and *The Citizen's* '*Botch-up sinks drug trap*' (Watson 2018) also highlights the crimes committed due to drugs. Subsequently, the choice of words the journalist used conditioned readers' perspectives on the dire consequences such as crime and violence associated with the scourge of drugs.

- **Contextual Connotation of Drug News Reports**

Considering the impact of drugs on the high rate of crime in South Africa, the

reader would want to know why the country is not treating the matter with the urgency it deserves. The news reports somewhat inform the readers of the psyche of the killers, drug traffickers, and dealers. Furthermore, the news reports highlight the severity of drugs and that drug users were not the only ones implicated in the crimes even limited law enforcement officers.

The essence of the preferred meaning in the news reports was made through the use of framing tools such as the selection of words, metaphors, exemplars, descriptions, arguments, and visual images to deal with justifications, causes, and consequences. In addition, the news reports were designed to have meanings to the consumer of the text, and the meaning was that all citizens regardless of age, race, and status contributed to the crimes and violence in societies. According to Cohen (2012), the media spend a substantial amount of time reporting deviant and criminal behaviour, and this news of deviance conveys information to the public regarding societal norms; even if media sources are not consciously engaging in a moral crusade, simply reporting certain incidents can be enough to galvanise public concern or apprehension.

- **Oversight due to Omission of Drug News Reports**

It is seldom to encounter a news account that explicitly presents the core argument of the frame. More commonly, an image or set of images, metaphors, catchphrases, or anecdotes carry the frame. The news frames are deliberately, and in some cases, consistently constructed equally by that which was omitted as by that which was included. The news reports omitted important information concerning how the police established that he was responsible for the murder. The reaction of the police to the violence caused by drugs is negative because in one news report a police officer was implicated in drug dealing and trafficking.

- **Limiting Debate of Drug News Reports**

The journalists needed to interrogate why the killer spent the stolen money and then claim to regret his actions afterward. In addition, the news report should have widened the scope of the debate by querying what motivated his actions. The scope of the drug scourge debate could have also been broadened to suggest rehabilitation and government intervention. Arguably, the killer was not going to continue with this heinous crime if it were not for CAT- the drug he snorted before committing the murder. Furthermore, in widening the debate

scope, the news report in *The Citizen*'s 22 February 2017 titled '*Son on trial for mom's murder*' the journalist should have also introduced a solution frame by suggesting alternative approaches to reporting crime stories originating from drug abuse. To simply proscribe the use of something without proffering other alternatives may not work effectively. Research on media framing has found that the majority of crime and drug news reports (Jernigan & Dorfman 1996) are reported 'episodically' rather than 'thematically'.

5.2 Scare-alarmist Frame

The study observed that in the *Daily Sun's* 05 June 2017 '*Man's Bluetooth overdose death scares addicts*', the journalist employed words such as *shocked, devastated, overdose, dead, dangerous,* and *concerned* to paint a clear picture of the occurrence to the reader. Butler posits that this sense that the frame implicitly guides the interpretation has some resonance with the idea of the frame as a false accusation (Butler 2009). The journalist's lexical choice was clear enough to scare and catch the audience's attention to the dire effect of drug abuse in the news reports. The study noted that some of the words or phrases in the *Daily Sun's* news reports were employed in the context of proffering solutions. The scare-alarmist frame of the news reports was designed to elicit a particular interpretation from a select group of media.

News reports that reported about drug addiction were observed in *The Citizen*'s '*Loss of faith in police are probed*', '*SA is boiling over*', '*Worry about airport drug hauls grows', and 'Centre ill-treats us, say addicts'.* These news reports disseminated a scare-alarmist frame of the drug scourge in communities. Other news reports also conveyed concern about new forms of drugs triggering increases in overdoses. Gitlin (1980) explains that 'frames, largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organise the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports'.

- **Contextual Connotation of Drug News Reports**

The *Daily Sun's* news report '*Man's Bluetooth overdose death scares addicts'*. The lead asserts that the shocked *nyaope* addicts gathered around the body of one of their friends who died from a Bluetooth overdose. The lead gave the reader the most important information concisely and clearly. Hartley postulates that it is clear that news discourse plays an important part in the struggle to affirm a single, uni-accentual value for signs. News discourse is hostile to

ambiguities and seeks to validate its suppression of the alternative possibilities intersecting its signs by reference either to 'the facts of the story or to 'normal usage' (Hartley 1982:24). Therefore, the news report submerged other readings of the text and foist their contextual connotation on the readers. Word choices, syntax, metaphors, descriptions, arguments, and visual images were deliberately selected and employed in the news report to construct a particular meaning.

The news reports in *The Sowetan* and *The Citizen* also yielded the scare-alarmists frame and had an overall negative tone toward the scourge of drugs, and specifically mentioned youth demographics as drug abusers. This agrees with Gamson (2008:165)'s assertion that scare frames are considered significant in examinations of media discourse as they constitute 'central organising ideas' or organising principles that assign 'coherence and meaning to a diverse array of symbols, thus creating awareness of the issue at hand'. Therefore, the adoption of the scare-alarmist news reports in the newspapers has the power to dissuade readers from using drugs.

- **Oversight due to Omission of Drug News Reports**

The *Daily Sun* journalists did shoddy work by not asking the other addicts who last saw the dead addict alive whether they weren't scared that they may also perish in the same manner. The journalist should have also tried to establish whether this was the first fatality produced by drug overdose in the region. In addition, the other journalists in similar news reports should have probed the addicts, and communities about an overview of overdose mortalities particularly focusing on the causes of mortality and the nature of drugs used. The loopholes in the news reports provide the readers with a 'half-truths' image of what happened. Subsequently, the frames adopted by the news reports have already set a tone that drug overdose deaths in the region are not prevalent. Hence, their omission in the news report.

- **Limiting Debate of Drug News Reports**

It should be noted that the selection of news sources can either broaden or narrow the scope of debate on any issue. In some instances, this can be to the detriment of the reader because he/she may feel to get a factual, true, complete, and balanced story. The debate was limited to how journalists in news reports such as *The Sowetan'*s '*Worry about airport drug hauls grows'* and *'Centre ill-treats us, say addicts',* and *The Citizen*'s *'New drug frenzy'* and '*SA is boiling over*' did not probe for plausible reasons why the government should

be concerned about rampant abuse of drugs. The news reports only conveyed a dismal outlook and did not offer any solutions; typically, there was only an implication that something should be done.

Media reporting on drugs is often not necessarily based on an empirical evaluation of the magnitude of the threat, but instead influenced by factors such as journalists' assumptions, cultural stereotypes, and the demographic groups perceived to be at the greatest risk (Manning 2007). The news reports in the *Daily Sun*, *The Citizen*, and *The Sowetan* expressed the negative attitude of communities toward drug abuse and discussed related harms such as death, overdose, addiction, mental health issues, and the negative experiences of drug addicts. These news reports provided information about drug use trends or patterns, use among a certain demographic, or the availability of a new drug, and the scare-alarmist frame was generated in the selected newspapers.

5.3 Foreign National Scapegoat Frame

- **Lexical Choice of Drug News Reports**

In the Citizen's 16 February 2017 '*Foreigners live in fear'*, the journalist employed words such as *Nigerians*, *xenophobic*, *destruction*, *hijack*, *prostitution*, and *anti-foreigners*. The choice of words and symbols in media texts is usually informed by the agenda or framing that the journalist wanted to reinforce. In the news report, the journalists emphasised how communities accused foreign nationals, particularly Nigerian nationals of dealing drugs and prostitution in Pretoria.

The closeness, relevance, and importance of the issue of drugs to every citizen of the world make it topical and, hence worth reporting on. Subsequently, the reportage of such an occurrence can be labelled as xenophobic but the reporter framed the news report in a dispelling way. In the news report, The South African First Party, and Mamelodi Concerned Residents geared up for a march to the Union Buildings to protest against the presence of foreign nationals in the country.

In one of the news reports on drug dealers and production, the moment the public starts to become aware of a certain issue or condition in society and believes the issue or condition to be a social problem requiring a quick solution depends on both the actual situation as well as the choice of wordlist processes. The majority of the news reports adopted the foreign national scapegoat frame to report on how communities were dissatisfied with foreign nationals particularly Nigerians who were dealing drugs and practicing prostitution in

the country as reported in the majority of *The Citizen* and *The Sowetan* news reports.

News reports included leaders, smugglers, cartels, sellers, and drug producers who were portrayed as responsible for the risks associated with drugs, and the risks emphasised were those to the community (i.e., drug proliferation, public safety). Specifically, foreign national traffickers were regarded as a pernicious force responsible for the destruction of communities through the diffusion of drugs and crime.

- **Contextual Connotation of Drug News Reports**

In the news report, '*Foreigners live in fear in Pretoria*', the journalist intended to inform the reader that communities were cognizant of the foreign drug dealers in their communities and wanted the South African government to intervene immediately. Hence, the march to the Union Buildings. The residents detailed that the foreign nationals brought nothing but destruction by hijacking buildings, injecting young South African women with drugs, and selling them as prostitutes. Another example is also observed in *The Citizen's* 27 October 2017 '*Woman forced into prostitution*' which highlights how a woman was forced into prostitution and plied with drugs by Nigerian nationals. The woman testified at the trial against the Nigerians, who have pleaded not guilty to numerous charges ranging from human trafficking, money laundering, and running a brothel to drug-related charges. The news reports generated a foreign national scapegoat frame that saw communities blaming Nigerian foreigners for dealing drugs.

This frame implies that communities can be labelled as xenophobic by readers of the newspapers understudy. In addition, the news reports may imply that communities can use foreign nationals as scapegoats concerning the scourge of drugs in their communities. Subsequently, the preferred meaning was that there are communities who take the law into their own hands and accused Nigerians of dealing drugs illegally. The communities' plight is that the foreigners are held unaccountable by the law enforcement agents as the majority of the news reports associated foreign nationals in all the drug dealing arrests.

- **Oversight due to Omission of Drug News Reports**

The foreign national scapegoat frame in the news reports was done to drive home the point that foreign nationals were blamed by South Africans for the manufacturing and distribution of illicit drugs in the country. The journalists

ensured that the news reports dispelled any xenophobic connotations that the reader may feel were concealed in the reporting. What was missing in the news reports is how the foreign nationals trafficked the drugs in the country. This omission on its own inadvertently tries to normalise the ideology that foreign nationals deal drugs. The news reports implied that Nigerians are notorious for drug cartels, but the government has turned a blind eye, hence the intervention by communities.

- **Limiting Debate of Drug News Reports**

Whilst the news reports brought to the attention of the reader on the alleged drug dealers, the journalists could have researched laws that other continents like Europe, North America, and Asia have implemented to curb drug dealing by foreign nationals. The news reports would have added value to the fight against illegal drugs in the country. This supports the deposition by Fairclough (1995) that 'frames' or 'frameworks' organise and understand information and experiences and nowadays can refer to the tendency of news coverage to employ frames in creating narratives, that present some information while excluding other information.

Therefore, the news reports gave information on the challenges of foreign nationals who are dealing with and producing drugs in the country. They also informed the reader about the process of drug production and identified the dealers and why it is seemingly difficult for these challenges to be addressed by the government. However, the fact that foreigners said they were living in fear and what the law enforcement was doing to curb their fear was a limited debate in the news reports.

5.4 Government Failure Frame

- **Lexical Choice of Drug News Reports**

The journalists in *The Citizen'*s '*Centre ill-treats us*' and '*JZ must address youth issues',* employed words such as *rehabilitation*, *treatment*, *approach*, *capacity*, *outcry*, and *interventions*. According to Danesi (2002), words in general are symbolic signs, as are many hand gestures. These symbolic signs play important roles in the building of meaning in a news story, be it hard or soft news. The words were employed to highlight the public's pleas on the significance of drug rehabilitation centres in communities. Subsequently, the framing of words and symbols in the news reports can educate the public about

topical issues such as the scourge of drugs. On the contrary, the public is oblivious to the fact that news organisations are also limited in capacity and there is fierce competition among stories for space for news reports.

The media must be an involved agent of change by ensuring that petitions against drugs are on the government agenda. Chaguta, (2010) postulates that before news stories make it into the paper, the issue must first make it into the media agenda. The media agenda is the hierarchy of importance ascribed to different issues by a news organisation. The study observed that the majority of the reports expressed community concerns over the increasing drug use, addiction, or overdoses in their areas. The news reports further noted the appeal of residents over the shortage of drug rehabilitation centres in the country. These yielded a government failure frame where the South African government failed to provide enough rehabilitation centres for drug addicts.

- **Contextual Connotation of Drug News Reports**

The contextual connotation behind most of the news reports was premised on the uproar of communities on the Department of Health and Social Development's failure to provide drug rehabilitation centres for addicts. Furthermore, there were news reports that reported the ill-treatment of drug addicts in the few government centres that provided drug rehabilitation. Interventions and collaborations were additional factors mentioned in responses to drug rehabilitation centres. Some news reports discussed a variety of solutions such as individual drug treatment programmes and treatment-oriented for teenagers. The challenge, however, is that the journalists seemed preoccupied with receiving statements from the residents without endeavouring to engage with responsible authorities on the position of the government to increase rehabilitation centres. A study conducted by Mabokela (2018), noted that news reports on rehabilitation centre in *Daily Sun* and *The Sowetan* inadequately raised the issue of minimal rehabilitation centres considering the hardships endured by addicts when seeking rehabilitation.

On the contrary, two news reports painted rehabilitation centres negatively. For example, one news report from *The Citizen'*s 08 March 2017 '*Centre ill-treats us, say addicts*' was concerned with overdose deaths reported on individual ill-treatment and discussed a rehabilitation centre that was a nightmare for most addicts. In the news report, one hundred and twenty-nine (129) '*Bluetooth*' drug users who volunteered for rehabilitation after the

Gauteng department of social development (GDSD) took on 'hotspot' approached and visited places of substance abuse in Mabopane and Soshanguve, Tshwane has all discharged themselves from rehabilitation centre due to alleged 'ill-treatment'.

Another news report, '*Probe into man's gang rape'* from *The Sowetan's* 11 July 2017 edition also emphasised how a man quit rehabilitation after he was raped by seven men at a drug rehabilitation centre in Randfontein. The alleged rape victim is said to have told his family about the ordeal after he left the rehab before completing his treatment. Consistent and cutting-edge coverage of government rehabilitation centres could have been highly prioritised because most of the addicts in black townships do not have access to rehabilitation treatment due to various reasons including poor socio-economic situation (Ghosh 2013). This compromises the noble roles of the media, that is, to inform, educate and raise awareness of the drug scourge.

In the aforementioned news report, the journalist missed the opportunity to interrogate the Department of Social Development on the kinds of challenges faced by drug addicts while at rehabilitation centres. The journalist expressed a bias by choosing to use and/or not to use news items to establish the operations of rehabilitation centres. The study further noted that the selection of vital details such as negligence at rehabilitation centres was necessary to give readers a different opinion about the events reported. However, bias through omission is difficult to detect. Regardless of the effects of drug abuse in South Africa, the journalists misplaced brevity because the failure of the journalist to elaborate on important aspects as observed in the foregoing information makes one think that the news report was used as a mere filler.

- **Limiting Debate of Drug News Reports**

No witnesses or other sources from the police or government are quoted in the news reports; hence objectivity and balance are compromised. McQuail asserts that many aspects of news form are related to the pursuit of objectivity in the sense of facticity or factualness (McQuail 2010: 378). Smith cited in McQuail (2010: 378) weighs in by saying without attribution of credibility by the audience, the news could not be distinguished from entertainment or propaganda. To update planning on drug rehabilitation, more recent national prevalence data on the number of drug treatment centres and the types of treatments offered in South Africa are needed.

5.5 Interventionist Frame

- **Lexical Choice of Drug News Reports**

Several news reports were included in this category of law enforcement and the frame that yielded was the interventionist frame. The news story titled '*Crackdown on Cape Crime'* published in *The Citizen* on 03 January 2017 accounts for police raids that happened in the Western Cape, where multitudes of people were arrested. The words and phrases dominant in the news reports for readers to decode the drug scourge texts in a specific way were *arrests, drug houses, raids, apprehended, operations, possession, and stolen property.* The headline of the news report was catchy and convenient to market the news report. According to Rudin and Ibbotson (2002:75), headlines contain several eye-catching aspects such as alliteration, emotive verbs/adjectives, capital letters, and sub-headings, as well as grammatical omissions. Tabloids are written for a less demanding reader who is not interested in thorough news updates. The role of the lead in any news report is also crucial. The news report pointed out the different kinds of crimes committed, the number of people arrested, and where and when the arrests happened.

Another example is a news report published in *The Daily Sun's* 24 January 2017 edition with the title '*Cops find dagga worth millions*' which is enough to lend a certain meaning to the reader. It is the careful use of words in the headline that may promote a particular agenda or frame concerning the drug scourge. These words or symbols are used for both denotation and connotation. They are employed in the text to manipulate the reader to decode a text in a particular way as desired by the encoder. According to Entman (1993) cited in McQuail (2010: 380), framing involves selection and salience. He summarises the main aspects of framing by saying that frames define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies.

The third news report titled '*Yes, I harboured pimps, prostitutes in my house*' published on 22 February 2017 in *The Sowetan*, attracts the reader to find out what the South African law enforcement has done to people harbouring drugs in their houses. The headline endorses the story. A good headline, according to Harris, Leiter, and Johnson (1992:506), will reach out and grab the reader's attention. The readers are hooked when it is vivid, informative, clear, and accurate. The headline entices readers to continue reading to learn more about how, when, and the reasons for the act of sheltering the pimps and prostitutes, who are also drug dealers and addicts. When such headlines are frequently presented in the press, the readers would also have

fewer doubts about the country's legal system in fighting the collusion of community members in drug activities. Furthermore, the headline denoted the importance of the content the news report referred to.

Additional news reports with this interventionist frame were observed in *The Citizen's* 20 January 2017 titled *'R500 000 drug bust'* where three suspected drug dealers were arrested with a large number of *mandrax* tablets with an estimated value of R 100 000 00. '*Cops patrol beefed up*' in *The Citizen's* 15 February 2017, is a news story on how sixty-three (n-63) additional Metro police officers were deployed to Rosettenville, south of Johannesburg, where as many as sixteen (n-16) houses were set alight by protesters, who suspected they were being used as brothels and drug dens. *The Citizen*'s 23 February 2017 news report '*Limpopo Drug Bust*' reported on how the police in Limpopo confiscated machines, drug manufacturing equipment, and chemicals with an estimated value of R10 million. The rationale of consciously selecting words and symbols, as well as images is to influence the reception and interpretation of media texts. In some instances, there is this naivety on the part of the media that the consumers just take messages as encoded. But the reader is not only a consumer of already encoded meanings but also the producer of the meanings of the text.

The *Daily Sun's* 22 May 2017 '*Tip-offs Saves Young Girls*', 08 March 2017 edition '*Cops Bust Jozi Drug Lords*', and 03 January 2017 *'Big New Year's Day Drug Bust*'. *The Sowetan's* 27 February 2017 news report titled '*Smell of Dried fish lead to R30m tik*', '*School bus driver bust for drugs*' and *The Sowetan*'s 08 May 2017 edition were some of the news reports that reported about law enforcement in the newspapers understudy. These news reports focused on people who broke laws in terms of the Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act No. 40 of 1992.

• Contextual Connotations of Drug News Reports

The interventionist frame generated in the news reports '*Yes, I harboured pimps, prostitutes in my house'* and '*Cops find dagga worth millions*' demonstrate how the government particularly the South African Police Services (SAPS) also relied on tip-offs from either community members or Community Police Forums (CPF) to achieve successful raids. According to McQuail (2010), the idea of framing is an attractive one and provides a strong hypothesis that an audience will be guided by journalistic frames in what it learns. It will also learn the frames themselves. The news reports were framed to give

meaning to the reader to realise that SAPS is committed to fighting the plague of drugs. For example, the news report '*Yes, I harboured pimps, prostitutes in my house*' in *The Sowetan's* 22 February edition illustrates that the police only arrested the 'God-fearing woman' in question only when the community took justice upon themselves by torching her house. What is also implied in the story is the existence of law enforcement which disregards the community's fight against drug abuse whereby mob justice is considered a criminal offense.

The news report by *The Sowetan* (Sifile 2017) further highlighted how the 58-year-old Annemarie van Zilj, of Pretoria West, told *The Sowetan* that although the torching of her house by the mob had upset her, she did not feel guilty for allowing her tenant, known as 'Paul', to turn her home into a brothel. The God-fearing woman further said she harboured the pimps and prostitutes because she felt sorry for them. Therefore, this is a clear indication that had not the mob of 50 interceded, the lady was still going to continue with the criminality unabatedly. The story infers that there is a syndicate in this evil practice of drug abuse, which is mostly linked to prostitution.

This was observed when the pimp continuously offered the prostitutes drugs such as cocaine to sell their bodies to feed their addiction. However, the gross violations of these acts reveal that there is not much commitment on the part of the SAPS and judicial system to decisively deal with the scourge of drugs. Lexical choices and their configuration in news stories also 'hold great power in setting the context for debate, defining issues under consideration, summoning a variety of mental representations, and providing the basic tools to discuss the issues at hand' (Pan & Kosicki 1993: 70).

Another news report published in *The Citizen's* 10 February 2017 with the title '*Heroin and cocaine bust: two in court*', identified that the KwaZulu-Natal police only managed to arrest the suspects for alleged possession of cocaine and heroin after they received tip-offs. Subsequently, the majority of the news reports '*R500 000 drug bust', 'Worry about airport drug hauls', 'Three men nabbed in dagga sting operations', 'R5m of cocaine confiscated'*, '*Trio arrested in border drug bust'* et cetera chronicled successful operations conducted by the South African Police Services (SAPS) in fighting the scourge of drug abuse. It is worth noting that frames influence the way audiences conceptualise issues by setting parameters for discussion (Altheide & Schneider 2013). Therefore, it was substantial for the news reports to be framed in a manner that demonstrates that a collaboration between the press and law enforcement is momentous to successfully combat the war on drugs in South Africa.

- **Oversight Due to Omission of Drug News Reports**

The news report '*Yes, I harboured pimps and prostitutes*' has evident cracks, such as why the police did not try to investigate the situation. According to the news source, the police did not take the God-fearing woman into custody for interrogation. Furthermore, the news report failed to mention what happened to the pimps and prostitutes who were housed, their overall number, nationality, and the duration that this woman's home operated as a brothel. The journalist should have spoken with a representative from the SAPS to establish if anyone had been arrested, especially the woman and the mob. It clearly shows that the style of reporting had no intention to get to the bottom of the story. The newspaper failed to employ in-depth journalism about the news report on harbouring pimps, and prostitutes who were dealing drugs.

In addition, the police commissioner and interchangeably spokesperson should have been mentioned in this story, particularly concerning his or her position on the rampant drug cartels and brothels run by citizens and foreign nationals. This news report's authorised framework raises more problems than it answers. Subsequently, the frame of the news report will not be recognised by the receiver, it is more than likely that the receiver (reader) of the message will not interpret it in the way the journalist (sender) wanted them to. In that case, the sender has failed to convey his or her message by omitting significant information in the news report.

Furthermore, the journalist should have asked Captain Kay Makhubela to provide clarity on why it took SAPS such long to act. Consequently, it was significant for the news report to detail whether SAPS was aware of the rampant drug use in that region. Therefore, it was important for the journalist to probe such questions to avoid posing a challenge to the credibility of the content presented in the news report. To avoid the 'foreigner-outsider' blame shift frame instead of taking responsibility for the local drug problem.

- **Limiting Debate of Drug News Reports**

In the aforementioned news reports, the journalists confined the illicit drugs scourge debate to the role which the press could play if the South African government, particularly the South African Police Services recognised the importance of combating the scourge of drugs. The journalists failed to see the importance of including alternative techniques to dealing with the problem. Researchers in the media's representation of drugs have pointed out that the drug war metaphors heavily used in the media in the 1980s focused attention

on law enforcement and punishment, and marginalised or excluded alternative policies, contributing to the public's ranking of drugs among the nation's most significant problems at the time. Media representations of illegal drugs have also affected perceptions of risk, restricted the possibility of a deeper understanding of drug issues, and limited support for drug policy reform (Lancaster, Hughes, Spicer, Matthew-Simmons & Dillon 2011).

In the news reports '*Police on high alert*' and '*Yes, I harboured pimps and prostitutes*', the journalists were unsuccessful in probing the SAPS and government's impending plans to scrap drugs and drug dealers in the areas. For the journalists to only dwell on the community's atrocious acts of burning drug dens without interrogating more on what caused their outrage, and what took SAPS that long to respond to the community's demands and pleas, puts the professionalism of the reporters to test. Journalists are expected to be well-equipped with interviewing skills and impart knowledge relevant to the social, economic, and technological development of nations. In their defence, trained journalists and mainstream media have expressed their apprehension about citizen journalism citing that unprofessional fingers are fiddling in the venerated profession of journalism.

Furthermore, the news reports limited the debate to the idea that SAPS and the government are doing well in fighting drugs, regardless of the 2020 South African Crime Statistics that assert that 60% of the crimes committed in the country are drug-related (South African Crime Statistics 2021). Therefore, framing of law enforcement news reports confined the debate simply to successful operations of SAPS, without questioning why the police have allowed drug abuse to continue unabated.

6. Limitations of the Study

To perform a study of this nature is not without challenges. Content analysis alone cannot serve as the basis for making statements about the effects of content on an audience. Hence, the challenge experienced in the study was in accessing all the copies of newspaper editions in order to review the appropriate stories published from 01 January to 31 December 2017. An intensive case study of all the newspapers in the country would have been the most appropriate approach to present a generalised report on media coverage of the illicit drugs scourge.

7. Conclusion

The study on the representation of the illicit drug scourge in the press has established that the three daily newspapers, particularly *The Citizen*, *Daily Sun* and *The Sowetan* have covered various drug abuse themes and frames with the intent to inform, educate and bring awareness to the state of the drug scourge in South Africa, to readers and policy makers. The findings identified several framing patterns, including the crime-violence frame, scare-alarmist frame, the foreign national scapegoat frame, the government failure frame, and the interventionist frame. It was found that aspects of race, gender, class and ethnicity also play a role in these interpretive frames.

As such, while drug abuse is evidently a pressing and widespread issue among the South African youth, the findings highlight a lack of proactive intervention from the media, communities, and government in raising awareness about its severe impact on society. This shortcoming in the press, may in time become a struggle between policy advocates and vested interests. Drug policy development, implementation and evaluation, work with certain frames. And the reporting, representation and analysis of the drug scourge in the South African newspapers, work with different frames of understanding, which may not be conducive to policy reform. This is a nexus of interaction between the media and policy development, that holds much promise for future research.

The selected newspapers in their coverage of the scourge of drugs news sought to highlight the importance of reporting about drug abuse to human existence. It is important however, to acknowledge and examine the different ways that audience's process or 'decode' meaning from such news. Given the complexity of approaches to framing and frame analysis and diversity of research findings, it is important to choose and clearly define one's approach to news frame analysis. The way the public thinks about various approaches to prevent drug related problems, is largely dependent on how this issue is portrayed in the press, particularly the newspapers.

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