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Editorial

The fifteen articles in this volume of the *Fountain Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* (Vol.7, Issue No. 1, Nov/Dec 2023) may be divided into four broad categories, namely, those relating to, (a) business management, leadership, communication, and development; (b) education; (c) gender and human rights, and (d) theology and spirituality. Thus, the three articles by Paul Nemashakwe, Queen Mpofu and Joseph Kayawe focus on leadership as the critical component in the survival of businesses and organizations especially in what has been described as a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) operating environment. They argue that appropriate leadership could play a critical role in harnessing the opportunities presented by the fourth industrial revolution (4IR), and in running the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) which now occupy a significant space in Zimbabwe's economic landscape - at a time when many large corporations relocated to other countries following the land reform program of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Rugare Chaita and Nyasha Kaseke focus on the survival strategies employed by the highly taxed, regulated, and politically controlled petroleum industry in Zimbabwe. He paints a picture of a growing industry in which competitive advantage and survival are contingent upon adopting the Cost Leadership Strategy. Edmore Muchineripi Chijoko and Priscille Hassa Malandji review literature on intercultural communication problems encountered in business organisations and discuss the implications on organisational performance. They draw from experiences of business conferences in Angola where Portuguese is effectively the language of business rather than English. Claybough Mapfumo examines the sustainability perspectives of beneficiaries and benefactors in the non-governmental organisation (NGO) aided community-based projects in the Masvingo province of Zimbabwe.

In the second category of articles, the authors explore areas relating to education and care of the young. Lenzeni Kamwendo advocates for a transition from the institutional dormitory system to the home system of care for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) while Vimbisai Nhundu analyses Zimbabwe's early childhood education pre-school system and Clifford Gomba warns of rampant academic dishonesty in higher education through a case study of two universities in Zimbabwe.

On gender and human rights, Tapiwa Musasa attempts to argue that the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) of 1948 'was never meant for everyone, but rather, it was a patriarchal document designed to further the interests of grown-up men to the detriment and exclusion of women and children.' She argues that the language used is particularly revealing, courtesy of its gender insensitivity. On the same theme, Promise Zvavahera argues that Higher Education (HE) in Zimbabwe is yet to achieve gender parity at all levels. And, from a literary studies perspective, Majahana Lunga, interrogates not just feminism but feminisms. He applies a feminist literary theory, *stiwanism,* to a text, *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu,* 'to understand the meaning of this

text, and in the process advance feminist criticism. He argues that while feminism's primary objective is for women and girls to have the same rights and opportunities as men and boys, some feminisms, for example *lesbianism* and *raunchism*, are so radical that they obscure the fight against patriarchy'.

Finally, in the category of theology and spirituality, Joshua Chakawa, Rudolf Nyandoro and Simplicio Musemburi revisit Zimbabwe's war of liberation by bringing up a much-overlooked theme, the destruction of religious objects and symbols considered sacred by the Church. From their perspective, sacrilege was used as a weapon of war. Beyond their research in Masvingo, the desecration of sacred places, objects, symbols, and persons as a weapon of war is commonplace in war zones. Boroma Mission in the Tete Province of Mozambique experienced this phenomenon in the 1970s. Blasio Manobo speaks of African ecological spirituality, viewing the incarnation as an all-encompassing event for the whole of creation and not just humans, thereby evoking the African spirituality that views trees, mountains, rivers and indeed nature as such, as sacred and hence to be treated with due respect. And finally, the article by Yvonne Sanyanga and Emmanuel Maziti on 'The lived experiences of the Catholic religious sisters who contracted Covid-19 at a convent in Mutare diocese, Zimbabwe' graphically illustrates the feelings and thoughts of the survivors during their convalescence. Their recommendations point to the need for training in better disaster preparedness and management even for those who 'walk by faith' such as these nuns. Writing an editorial for such diversity is as daunting a task as trying to reconcile the divergent views and yet this is what this journal is about, a platform for plurality and multiplicity, with of course, the occasional single theme special editions.

Antonio Santos Marizane

Chief Editor

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The Necessity of Effective Leadership in a VUCA Environment: A Conceptual Discussion.

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Abstract

The current global operating environment is characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA). If organisations are to survive and prosper in this VUCA environment, effective leadership is a necessity. This paper is a conceptual discussion which positions effective leadership as necessary for survival and success in a VUCA environment. Although it is the responsibility of leaders to ensure that their organisations are responding effectively to the requirements of the VUCA environment, scholars have found a deficit of leadership competencies necessary for people to work in a VUCA world. Leadership models and tools that effectively worked in the past cannot be effectively inferred to the present and the time has come for new leadership models that are compatible with the requirements of the VUCA world. Sustainable success requires leaders who are able to come up with a compelling vision and then articulate that vision to all stakeholders. Effective leadership in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment demands men and women with a strong character. Contemporary leaders should be flexible and quick to change their plans, work schedules and leadership styles as the situation demands. Leaders should prioritise the acquisition of new and relevant skills and sustain their physical, mental and emotional fitness so that they effectively deal with the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous situations they face.

Key words: Ambiguity; Complexity; Effective leadership; Leadership; Uncertainty; Volatility

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1.0   Introduction

The world is changing in a faster way that it is becoming difficult to understand what is happening (Tudorache, Ispas & Barsan, 2020). It is filled with chaos and turbulence, with unpredictability becoming the order of the day (Sinha & Sinha, 2020). This calls for a radical rethinking of the strategies of understanding and handling the ever-changing environment. The world has been grappling with security challenges, economic turbulence, climate change, global pandemics and many other challenges emanating from globalisation, population dynamics, rapid technological innovation and a deficit in leadership talent (Jain, 2015). The leadership deficit is likely to get worse as many aging leaders and managers retire from their positions in a very short space of time. The current worldwide operating environment can be characterised as being volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous, popularly known by the acronym VUCA. If organisations are to survive and prosper in this VUCA environment, effective leadership is a necessity. Although this applies globally, it is more pronounced in Africa, a continent beleaguered by many leadership challenges (Nemashakwe, Zinyemba & Gumbe, 2022; Nemashakwe, 2021; Bailie, 2018; Moghalu, 2017). This paper is a conceptual discussion which positions effective leadership as necessary for survival and success in a VUCA environment. The discussion will proceed as follows; firstly, the VUCA concept will be defined followed by a discussion on what the VUCA environment entails. Then, leadership in the context of the VUCA environment will be outlined followed by a conversation on the necessity of effective leadership in a VUCA environment. The paper will proceed to outline how effective leadership in a VUCA environment should be like before proposing a conceptual framework detailing the proposed essential elements of effective VUCA leadership. The paper concludes with a guideline for future research.

2.0   The concept of VUCA

The VUCA concept is believed to have been invented by the United States military to describe an environment characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (Sarkar, 2016; Jain, 2015). It was coined to describe an entirely new situation that arose after the end of the cold war and the collapse of the Eastern bloc (Wolanin, 2022). As the cold war ended, expectations were very high for stability and

normalcy. However, instead of stability and normalcy, volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity emerged (ibid).

The VUCA concept has been borrowed by leaders in other disciplines such as business to signal "chaotic, turbulent, and rapidly changing business environment that has become the new normal" (Tudorache et al., 2020). Recent chaotic and turbulent occurrences include the 2008-2009 global financial crisis (Das & Ara, 2014) and the 2019-2022 COVID-19 pandemic (Ramakrishnan, 2021). VUCA symbolizes an operating environment which constantly changes in a dramatic and relentless way (Rimita, 2019). It signifies a change in the business' operating environment which requires astute responses (Mwinga & Mwenje, 2021). Organisations which operate in a world order characterised by advanced technological developments, rapid digitalization and the elimination of global boundaries cannot escape from dealing with complex and sometimes confusing issues.

Several studies focusing on understanding VUCA as a phenomenon have been carried out, although most of them have been confined to North America and other developed regions (Rimita, 2019). This can equally be said of papers focusing on management and leadership in the VUCA world which have been published over the last decade (Krawczynska-Zaucha, 2019). As a result, it can be concluded that a sufficient gap exists for studying VUCA as a phenomenon and its implications on management and leadership in Africa.

3.0   What VUCA environment entails

We are living in a world where everything is changing (Jain, 2015). Economies are changing, businesses are changing, principles are changing, ideas and many more things are changing. The world is experiencing big and small, predictable, and unpredictable, and positive and negative changes in a rapid way (Sinha & Sinha, 2020). These environments increasingly impede the capacity of many leaders to understand, decide, communicate and act decisively (Casey, 2020). Many leaders are becoming intimidated by the uncertainty and ambiguity of the prevailing situations that they decide not to act for fear of making a mistake. The section below explains what the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment involves.

3.1 Volatility

Volatility means the turmoil caused by the continually increasing change and the speed of the change (Michel, 2016). Ciceklioglu (2020) asserts that the change is unpredictable and non-constant. Since the change is rapid, it becomes difficult for the average person to cope with its speed. With volatility, established order is disturbed resulting in unexpected events (Wolanin, 2022). As such, there is an emergency of new concepts which people are not sure whether they are correct and are unaware of how they are applied.

3.2 Uncertainty

Uncertainty refers to the decrease of expectedness of decision-making phases of organisations and individuals (Michel, 2016). Organisations are finding it difficult to understand with certainty issues such as customer preferences, industry, and markets because of lack of clear conditions (Ciceklioglu, 2020). This has made collaborations and interpersonal relationships more fragile. Wolanin (2022, p. 176) asserts that "uncertainty nullifies the sense of control". It makes forecasting and decision-making challenging because of lack of predictability in issues and events. The volatile environment has made it difficult for leaders to rely on past events to predict future outcomes (Lawrence, 2013). This has made forecasting and decision-making very difficult.

3.3 Complexity

The contemporary world is becoming more and more complex as each day passes. Complexity emanates from impenetrable knowledge in today's business world which arises from the external environment and interweaves without fluctuating effects (Bennett and Lemoine, 2014). It is becoming increasingly difficult for things to become unequivocally clear or exactly determinable (Sinha & Sinha, 2020). With complexity there exists many possible causes of an event (Wolanin, 2022). This has resulted in leaders having more than one problem or solution.

3.4 Ambiguity

Ambiguity refers to the confusion associated with the cause and effect of situations (Guterman & King, 2014). It explains the likelihood of misjudging events and situations

and the obscuring of facts. The division between what is good or bad, right, or wrong becomes unclear. People cannot agree on one version of what they see, hear, or perceive (Wolanin, 2022).

4.0   Leadership in the context of the VUCA environment

4.1   The concept of leadership

Leadership is one of the most important topics in human sciences (Hogan and Kaiser, 2005). However, it has been very difficult to define and understand (Silva, 2016; Peretomode, 2012). This has resulted in many definitions and explanations emerging (McCleskey, 2014). Northouse (2015, p. 3) defined leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal". It has also been defined by Ramakrishnan (2021, p. 95) as "the art of influence and nurturance of positive changes in a complex adaptive system". Casey (2020) adds an important dimension by asserting that in addition to influencing people to achieve defined goals, leadership prepares people and organisations for the future.

The survival and growth of organisations depends on good leadership (Lekhanya, 2015). This is because the behaviour and attitudes of employees are influenced to a larger extent by the leadership exercised. Researchers have found leadership to be the most momentous aspect contributing to the performance of an organisation (Rahim, Abidin, Mohtar & Ramli, 2015). Having right leadership behaviours enhance the viability and success of an organisation (Arham, Boucher & Muenjohn, 2013). Exercising right leadership behaviours mollifies an organisation from failure (Madanchian & Taherdoost, 2017). Effective leadership moves both the organisation and its people towards a better future (Ramakrishnan, 2021). However, the problems that today's leaders face in a VUCA environment have no clear solutions (Ciceklioglu, 2020). This threatens the business' future and the leaders' careers.

4.2   The necessity of effective leadership in a VUCA environment

Although the term VUCA has become increasingly related to expectations for leaders to combat all types of crisis circumstances with intelligence and courage (Mishra, 2020), Hameed & Sharma (2020) and Wolfe (2015) concur that there is a deficit of leadership competencies necessary for people to work in a VUCA world. This has been supported by Ramakrishnan (2021) who asserted that the few leaders who are

available are unprepared to lead effectively. The leadership and management models that we have relied on for a very long time are quickly losing their validity (Ciceklioglu, 2020). The traditional models have proved insufficient for both organisations and people to manoeuvre in a VUCA world (Hameed & Sharma, 2020). Leaders find themselves without enough time to reflect resulting in them either acting too quickly or too late because they get trapped in analysis paralysis (Ramakrishnan, 2021).

Bennis (2007) articulated four major threats to world stability which included nuclear or biological calamity, a worldwide pandemic, tribalism and the leadership of human institutions. He asserted that to solve the first three problems, exemplary leadership was a necessity. The emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic exposed a dearth of global leadership. Instead of being transparent and spearheading collective leadership, most leaders opted for the traditional authoritarian leadership. Resultantly, they failed to instill confidence in the people they led with disastrous consequences. Ramakrishnan (2021) has argued that leaders who were able to implement collective leadership; bringing in their political opponents were able to cope up with the COVID-19 pandemic effectively.

It is fundamental for leaders to be equipped in today's rapid pace of VUCA disruption to handle the innumerable changes that VUCA brings (George, 2017). A VUCA world requires a better quality of leadership (Hameed & Sharma, 2020). Leaders should devise ways of becoming comfortable in an uncomfortable VUCA world. This environment demands leaders who are prepared to take significant risk and formulate new strategies. It is critical that organisations modify their practices in line with this new normal (Ramakrishnan, 2021). This no longer requires leaders who only think outside the box but who remove the box entirely.

It is the responsibility of leaders to ensure that their organisations are responding effectively to the requirements of the VUCA environment (Ramakrishnan, 2021; Raghuramapatruni and Kosuri, 2017; Sarkar, 2016). There is consensus that in times of turmoil, leadership becomes essential to business survival and success (Mwinga and Mwenje, 2021). Business leaders should play a vital role in facilitating the viability of their businesses when they are operating in a VUCA environment. However, it has been noted that most organisations misunderstand and undervalue the importance of leadership in such circumstances.

A study conducted on 13124 leaders showed that the most daunting challenge facing leaders in the 21st century was operating in a VUCA environment (Rimita, 2019). The study further indicated that only 18% of leaders had the capacity to lead in a VUCA world. This clearly shows that only few leaders are ready to lead in a VUCA environment, with most of the leaders ill prepared to deal with VUCA challenges and headaches.

Leaders irrespective of their field of specialisation have been experiencing the VUCA features almost daily (Tudorache et al., 2020). Unfortunately, the frequency and the magnitude of the change is surpassing the skills that leaders possess, which calls for new perspectives on leadership and the upgrading of skills. Leadership rules that effectively worked in the past cannot be effectively inferred to the present (Sinha & Sinha, 2020). The time has come for new leadership models that are compatible with the requirements of the VUCA world.

4.3   Effective leadership in a VUCA environment.

Effective leadership in a VUCA environment demands a holistic shift in how organisations are led. If organisations are to survive and prosper in this current environment characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, new ways of leading and new skills are a necessity. What has made organisations succeed in the past will not guarantee success in the future. The following section theorises how effective leadership in a VUCA environment should be like. It details what contemporary leaders are expected to do and the skills they should possess if they are to lead their organisations to success this 21st century.

There is need for leaders who have the capability to visualize the future (Jain, 2015). When an organisation is undergoing a period of rapid change, stakeholders need direction, although, with the possibility of an adjustment in the route (Raghuramapatruni and Kosuri, 2017). It is the responsibility of effective leaders to provide such direction. They should have the bravery to act with conviction in the face of ambiguity and risk and the character to do the right thing in tough times. Contemporary success requires leaders with the vision to see opportunities in challenges. They should visualize opportunities where others are constantly seeing challenges. In the same way a magnet works, the greatness of a vision will attract the

different forces around it (Nurbantoro, 2021). Ciceklioglu (2020) believes that coming up with a compelling vision is necessary where volatility is present. Leaders should develop the ability to communicate the vision to all stakeholders so that they drive everyone towards the achievement of the vision (Ramakrishnan, 2021).

Strong organisations are built by leaders with strong values. Followers trust leaders of character because they believe the leaders are not selfish and will do the right thing for the organisation especially when the going gets tough. Casey (2020) believes that trust is the glue which binds the organisation together. An effective leader should have the character to do the right thing for the organisation especially in very difficult situations and when what is right is unpopular.

Contemporary leaders should not only believe in change but should also embrace it (Jain, 2015). They should develop agility (Tudorache et al., 2020). People, especially leaders need the flexibility to react to whatever outcome or situation. Flexibility enables leaders to recognise and acclimatize to the demands of a situation quickly by addressing both the bigger picture and its individual elements (Krawczynska-Zaucha, 2019). If organisations are to survive and succeed in this VUCA environment, leaders should be flexible and quick to make decisions revolving around making necessary shifts in people, process, technology, and structure (Das & Ara, 2014). Agility calls for leaders to be quick in changing their plans, work schedules and leadership styles (Ramakrishnan, 2021). Leaders who will lead their organisations to sustainable success in this VUCA environment are those who are able to work with anyone; what is known as people agility (Nurbantoro, 2021). Resources should be directed towards building capacity for future flexibility (Ciceklioglu, 2020).

There is need for leaders to create sound collaborations with stakeholders such as employees, customers, suppliers, shareholders, and society (Sarkar, 2016). The partnerships must be based on trust (Ramakrishnan, 2021). Nemashakwe, Zinyemba & Gumbe (2023) have argued that employees are key to the success of an organisation and as such leaders should allow them to freely express themselves without any fear of negative retribution. Ramakrishnan believes that for wise decision making, VUCA times call for collaboration from diverse groups. To deal with volatile situations, relationships between individuals connected to the organisation should be maintained at the highest level (Ciceklioglu, 2020). Leaders need to put more

emphasis on connections and effective communication with stakeholders. They should understand that the higher they go on the organisational hierarchy, the more time they need to spend influencing people outside their control to support their efforts. Wolanin (2022) believes that top executives should spend most of their time on external contacts appreciating their importance and power.

To succeed in a VUCA environment, the focus must be on collective as compared to individual leadership. This calls for leaders who are prepared to exercise responsible leadership for the sake of the survival of their organisations. Sarkar (2016) is of the view that responsible leadership combines the central qualities of the servant, authentic and transformational leadership styles. Responsible leaders encourage teamwork while at the same time setting high-performance targets (Ramakrishnan, 2021).

Although leaders must accept that their environments will be volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous, they should never accept results dictated by external factors. As such, they should be at the forefront of creating the future they desire for their organisations irrespective of the challenges they will experience. To achieve that, leaders should focus their energy and time on those issues which bring the highest payoff for their organisations. This is not easy because in most instances, the situation keeps diverting the leader's attention from these crucial activities. These highest payoff activities are the hardest to do and as such, they require extreme commitment and a lot of energy on the part of the leader.

There is need for development of leaders at all levels all the time (Ramakrishnan, 2021). In fact, the development of leadership capacities in the VUCA environment should be the norm. This becomes more critical during the management of a crisis where the decisions made by leaders have far-reaching consequences. Traditional leadership development methods such as on-the-job training, coaching, mentoring and job assignments have been found to be falling short in developing the capabilities necessary to succeed in a VUCA environment (Lawrence, 2013). The methods have been found to be at odds with the demands of leadership in a VUCA world. As such, it is necessary for human resources and talent management professionals to reframe leadership development activities taking into consideration the VUCA world. Contemporary leadership development must increasingly focus on learning strategic

thinking, self-awareness, and agility. Successful leadership development must shift focus from behavioural competencies to complex thinking abilities and mindsets leaving leaders comfortable with ambiguity.

In order to achieve success in the VUCA world, leaders should obtain new skills and abilities (Johansen, 2012). Conciliatory skills will help to balance and eliminate polarization around the organisation (Ciceklioglu, 2020). Leaders with effective conciliatory skills will be able to calm down tense situations in which communication is interrupted and differences triumph (Johansen, 2012). It is imperative that they develop superior conceptual and social skills. Leaders with these skills and other extremely developed competencies guarantee the continued success of an organisation in times of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity.

One of the toughest challenges for leaders operating in the VUCA environment is to sustain their physical, mental, and emotional fitness in a way that allows them to deal with the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous situations they face (Casey 2020). Effective leaders are the ones who can function at their best. To do that, Ramakrishnan (2021) advises them to focus on their physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. Leaders should find time to read to stimulate new insights, get new ideas and develop their intellectual capacity. They should develop the capacity to vigorously test prevailing ideas in the context of the emergence of new competing models (Nurbantoro, 2021). Leaders should also develop a regular exercise regimen to avoid fatigue, burn stress and frustrations, and build resilience necessary for the VUCA environment. They should also not overlook spending time with their families and periodically recharging because it builds in them capacity to successfully run the business' grueling marathon race.

Leaders should be in possession of as much information as possible for them to anticipate events and influence decision making (Wolanin, 2022). When leaders are in possession of information, they can predict what will happen, when and why. However, having more information on its own is not enough, necessary tools and skills should be at the leader's disposal to enable them to process the vast amount of information quickly and infer conclusions which will benefit the organisation. As we are operating in the digital era where information is widely available to such an extent that organisations may suffer from information overload, contemporary leaders must

develop special skills to process the complex information (Nurbantoro, 2021). In order not to be lost in the flood of information leaders find at their disposal, they need to develop clarity about what is right or wrong, true or false, and trustworthy or not.

To lessen ambiguity, leaders should allow experimentation (Bennet & Lemoine, 2014). It is only with intelligent experimentation that leaders will be able to deduce strategies that are beneficial or not especially in situations where former rules of business have ceased to apply. Uncertainty and complexity will not disappear even for the best prepared leaders. They should be ambassadors of change and forerunners of the future (Wolanin, 2022). Although, it can be difficult for leaders to predict the future, they can at least make sense of it. Leaders must be able to see the light at the end of the tunnel when others are only seeing darkness in the tunnel. They should then devise the path to take the entire organisation from the tunnel where there is darkness to its end where there is light.

When undergoing a bad situation, followers desire and expect leaders who are compassionate and walk in the shoes of those affected by the situation. Ramakrishnan (2021) believes that leaders should exhibit hope that together with the followers they can manage the crisis despite not knowing everything about the prevailing situation. To do that, they should be open about the nature and severity of the situation. They should always project hope that normalcy will return soon.

Having leaders who are relevant for the VUCA world begins at the selection stage with the hiring of leaders with the requisite skills. During the selection process, a structured interview must be designed to assess agility, complex thinking skills, self-awareness, openness to change and ability to collaborate (Horney, Pasmore & O'Shea, 2011). After attracting the leaders with these skills into the organisation, continuous development and refresher programmes are necessary especially in the critical areas of scenario planning. Leaders should be trained to anticipate future possible challenges and come up with possible solutions (Lawrence, 2013). This is meant to make leaders confident as they encounter a new situation. Sinha & Sinha (2020) propose simulations as a powerful learning tool for VUCA leaders because it allows leaders to practice skills in a non-threatening and safe environment.

5.0   Proposed conceptual framework.

Having discussed how effective leadership in a VUCA environment should look like to engender sustainable success, the authors propose the following conceptual framework. The framework depicted in figure 1 below symbolises the VUCA leadership necessary to take organisations to the next level and engender sustainable success.

Figure 1: Effective VUCA leadership
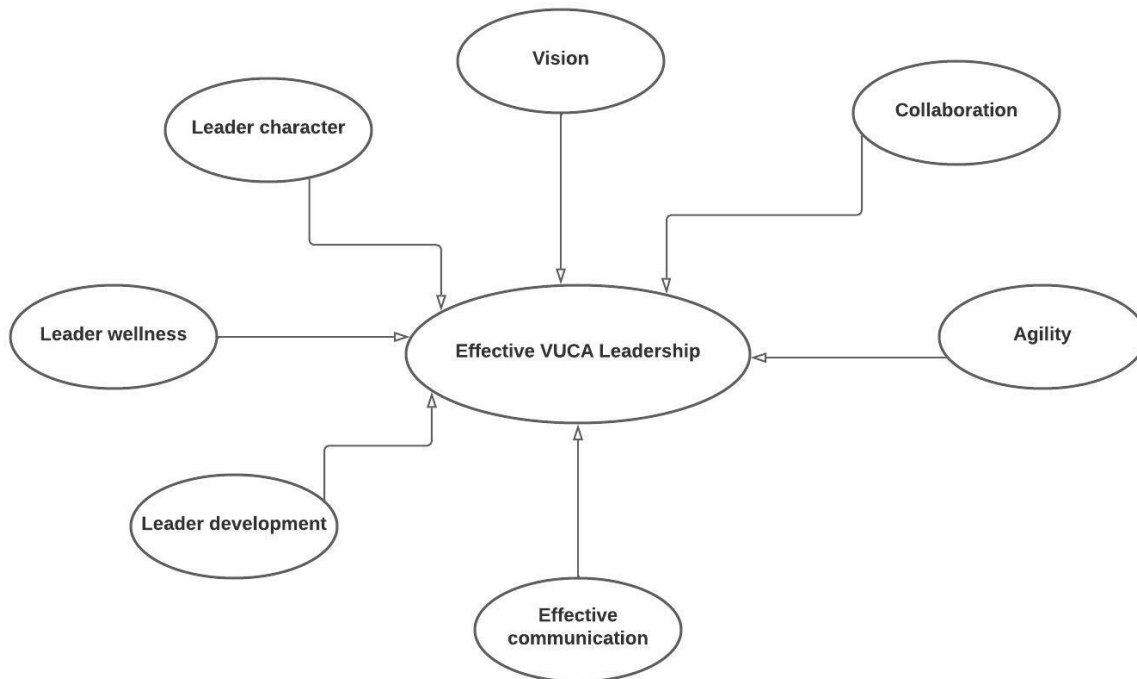
Sustainable success in a VUCA environment requires leaders who can come up with a compelling vision for their organisations. They should be effective communicators who articulate the vision to stakeholders so that everyone knows the direction the organisation is taking and works towards the achievement of the vision. Effective leadership in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment demands men and women with a strong character. It requires people with strong values, who are not selfish and who are prepared to do the right thing even when doing the right thing is unpopular. Contemporary leaders should be agile. They should be flexible to react to whatever outcome or situation. The leaders should be quick in changing their plan, work schedules and leadership styles. The VUCA environment demands the creation of effective collaborations with stakeholders such as employees, suppliers,

customers, shareholders, and communities based on trust. Leaders should put more emphasis on the creation and maintenance of these vital connections.

The only constant thing about the VUCA environment is change. What is only certain is that the world will keep on changing. Leaders should be prepared to change as the environment changes. This will only be possible if organisations prioritise the development of their leaders. This responsibility should not only be left to organisations but leaders should take the responsibility and initiative of self-developing themselves through the acquisition of new and relevant skills. Leaders operating in the VUCA environment should sustain their physical, mental, and emotional fitness so that they effectively deal with the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous situations they face. They can do this by maintaining a regular exercise regimen, read extensively to develop their intellectual capacity, spend quality time with their loved ones and have enough rest.

6.0   Conclusion and guidance for future research

The paper positioned effective leadership as necessary for survival and success in a VUCA environment. Effective VUCA leadership involves leaders coming up with a compelling vision. It also involves leaders who are agile and who possess a strong character. Effective leaders should sustain their physical, mental, and emotional fitness so that they effectively deal with the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous situations they face.

The paper has proposed a conceptual framework detailing essential characteristics of effective VUCA leadership. Future researchers may empirically test the proposed elements with the aim of either proving or disproving them as essential elements of effective VUCA leadership.

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Effective Leadership as a catalyst for enhancing employee retention in SMEs in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Most managers agree that employees are the greatest asset that any organisation may have. However, retaining them is one of the toughest challenges experienced by these managers. While Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are fundamental to the sustainable growth and development of developing economies, they have witnessed high levels of employee turnover which has paralysed operations and negatively affected viability. The paper argues that effective leadership acts as a catalyst for enhancing employee retention in Zimbabwean SMEs. Guided by the positivism research philosophy and the deductive approach, the study adopted a quantitative research design where a survey strategy was used to collect primary data from 197 participants from Bulawayo's Central Business Area (CBA) who had been chosen using proportional stratified sampling. The study found that having and communicating a clear vision, effective communication, employee development, fairness, transparency, and accountability were related and positively contributed to employee retention. The study concluded that effective leadership is a catalyst for enhancing employee retention in SMEs in Zimbabwe. Leaders were recommended to communicate in a timely manner and provide feedback in a humane way. They should also ensure that organisational processes such as performance appraisal, disciplinary and grievance handling procedures are not only fair but are seen to be fair.

Key words: Clear vision; Effective communication; Effective leadership; Employee development; Employee retention; Fairness; Transparency and accountability.

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1.0   Introduction and background

Most managers agree that employees are the greatest asset that any organisation may have as they constitute its life-blood (Das & Baruah, 2013). However, retaining them is one of the toughest challenges experienced by these managers. This is worsened by a critical shortage of talented employees prevalent in a highly competitive world (Wakabi, 2016). Employee turnover is associated with costs such as recruitment, training, reduction in productivity and lost time (ibid). These costs pose a significant challenge to organisations (Carter, Dudley, Lyle & Smith, 2019).

Sustainable competitiveness of an organisation is driven by human capital (Singh, 2019). Organisational success, whether measured using metrics such as customer satisfaction, increased sales, large market share or high profitability depends on an organisation's ability to retain the best employees (Das and Baruah, 2013). As leaders begin to understand that sustainable competitive advantage comes from people, they will employ strategies to ensure that the best employees are retained so that quality performance is assured and sustainable competitive advantage is guaranteed (Wakabi, 2016).

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are fundamental to the sustainable growth and development of developing countries (Tinarwo, 2016). They play an important role in employment creation (Maseko and Manyani, 2011), act as a nursery for larger firms (Mamman, Kanu, Alharbi & Baydoun, 2015) and act as an incubator of innovative ideas (Muriithi, 2017). However, despite their importance, SMEs have been affected by a high failure rate (Mudavanhu, Bindu, Chigusiwa & Muchabaiwa, 2011) which is largely blamed on ineffective leadership (Madanchian and Taherdoost, 2017; Saasongu, 2015; Jalal-Eddeen, 2015). This has been corroborated by Nemashakwe, Zinyemba & Gumbe (2022) who found out that leadership in Zimbabwean SMEs was not effective. SMEs have witnessed high employee turnover rates which have paralysed operations and negatively affected viability (Daka, 2016).

Singh (2019) is of the opinion that high level of turnover negatively affects the image of the organisation and sends a wrong message to prospective employees about the organisation.   When employees leave an organisation, they deprive the organisation of their knowledge, skills, experience, and right attitude (ibid). These valuable

resources that might have been gained courtesy of the organisation may be used against the same organisation especially if the exiting employee joins a competing firm. It has been argued that rather than leaving the organisation, employees leave managers. Leadership plays a critical role in the retention of employees. It determines whether employees stay or leave the organisation (Mwita, Mwakasangula & Teferukwa, 2018; Puni, Agyemang & Asamoah, 2016). When employees are treated poorly by their leaders, they experience psychological distress and lower job satisfaction, which unfortunately leads to lower commitment and high staff turnover.

2.0   Literature review

2.1   Leadership

Leadership is regarded as one of the least understood phenomena despite its ranking amongst the most important topics in human sciences (Hogan and Kaiser, 2005). This has resulted in difficulties in coming up with a common definition (Silva, 2016; Peretomode, 2012). Although there has been a proliferation of innumerable definitions (McCleskey, 2014), Northouse (2015)'s definition captures the essence of leadership. The author defined leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 3). This definition clearly shows that leadership involves a process of influence between the leader and followers (Maaitah, 2018). It "involves the ability to build and maintain a group that performs well relative to its competition" (Hogan and Kaiser, 2005, p. 172).

Leadership is one of the key organisational components that determine whether an organisation succeeds or not (Kumar and Matheen, 2019). It is critical to any organisation because the leader's behaviour either makes or breaks the organisation (Maaitah, 2018). Arham (2014) identified leadership behaviour and skills as the important ingredients that determine the survival and growth of SMEs. Leaders should be effective when it comes to interpersonal and intercultural communication. Effective communication nurtures an environment of openness and trust (Singh, 2019).

2.2   Employee retention

Many organisations have understood the importance of employee retention (Singh, 2019). It involves encouraging employees to remain in the organisation for a long period of time or until the completion of a project (Das & Baruah, 2013). It involves

numerous strategies employed by an organisation to encourage its human resources to remain with it for a long period of time (Singh, 2019). Employee retention aims at minimising voluntary turnover (Wakabi, 2016).

Retention is essential for the growth and stability of an organisation. It reduces the cost of replacing employees and ensures that loyal customers are kept in the organisation (Wakabi, 2016). Great organisations deploy their arsenal with the aim of retaining their valued resources since they are aware that quality employees are hard and costly to find. Das & Baruah (2013) believes that the onus is on leaders to adopt and implement appropriate employee retention strategies. Effective retention strategies prevent skilled and experienced employees from leaving the organisation as this may compromise productivity and service delivery. It has also been estimated that the cost of recruiting and training a replacement employee is equivalent to 50% of the employee's annual salary (Maaitah, 2018). Research has shown that when employees are committed, they are less likely to leave their organisations (Frye, Kang, Hu & Lee, 2020). This means that more committed employees are less likely to leave their organisations as compared to less committed employees.

2.3   The role of leadership in employee retention

Wakabi (2016) believes that leaders play a critical role in employee retention since the type of leadership they practice impacts directly on the feelings employees have about the organisation. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate their followers to achieve higher performance targets (Lim, Loo & Lee, 2017). This may resultantly motivate employees to stay with the organisation as the leader and followers mutually trust and remain loyal to each other. The leadership style of a manager may be one of the stressors causing employees to leave their jobs.

If organisations are to retain employees, leaders should embrace leadership styles that promote staff retention (Wakabi, 2016). The common understanding that employees leave their jobs because of bad leadership shows the significance of leadership in contemporary organisations (Lim et al., 2017). Leaders should create a conducive environment that will endear the organisation to employees and influence them directly and indirectly to remain with the organisation irrespective of opportunities arising outside the organisation (Wakabi, 2016).

Transformational leaders have been found to act as change agents as they articulate the vision of the organisation, challenge the status quo, inspire and motivate followers to achieve their greatest potential (Lim et al., 2017). Due to the vision articulated by the transformational leader, followers become loyal and are committed to following the leader towards achieving the shared vision (ibid). Relationship oriented leaders take the responsibility of assisting employees to develop their careers (Wakabi, 2016). Transformational leaders have been found to care for their employees and provide coaching and mentoring to the employees which inspires the followers to rally behind the leader and assist in the achievement of the organisational vision (Lim et al., 2017). Provision of coaching and mentoring activities improves job satisfaction which ultimately reduces turnover intention in employees (ibid).

Pay has been viewed as a great motivator and an employee retention technique especially for lower-level employees. If good performers in an organisation are not rewarded sufficiently, they leave their jobs (Wakabi, 2016). Although pay is important, most employees are of the view that intrinsic rewards such as recognition, sense of achievement and work autonomy are more important than extrinsic rewards (Frye et al., 2020). These intrinsic rewards have been found to have a strong effect on employee turnover. Mwita et al. (2018) advised leaders in organisations to constantly seek feedback from their employees regarding perceptions on leadership style and institute improvements before aggrieved employees decide to leave. Organisations that give employees freedom to voice their dissatisfaction with working conditions have a greater chance of retaining their employees (Singh, 2019).

In a study to examine the link between leadership and employee retention in Tanzanian commercial banks, Mwita et al. (2018) found a significant linear relationship between the two variables. Ng'ethe, Namusonge and Iravo (2012) found the relationship between leadership style and the retention of academic staff in public universities in Kenya to be significant. This means that the perceived quality of the leadership style has an effect on whether employees stay or leave the organisation.

In a study by Nwokocha and Iheriohanma (2015) to examine the nexus between leadership style, employee retention and employee performance in Nigeria, it was concluded that effective leadership style is important for attaining organisational goals. The study found that when leadership style is perceived to be repulsive by employees,

it will affect employees' performance and prompt their inclination to leave the organisation. Khalid, Pahi, and Ahmed (2016) found a strong and positive relationship between leadership and employee retention in the banking sector in Pakistan. In a study by Koesmono (2017) to assess the impact of transactional leadership on employee turnover intention in Indonesia, it was found that transactional leadership in conjunction with work motivation and job satisfaction have an impact on turnover intention. A study by Carter et al. (2019) found that having an immediate superior in the military possessing strong leadership increased retention rates by 2.7 percentage points while having a senior leader with strong leadership increased retention rates by 2.1 percentage points.

3.0   Conceptual Framework

The following conceptual framework shown in figure 1 was proposed for the study.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework
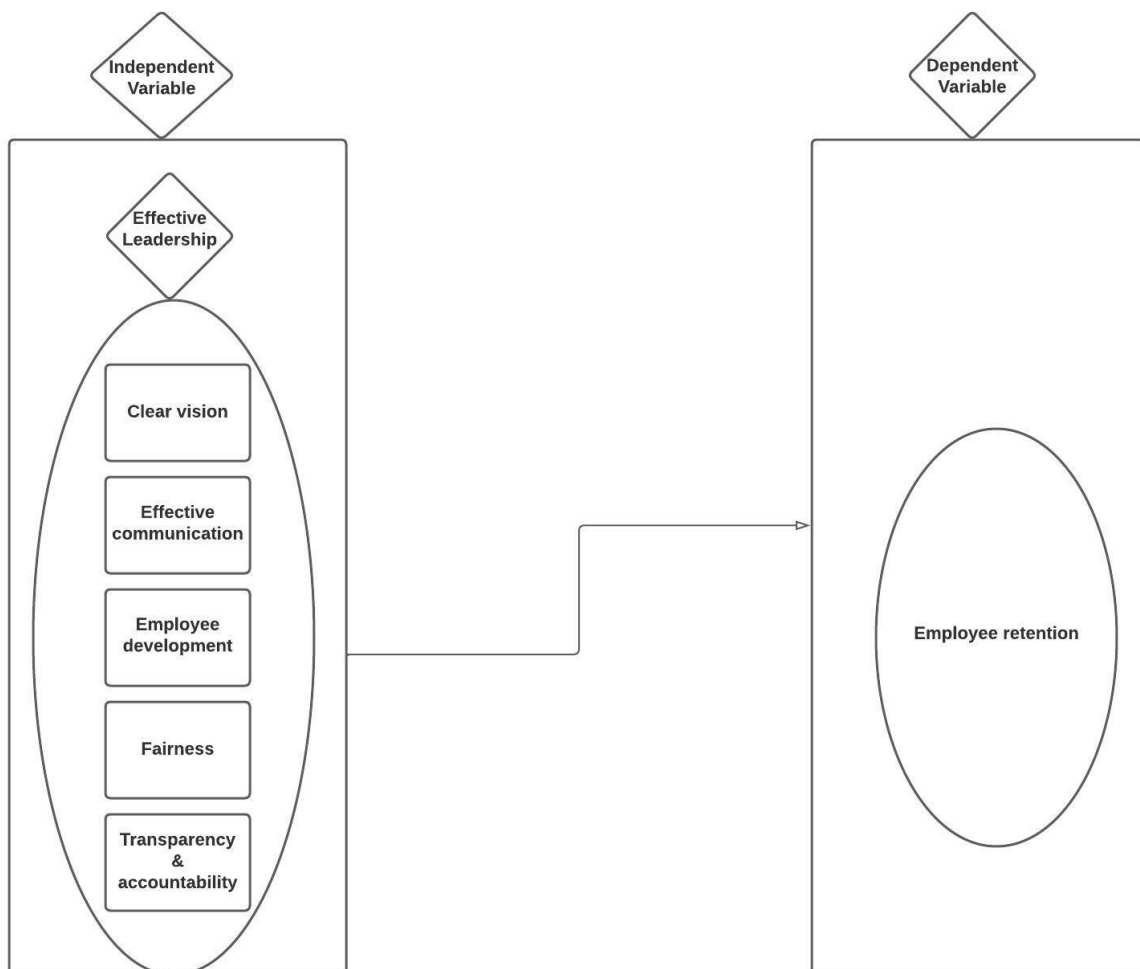
Leaders play a critical role in the retention of employees in any organisation. Since it is believed that employees leave managers rather than organisations, it is also true that managers are the reason why employees may decide to remain with an organisation for a long period of time. This all depends on the type of leadership that managers practice in an organisation. The study proposed that employee retention is dependent on effective leadership. Five elements were chosen to represent effective leadership namely clear vision, effective communication, employee development, fairness, and transparency and accountability.

3.1 Independent variables

3.1.1 Clear vision

Employees love to work for an organisation with a clear direction. One way that leaders provide strategic direction to an organisation is through crafting and communicating a compelling vision to all stakeholders. A leader who can create and communicate a compelling vision in a clear, concise and inspiring manner rallies employees towards the achievement of the vision. When employees believe in a leader's vision and sees it as achievable, they are prepared to remain in the organisation and work with others towards the achievement of the vision.

3.1.2 Effective communication

Cloutier, Felusiak, Hill, & Pemberton-Jones (2015) believed that effective communication is essential for retention of employees. When leaders communicate with employees in a timely manner, without withholding any information whether it is positive or negative, mutual trust is built between employees and their leaders. Employees are prepared to stay in an organisation where two-way communication is encouraged. This will show employees that they are valued because it affords them an opportunity to communicate their opinions and grievances to their leaders as compared to a situation where they are constantly on the receiving end. Employees stay in an organisation where they constantly get feedback irrespective of whether the feedback is positive or negative as long as they get the feedback in a humane way. Leaders should encourage open communication. Fostering open communication in an organisation has been found to be one of the factors which reduces employee turnover (Wakabi, 2016).

3.1.3 Employee development

A study by Mehta, Kurbetti, & Dhankhar (2014) showed that employees are likely to stay longer with organisations where there are career opportunities. Such employees will also exhibit greater loyalty to the organisation. Employees are prepared to stay with leaders who exhibit an interest in their career progression. When leaders understand that it is their responsibility to assist employees in their career progression, employees will be loyal and remain with the organisation. This should involve making sure that employees who want to develop themselves have been given ample time and support to do so without any hindrance. The support should also involve resources especially for those whose salaries and benefits might not be enough to allow them to advance themselves.

3.1.4 Fairness

Employees know very well when they are treated fairly and when they are not, and few employees will willingly remain in an organisation where they are not treated fairly. If managers want to retain employees, they should treat them fairly. Employees should not be unnecessarily discriminated against. They should be paid a fair wage for a fair day's work. Nadiri and Tanova (2010) cited in Frye et al., (2020) postulated that fair compensation and fairness within the working environment are some of the factors that make employees satisfied with their jobs and choose to remain in those organisations. Leaders in organisations should desist from having favourites as this will demotivate employees and encourage them to look for alternative organisations. Organisational processes such as performance appraisal, disciplinary and grievance handling procedures should not only be fair but should also be seen to be fair for employees to have confidence in the organisation and decide to stay longer.

3.1.5 Transparency and accountability

Modern managers should be transparent and keep their subordinates well informed about the important facets of the business. Employees are prepared to work for organisations where managers do not hide anything and are prepared to explain their actions or decisions to subordinates. When managers are transparent and are prepared to be accountable, trust is nurtured between the leaders and their

subordinates. This trust will motivate employees to stay with the organisation for a long time. Nemashakwe, Zinyemba and Gumbe (2023) cautions leaders from instilling fear in their subordinates and engaging in retributive behaviour as this may motivate employees to quit the organisation and look for friendly organisations.

3.2   Dependent variable

3.2.1 Employee retention

Although it is difficult to tell with certainty whether an employee will be with the organisation for a long time, there are signs that may signal whether the organisation is on course to retain the employee or not. Employees who are happy to continue with the organisation and are not thinking of quitting jealously guard the reputation of the organisation, knowing fully well that the organisation is their home and they will not be going anywhere anytime soon. These employees are not actively looking for employment elsewhere and do not consider or apply for any vacancies that may arise outside the organisation. Employees who are not harbouring any ambitions of leaving the organisation anytime soon are not active on job hunting platforms. Employees who believe in the organisation and are not thinking of leaving anytime soon show interest and are focused on long term projects. In contrast employees who are about to leave are reluctant to commit to long term projects.

4.0   Methodology

The study was guided by the positivism research philosophy and the deductive approach. Positivism was ideal because it placed greater emphasis on empirical data collection and effect-oriented analysis (Neuman, 2014). It was also chosen because of its ability to produce pure data and facts not influenced by human interpretation and bias (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). Deductive approach was chosen because of its ability to explain causal relationships between variables. The study adopted a quantitative research design where a survey strategy was used to collect primary data from 197 participants from Bulawayo's Central Business Area. Quantitative research design was chosen so that opinions, attitudes, behaviours and variables could be quantified (Mohajan, 2020) and also because of its ability to save time and resources (Eyisi, 2016). A survey strategy was chosen because it goes hand in hand with a deductive approach and most researches in social sciences use it as a data gathering

technique (Neuman, 2014). It was also possible for standardised data to be collected from participants in a cost-effective way allowing for easy comparison (Saunders et al., 2016).

Research participants were chosen through proportional stratified sampling where the population was first separated into strata based on the sector in which the SME operated before a random sample was drawn from the different strata in relative proportion to the size of the stratum in the population as enunciated by Greenfield and Greener (2016). Proportional stratified sampling was ideal because the researchers had prior knowledge about the population (Jawale, 2012) and it enhanced the sample representativeness in relation to the population (Saunders et al., 2016). Data was analysed through the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 and Smart PLS version 3 tools. The study was conducted in a manner that safeguarded the best interests of research participants (Magwa and Magwa, 2015).

5.0   Findings and Discussion

5.1   Response rate

Out of the 250 questionnaires that were distributed, 197 were returned. This gave a response rate of 78.8% which was considered enough for statistical analysis (Saunders et al., 2016; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The distribution of the questionnaires is shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Distribution of questionnaires

Participant category	Questionnaires distributed	Questionnaires analysed	Percentage
Non-managerial	150	119	79.3%
Supervisory	65	53	81.5%
Managers	20	14	70.0%
Owner-managers	15	11	73.3%
Total	250	197	78.8%

5.2 Sample adequacy and significance

In order to test the sample adequacy and significance, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sample adequacy and the Bartlett's test of sphericity were used and the results are shown in table 2 below.

Table 2: Sample adequacy and sphericity

KMO and Bartlett's test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.836
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	11631.683
	df	947
	Sig.	0.000

The KMO value of 0.836 is above the accepted threshold of 0.50 which showed that the sample was adequate and appropriate for exploratory factor analysis (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2014). The BTS value of 0.000 showed that the sample was statistically significant.

5.3 Instrument reliability

The internal consistence of the research instrument items was measured using the Cronbach alpha coefficient and the results are shown in table 3 below.

Table 3: Cronbach alpha values

Theme	Number of items	Cronbach alpha value
Clear vision	6	0.821
Effective communication	5	0.813
Employee development	6	0.792
Fairness	6	0.873
Transparency and accountability	4	0.743
Employee retention	6	0.833
Total	**33**	

All the Cronbach alpha values were above 0.7 showing a strong and solid item covariance (Gerber and Hall, 2017; Saunders et al., 2016). This proved that the instrument used for the study was reliable.

5.4 Spearman correlation analysis

The spearman correlation analysis was used to test the direction and the strength of the monotonic relationship between the proposed independent variables (clear vision, effective communication, employee development, fairness, transparency and accountability) and the dependent variable (employee retention). The results are shown in table 4 below.

Table 4: Spearman correlation values

Dimension	Effective leadership
Clear vision Sig N	0.591 0.000 197
Effective communication Sig N	0.621 0.000 197
Employee development Sig N	0.477 0.003 197
Fairness Sig N	0.523 0.000 197
Transparency and accountability Sig N	0.539 0.000 197

Table 4 above showed that the correlation coefficient values for clear vision, effective communication, employee development, fairness, and transparency and accountability were 0.591, 0.621, 0.477, 0.523 and 0.539 respectively.

5.4.1 Clear vision

A Spearman coefficient (rho) of 0.591 showed that clear vision was positively correlated to employee retention and was also significant at 5% level of significance. The relationship between clear vision and employee retention was moderate

(Saunders et al., 2016). An analysis of the findings showed that leaders of SMEs were not worried about creating and communicating a compelling vision. As a result of the absence of a compelling vision, employees were prepared to leave their current organisations in search of new organisations because there was nothing to rally employees behind. 72.6% of the respondents were of the view that leaders were not communicating a compelling vision. 56% of managers and owner-managers were of the view that leaders were not communicating a compelling vision to stakeholders. Lim et al. (2017) were of the view that when leaders articulate a compelling vision, followers become loyal and committed to following the leader towards achieving the shared vision. When a leader develops and communicates a compelling vision effectively, employees will identify themselves with the vision such that it becomes inconceivable for them to exit the organisation before they participate in the fulfilment of the vision.

5.4.2 Effective communication

A Spearman coefficient (rho) of 0.621 revealed that effective communication was positively related to employee retention and was statistically significant at 5% level of significance. A rho of 0.621 showed that the relationship between effective communication and employee retention was strong. An analysis of the findings showed that leaders in SMEs were not effectively communicating. 71.6% of the respondents were of the view that communication was predominantly one way. 80.7% of non-managerial employees reported that they were not given negative feedback in a humane way. This resulted in them being less loyal to the organisation and harbouring ambitions of exiting the organisation. These findings were consistent with the findings of Wakabi (2016).

5.4.3 Employee development

A Spearman coefficient (rho) of 0.477 revealed a positive correlation between employee development and employee retention and the relationship was significant at 5% level of significance. A rho of 0.477 showed a moderate relationship between employee development and employee retention. 81.2% of the respondents were of the view that SMEs had limited career progression avenues which affected the desire of employees to stay with the organisation. 90.1% of non-managerial and supervisory respondents were of the view that leaders were not interested in their careers. The

same respondents were of the view that their leaders were not supportive in terms of career development. When leaders are interested in the careers of their subordinates and are supportive, employees will begin to see the organisation as a family which requires their loyalty irrespective of occasional problems that may emerge. As such, the appetite to leave the family will decrease.

5.4.4 Fairness

A Spearman coefficient (rho) of 0.523 showed that fairness was positively correlated to employee retention and was significant at 5% level of significance. A rho of 0.523 showed a moderate relationship between fairness and employee retention (Saunders et al., 2016). 85.5% of non-managerial and supervisory respondents were of the view that they were not treated fairly although they valued fairness at work. 69% of the respondents believed that leaders had favourite employees. As such, if an employee was not among the favourites, it was time for them to move on and look for another organisation to work for where either they could become favourites of leaders or where employees were at least treated fairly.

5.4.5 Transparency and accountability

A Spearman coefficient (rho) of 0.539 showed a positive relationship between transparency and accountability and employee retention. A rho of 0.539 showed that the relationship was moderate (Saunders et al., 2016) and was significant at 5% level of significance. 65.5% of the respondents were of the view that leaders were not transparent. 84.8% of the respondents were of the view that leaders were not accountable while 88% of managers and owner-managers believed that leaders should not be accountable to their employees. These findings were consistent with the findings of Nemashakwe et al., (2023). When leaders are transparent and have nothing to hide, employees will believe that the leaders will do everything in the best interest of them and the organisation. Employees will love to work in an organisation where they can demand accountability from their leaders and will stay with that organisation for as long as it takes.

5.5 Research hypotheses

Five hypotheses were formulated for the study and table 5 below shows the t-statistics and p-values for the hypotheses and whether they were supported or not supported by empirical findings.

Table 5: Research hypotheses values

	t-statistic	p-value	Hypothesis	Decision
Clear vision contributes to employee retention	3.147	0.027	H1	Accepted
Effective communication contributes to employee retention	3.319	0.014	H2	Accepted
Employee development contributes to employee retention	2.637	0.036	H3	Accepted
Fairness contributes to employee retention	2.784	0.031	H4	Accepted
Transparency & accountability contributes to employee retention	2.968	0.029	H5	Accepted

5.5.1 Clear vision

The study tested the hypothesis that clear vision contributes to employee retention. The t-statistic for clear vision on employee retention was 3.147 and was greater than 1.96 (Nawanir, Teong & Othman, 2013). The p-value was 0.027 and was less than 0.05 (Firmansyah & Maemunah, 2021). The hypothesis was accepted and it was concluded that a clear vision contributes to employee retention.

5.5.2 Effective communication

The study tested the hypothesis that effective communication contributes to employee retention. The t-statistic was 3.319 and was above 1.96 (Nawanir et al., 2013). The p-value between effective communication and employee retention was 0.014 and was less than 0.05 (Firmansyah & Maemunah, 2021). The hypothesis was accepted and it was concluded that effective communication has a positive influence on employee retention.

5.5.3 Employee development

The study tested the hypothesis that employee development contributes to employee retention. The t-statistic for employee development on employee retention was 2.637 and was above 1.96 (Nawanir et al., 2013). A p-value of 0.036 was achieved and was less than 0.05 (Firmansyah & Maemunah, 2021). As such, the hypothesis was accepted and it was concluded that employee development positively contributes to employee retention.

5.5.4 Fairness

The study tested the hypothesis that fairness contributes to employee retention. The t-statistic for fairness on employee retention was 2.784 and was above 1.96 (Nawanir et al., 2013). The p-value obtained was 0.031 and was less than 0.05 (Firmansyah & Maemunah, 2021). The hypothesis was accepted and it was concluded that fairness contributes positively to employee retention.

5.5.5 Transparency and accountability

The study tested the hypothesis that transparency and accountability contribute to employee retention. The t-statistic was 2.968 and was above 1.96 (Nawanir et al., 2013). The p-value for transparency and accountability on employee retention was 0.029 and was less than 0.05 (Firmansyah & Maemunah, 2021). As such, the hypothesis was accepted and it was concluded that transparency and accountability have a positive influence on employee retention.

6.0 Conclusion

The study sought to determine whether effective leadership influences employee retention in SMEs. The study concluded that having and communicating a clear vision, effective communication, employee development, fairness, and transparency and accountability, which are all fundamental ingredients of effective leadership were all related and positively contributed to employee retention. Overall, the study concluded that effective leadership is a catalyst for enhancing employee retention in SMEs in Zimbabwe.

7.0   Recommendations

It is recommended that leaders should map the direction of their organisations by articulating and communicating a compelling vision to employees. They should foster open communication, communicate in a timely manner without withholding information unnecessarily and provide timely feedback to employees in a humane manner. Leaders should support employees in career development. They should make sure that resources are availed to those who want to improve themselves. Managers should take an active interest in the careers of their subordinates and should be prepared to act as their mentors.

In order for employees to stay with their organisations for longer periods of time, managers should be fair. They should desist from unfairly discriminating against employees. Organisational processes such as performance appraisal, disciplinary and grievance handling should not only be fair but should also be seen to be fair. If employees are to choose to stay with an organisation, managers should be transparent in everything they do and they should also be prepared to be accountable for their actions. Managers should desist from instilling fear in subordinates and engaging in retributive behaviour when employees become assertive.

8.0   Guidance for future research

The study was carried out in Bulawayo's Central Business Area which could limit the generalisability of its findings. Future researchers may extend the study to other geographical locations and sectors. The study adopted a quantitative design. Future researchers may also do either a qualitative or mixed methods research so as to compare the findings.

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The role of leadership in adopting the Fourth industrial era technologies in developing economies

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Abstract

The study explored the role of leadership in adopting the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) technologies in emerging technologies. This was prompted by the fact that in emerging economies, the adoption of 4IR is at infancy stage and not visible across the globe. The fourth industrial revolution has the capacity of providing opportunities to emerging economies. However, there are challenges embedded in new technologies which might limit the possibilities to operate in an 4IR era. This implies that benefiting from new technologies will not be automatic, but with competent leadership, emerging economies can take advantage of digitalisation to fast track their growth and development. The study utilised a semi-systematic literature review approach. A qualitative/ narrative approach was utilised to establish themes. A thematic inductive method was used to analyse the data. The clusters of data pertaining to the subjects of inquiry served as the basis for the creation of themes. The findings of the study revealed that the role of leadership in the adoption of 4IR technologies is crucial and multifaceted. The key aspects of their roles are as follows: vision and strategy; change management; resource allocation; collaboration and partnerships; risk management and governance; stakeholder engagement as well as continuous learning and innovation. In addition, it is recommended that key stakeholders need to support leadership to become better 4IR-aligned leaders in emerging economies. That is, leadership upskilling and re-skilling in emerging economies requires an effective governmental, and institutional framework.

 Key terms: leadership; fourth industrial revolution; emerging economies; leadership roles; technologies.

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Introduction

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is an era that has changed the way people live, work and interact with each other. Its development is based on the foundations of the first, second as well as the third industrial revolutions. 4IR has gained momentum across the globe and it has accelerated human capital development, supported and empowered by digitalisation. The major features of the 4IR technologies include; Big data, Internet of Things (IoTs); Automation, Artificial Intelligence, 3D printing, Robotics and so on. According to Rotatori, Lee and Sleeva (2021) these technologies of the 4IR era contribute immensely on all sectors of the economy and stimulating the societal systems. The result is a fundamentally different period of societal change that extends in size and scale beyond previous periods of industrial revolution. Shiller (2013) adduce that "you cannot wait until a house burns down to buy fire insurance on it". This statement clearly stipulates the necessity of humankind to be more proactive rather than reactive in any given situation. It is a grave mistake to wait for major dislocations to happen in organisations and communities at large, to prepare for the 4IR (World Economic Forum (WEF), 2021). Organisations, through training and development programmes should be in a position to prepare and train their workforce for the fourth industrial revolution era (Mpofu & Nemashakwe, 2023).

In addition, there is a need to also assess and establish the role of leadership in business and how does it fit in the adoption of 4IR. This is because the 4IR has immensely affected the day-to-day activities of organisations, including the control environment within the domain of leadership. According to WEF report (2021) leaders as well as their workforce are at a point where they are asking their purpose and relevance in the fourth industrial revolution era. Some of the individuals are of the view that 4IR will eventually make humans redundant, leading to socio-economic problems. However, some of the scholars dispute the statement, citing that human capital will never be made jobless (Sutherland, 2020). For humans to remain relevant in 4IR, the world requires more realistic leaders, who understand and execute their duties and responsibilities meticulously. Leaders need to understand that digitalisation is inevitable, whether people like it or not, there is no escape regarding new technologies. It is an unstoppable force that has a huge impact on the way people live, connects and work.

According to the Delloite report (2021) "leaders of business should be focussed on the challenges they face now and will face in the future, and then they must strategize with actions that will lead their business into the 4IR". This implies that the value creation and financial performance of organisations as well as fulfilment of employees' individual needs is largely dependent on those charged with governance's (leadership) systems and policies. It is imperative for leaders to take a stand and assist their workforce adapt to new technologies, move with time, either through education and intensive training or by human connectivity. This is despite the fact that the majority of leaders in emerging economies suffer from technophobia and others are struggling to understand all the new-technology opportunities and threats. It is against this background that, this paper aims to establish the role of leadership in adopting the fourth industrial revolution era technologies in the developing economies.

Unpacking Fourth industrial revolution

According to Schwab (2016) 4IR era can be defined as an "ongoing transformational period characterized by the fusion of technologies, digitalization, and automation across the globe". This revolution is considered disruptive compared to previous industrial revolutions due to the speed and scale of its impact. Digital technologies have accelerated the 4IR which has also led to industries and societies reformation. These new technologies are interrelated and intertwined, allowing innovativeness and creativeness across industries. Examples of 41R technologies include artificial intelligence (AI), Big data, Robotics such as machine learning, Internet of Things (IoTs), Automation, Blockchain, Cloud computing as well as Nanotechnology. According to Kommunuri (2022) and Kumar et al. (2022) AI technology is a primary driver of the 4IR, which is described as a novel, controversial, innovative, avant-garde, and influential technologies emerging from 4IR with the ability to foster transformative change in the business environment. Kommunuri (2022) further states that "AI technologies enable systems to perform tasks traditionally requiring human intelligence, such as pattern recognition, decision-making, and complex problem-solving". This contributes immensely to industries such as mining, healthcare, banking and finance, manufacturing, education as well as in transport sector.

IoT is another new 4IR technology that has heightened the connectivity across the globe. According to Schwab (2016) IoT can be described as the network of computing

devices, vehicles, appliances, and other things embedded with sensors, software and internet. These hardware, software and internet when interconnected allow the sending and receiving of information/data. They make the data cycle processing easier and enables production of enormous volumes of real-time data, facilitating data-driven decision-making and enabling new services and business models.

Automation and robotics are also pivotal components of the 4IR. Advances in robotics allow for increased efficiency and productivity, particularly in manufacturing and logistics. Robots are becoming more intelligent and capable of performing complex tasks, leading to the emergence of collaborative robots (cobots) that work alongside humans.

In addition, big data analytics is another key aspect of 4IR era. According to Mpofu-Sebele (2023), big data and big data analytics allow for large volumes of data that are often complex (data of high volume, velocity, and variety) to be analyzed quickly, accurately, and efficiently. Schwab (2016) cites that enormous amount of data generated by digital systems and IoT devices provides opportunities for insights and predictions. It can be concluded that if this data is analysed appropriately, the following results might be obtained: economic decision making; optimal use of resources; new product development as well as services.

From literature analysis, it was revealed that the 4IR era has the capacity to accelerates the societal and economic growth. Even though the 4IR has brought profound change in the economy, increased productivity as well as creativity, innovation, it also raises concern that automation of work and the potential loss of jobs are central concerns about 4IR, in particular, the male dominated sectors such as manufacturing, construction and mining due to machine substitution. Different stakeholder groups such as employees, entities and government need to embrace and adapt to the new era by re-skilling and upskilling through training and development programmes. They need to strategise on how they can manipulate these transformative technologies for positive results. It can be concluded that for the emerging economies to fully adopt 4IR era technologies, there is a need to elucidate the role of leadership in this contemporary environment. Governments, businesses, and individuals need to adapt to this era by embracing lifelong learning, upskilling, and finding ways to leverage these transformative technologies for positive outcomes.

Emerging economies in Fourth industrial revolution era

In emerging economies, there is little to be said about the adoption of 4IR technologies, though early engagement with the concept by businesses and governments may see this develop (Sutherland, 2020). The societal and economical changes vary from industry to industry across the globe, leading to varied responses towards 4IR technologies, exclusively developed in other continents. From literature analysis, it is revealed by scholars that government bodies through their leadership fail to sync with new technology prevalent in 4IR era. Furthermore, they lack competency and capacity to manage investments, accompanied by the delays in the administration and political processes needed to address the challenges of providing the necessary legal, institutional and policy frameworks. According to Sutherland (2020:236) "emerging economies have almost exclusively been takers of advanced technologies and of related policies, often with limited adaption to national requirements". The adoption of 4IR technologies is heavily dependent on the availability of skills through human capital, infrastructure as well as intellectual capital. Countries like South Africa and Rwanda have been proactive in adopting and integrating 4IR technologies into their industries. This is because, their government bodies have an understanding of the potential benefits related to these technologies and the need to be at par with the developed economies.

This study focused on the emerging economies, main reason being their potential for leapfrogging. There are also high chances of these economies catching up with developed economies, what is needed is the capacity to bypass the traditional stages of development, as the advanced economies successfully did that. According to Schwab (2016) by leveraging these advanced technologies, emerging economies can improve their industrial capacities and competitiveness in a shorter period. In addition, adoption of 4IR technologies allow emerging economies to improve their infrastructure. This can be done through taking advantage of mobile and digital technologies and they can cater for the less privileged areas such as healthcare as well as the education sector. This enhances financial services provision and to widen digital financial inclusion, as well as poverty alleviation with an aim to achieve the UN 17 SDGs by 2030 within these economies.

From literature analysis, emerging economies are largely dependent on agriculture, manufacturing and/or mining. Adoption of new advanced technologies such as AI, IoTs, Big data, robotics and automation allow diversification, tapping in new industries as well as enhancing societal and economic growth and creation of employment. In addition, 4IR technologies augments integration into the global supply chains. Through employment of block chain technologies and IoTs, emerging economies can resolve constraints of high cost, financial literacy, access difficulties linked to geographical access, and the inadequacy of financial services and products (Schuetz & Venkatesh, 2020). According to Mpofu-Sebele (2023) blockchain has a great likelihood of contributing to the UN Sustainable Development Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs especially in reducing poverty, hunger, and inequalities among other economic, social, and environmental challenges in emerging economies. Considering the above, it is noteworthy to acknowledge problems encountered by emerging economies in adopting the aforementioned technologies. These include failure to secure sufficient capital, poor digital infrastructure, skills shortages as well as red tape.

In summary, emerging economies are increasingly embracing fourth industrial technologies to leverage leapfrogging opportunities, overcome infrastructural limitations, diversify their economies, and integrate into global supply chains. While challenges exist, the potential benefits of such adoption are significant, paving the way for sustainable growth and development. Having offered a fair background of 4IR era, emerging economies in 4IR technologies, the following section aim to explore the leadership skills and practices that are beneficial for leading various industries in the 4IR era.

Leadership skills for the Fourth industrial revolution era.

According to Twin (2020) "leadership is defined as the capability of management to fix and accomplish challenging aims, make efficient decision making when required, overtake the rivalry and influence followers to achieve at the utmost level they can". Leadership plays a crucial role in the adoption of the fourth industrial revolution era technologies. Since the adoption of the 4IR technologies by other emerging countries such as South Africa, a more holistic approach to leadership should be considered and implemented fully. According to Gray (2016) 4IR era have birthed among other technologies, artificial intelligence, robotics, big data analytics, block chain as well as

automation. These technologies require full adoption by specific industries. According to Uys and Webber-Youngman (2019) successful implementation of the technologies requires a very different kind of a leader. This means that leadership will have to change and adapt to a new skills-set to be successful in the 4IR era. The necessary skills include emotional intelligence, change management, diversity management, critical thinking, being focused, quick and constant learning, technologically advanced as well as workforce flexibility and well-being and so on. These skills are necessary because industries such as mining, construction, etc require an emerging class of creative and sophisticated solution-seekers who incorporate the additional talents listed. The efficacy of this transformation will be determined by the calibre of the leaders who will be at the forefront with an entirely novel perspective along with corresponding competencies. (Uys &Webber-Youngman, 2019). Gray's (2016) article presents 10 leadership skills needed to thrive in 4IR era as follows: complex problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, people management, coordinating with others (group work activities), emotional intelligence, judgement and decision-making, service orientation as well as negotiating and cognitive flexibility.

Based on the findings of Gray (2016); Naidoo and Potokri (2020); Sutherland (2020), researchers established that leaders should consider emotional intelligence as a leadership skill. This implies that machines are incapable of comprehending the qualities that make every human unique. They are unable to simply take the place of a person's capacity for emotional, empathic, and moral connection with other people. Given that they are mindful of themselves and have good interpersonal skills, leaders with high EQ are in high demand in the 4IR era. In addition, Gray (2016)'s article revealed that potential leaders need to be kept up with new improvements and they should be aware that these new developments will occur quickly in many different areas. To see the changes as chances for improvement and evolution, they must arm themselves with adaptability abilities.

It also follows that, being a leader, there is a need for diversity management. This means that being culturally intelligent is crucial. Acknowledging the differences in social structure, experiences, their sexual orientation, and ethnicities is a must in today's varied labour force, which is always changing in the workplace. The ability to comprehend, accommodate, and control an array of workers will lead to improvements

in ways employees interact with one another as they function collectively. According to Schwab (2016) leadership that is adept at thinking critically and analytically will be equipped to address complicated issues and come up with novel solutions. These abilities will enable leadership to guide the connection between human beings and technological advances required to increase the efficiency of labour. On the other hand, Gray (2016) and Naidoo and Potokri (2020) adduce the need for 21st century leaders to be focused, quick and continuously learning. This entails that someone in leadership who recognizes that there is an abundance of additional abilities to be acquired daily and develops themselves frequently will be an asset to any company.

In addition to that, leadership that is tech adept is going to leap out above everyone. Not only relating to the technical abilities of encoding and comprehending concepts like robotics, the internet of things, data, intelligent machines, etc., but also to leadership's capacity for discussion and decision-making regarding the fundamentals of technological advances, their willingness to adopt it, and their capacity for helping prepare the company for the years to come. Lastly, it is important to note that different shifts in labour and workplace requirements will occur. Leaders need to be more adaptable. Particularly in the digital age, adaptability with the employees and a commitment to their mental health are essential.

Challenges faced by leadership in the Fourth industrial revolution era.

Schwab (2017) demands that managers and staff "in tandem build an era that is beneficial for everyone by placing humanity first, developing them, and constantly reiterating that all of these cutting-edge innovations are primarily instruments developed specifically for humans." Nevertheless, leadership is obligated to pioneer innovations and support others as they evolve and adjust to changing times, whether it be through interpersonal relationships or learning and instruction. Deloitte's annual Millennial Survey report (2023) disclosed that firm officials had genuinely professed a desire to make the world a better place. According to the poll, CEOs placed societal effect above economic success and consumer or staff satisfaction when assessing their organization's economic performance. In today's markets, which are shifting quickly, it was also made clear that top management was finding it difficult to create successful plans. Many leaders struggle to comprehend all the innovative technologically driven prospects when confronted with an ever-growing array of

emerging technologies, and in some instances may lack an overall strategic plan to direct their endeavours. Additional literature study reveals that businesses lack comprehensive procedures for making decisions and that organizational silos restrict their capacity to create and exchange expertise to put innovative strategies into practice.

However, rather than undertaking hazardous decisions to spark chaos, executives still put a greater focus on employing modern technology to defend what they believe. The difficulties involve getting overly concerned with immediate outcomes, not completely comprehending the fourth industrial revolution innovations, and having an abundance of technological options. The competence problem is also growing more obvious. Leadership has become more conscious of the size of the knowledge divide and the depressing reality that the present educational landscape will not be able to handle the task. Organizational leaders must work to develop current staff members rather than focus on recruiting new ones. However, Deloitte's annual Millennial Survey (2023) reveals that opinions about who should be in charge of training certain talents are different among leadership and new employees. The following figure presents a summary of challenges faced by the 4IR era leadership.
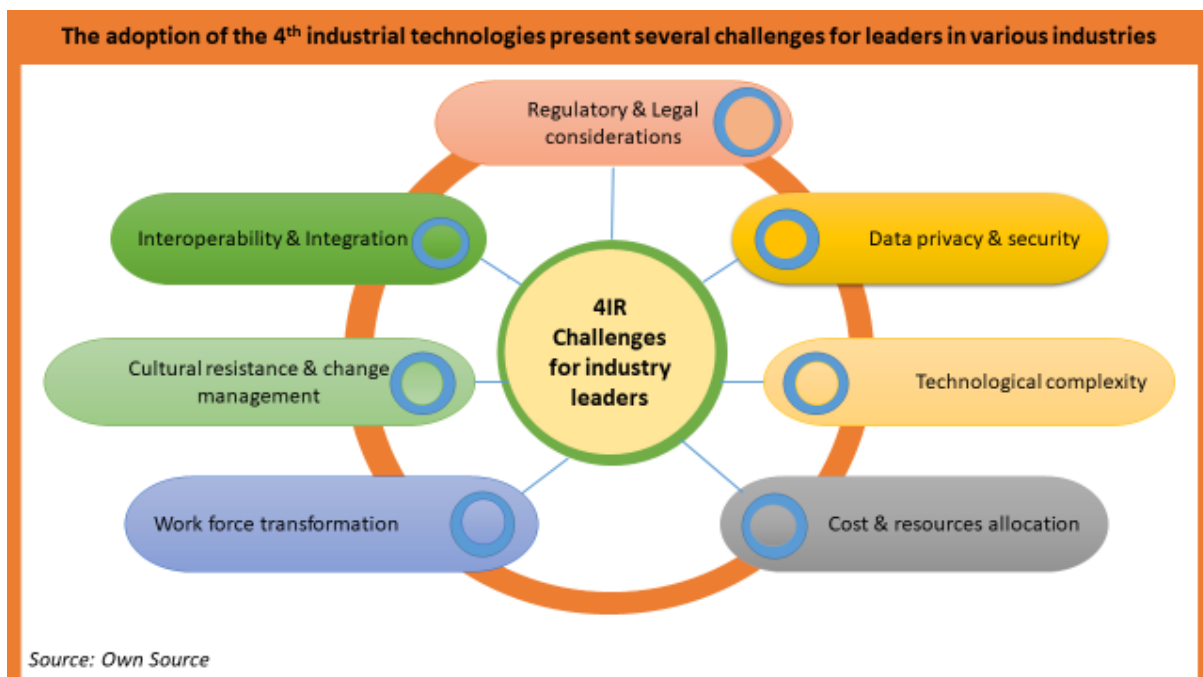
Figure 1: Challenges faced by leadership.

According to Schwab (2017) fourth industrial technologies, such as artificial intelligence, robotics, and automation, are often highly complex and require a deep understanding to implement effectively. Leaders may lack the technical expertise necessary to navigate and make informed decisions in this rapidly evolving landscape. This is followed by the assertion that integration of new technologies often necessitates significant changes in the workforce. As a result, leaders must navigate the challenges of upskilling their employees, addressing potential job displacement, and managing the overall transition to new roles and responsibilities.

In addition to that, there is an issue of cost and resource allocation. Adopting fourth industrial technologies can require substantial financial investments. Leaders must carefully allocate resources to acquire the necessary technology, upgrade existing infrastructure, and train employees. Balancing these investments while ensuring optimal return on investment can be a significant challenge. It also follows that Fourth industrial technologies heavily rely on vast amounts of data for analysis and decision-making. Therefore, leaders must address concerns related to data privacy, cybersecurity, and ethical use of personal information. Safeguarding data while leveraging its potential can be a complex task.

According to Uys &Webber-Youngman (2019) the adoption of new technologies often encounters resistance from employees and stakeholders who may be resistant to change. It is necessary that leaders navigate cultural barriers, address fears and concerns, and effectively communicate the benefits and rationale behind their technological initiatives. On the other hand, Gray (2016) asserts that integrating fourth industrial technologies into existing systems and infrastructure can be challenging. This implied that leadership need to ensure compatibility and seamless integration with legacy systems, often requiring strategic planning and collaboration with different departments. Also, the adoption of new technologies is accompanied by regulatory frameworks that can vary across industries and regions. It is imperative that leaders stay informed about evolving policies, navigate compliance requirements, and proactively address legal challenges posed by the adoption of the fourth industrial technologies.

Considering the challenges outlined above, it can be deduced that leadership in emerging economies face the formidable task of understanding, implementing, and

leveraging fourth industrial technologies within the unique context of their organisations. Overcoming these challenges requires a combination of technical expertise, strategic vision, effective change management, and a commitment to continuous learning and adaptation.

Supporting and developing 4IR era leadership

Kelly (2019); Naidoo and Potokri (2020) adduce an aspect of paradigm shift in the era of digitalisation influenced by the 4IR technologies and its necessity across different continents. These scholars further point out the need for leaders to shift from "decision making to sense-making" (Kelly, 2019:124). This implies that using facts as basis for economic decision making will not suffice in 4IR era, there is a need to adopt a holistic approach and take note of both the contextual and situational settings. In addition, Kelly's (2019:129) article articulate that it is necessary for leadership to shift their mindset from "charismatic authority to swarm intelligence". The effective leadership uses collaborative networks where main decisions are handled by using collective intelligence rather than a single leader's influence. It also follows that fourth industrial leadership should shift from "analogue to digital mindset". Learning new technological skills is essential for digital transformation, but is not enough (Kelly, 2019). Developing a digital mindset takes work, however it is worth the effort. According to Naidoo and Potokri (2020) leadership who have a digital mindset are better able to set their organisations up for success and to build a resilient workforce. This implies that digital mindset leaders are proactive and are well-positioned to take advantage of new business.

Following the above discussion, Larson, Miller and Ribble (2010) identified five elements that will improve and enhance digital leadership. The scholars cite that leaders of both knowledge and digital economies must have vision to keep abreast of technology within the industry. Naidoo and Potokri (2020) support the idea of owning a vision and they add that, through clear vision, leaders promote innovativeness and creativity. Larson et al. (2010) further state that leaders should understand the learning culture of the digital age, and this can be achieved through evaluating how the 4IR technologies promote an enabling environment. In addition to that, it is necessary for leadership to establish the effects of new technologies in the long-run, and this is done to sustain "systemic improvement". In conclusion, the scholars outline the need of

developing a universal framework for "excellent professional practice" as well as promoting digital citizenship across industries. Considering the above, for leaders to adopt new technologies, it should be a personal choice and their understanding of new technologies benefits as well as their impact on organisation's financial performance and value creation. Then, a proposal to support and develop emerging economies leadership will enhance their personal learning networks which will have impact on their professional development. The following section of the study presents the research methodology utilised to explore the roles of leadership in adopting the 41R era technologies.

Methodology

A semi-systematic review method was adopted in this paper. According to Synder (2019:335) "the semi-systematic or narrative review approach is designed for topics that have been conceptualized differently and studied by various groups of researchers within diverse disciplines and that hinder a full systematic review process". By the adoption of this review, this study seeks to identify and understand all potentially relevant research traditions that have implications for the role of leadership in Fourth industrial revolution and to synthesise these using meta-narratives. This enabled the researchers in understanding complex areas, such as the implications of leadership in 4IR technologies such as big data, robotics as well as artificial intelligence among others. This study focused on emerging economies. This is because the adoption of Fourth industrial technologies in some emerging economies is still not visible across the globe (Sutherland, 2020). Some emerging countries such as South Africa, Brazil, Russia, India and China have been actively adopting and integrating these technologies into their industries. Lee, Maleba and Primi (2020) adduced that these countries have embraced 4IR due to potential benefits arising from new technologies as well as aiming to be at par with the developed economies. The literature findings were analysed using the thematic analysis, which is guided by the writings of Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis using semi-systematic review allows the identification of key themes, which are then synthesised prior to thematic network presentation.

Results

The findings of this study were based and guided by the following studies: Demski (2012); Cote (2017); Kay (2019); Naidoo and Potokri (2020); Sutherland (2020); Salina, Noordina, Rajadura, and Othman (2021). The emergence of 4IR era features, requires leadership to be proactive, adapt and adjust to the current trends of the Fourth Industrial revolution. If leadership roles remain unknown with certainty, then it shows that leaders are ill-prepared to adopt the new digital technologies. From literature analysis, it was revealed that the role of leadership in the adoption of fourth industrial technologies is crucial and multifaceted. Leadership plays a significant role in driving and facilitating the successful integration of these emerging technologies within an organization or industry. Figure 2 below show the summary of key aspects of leadership roles.
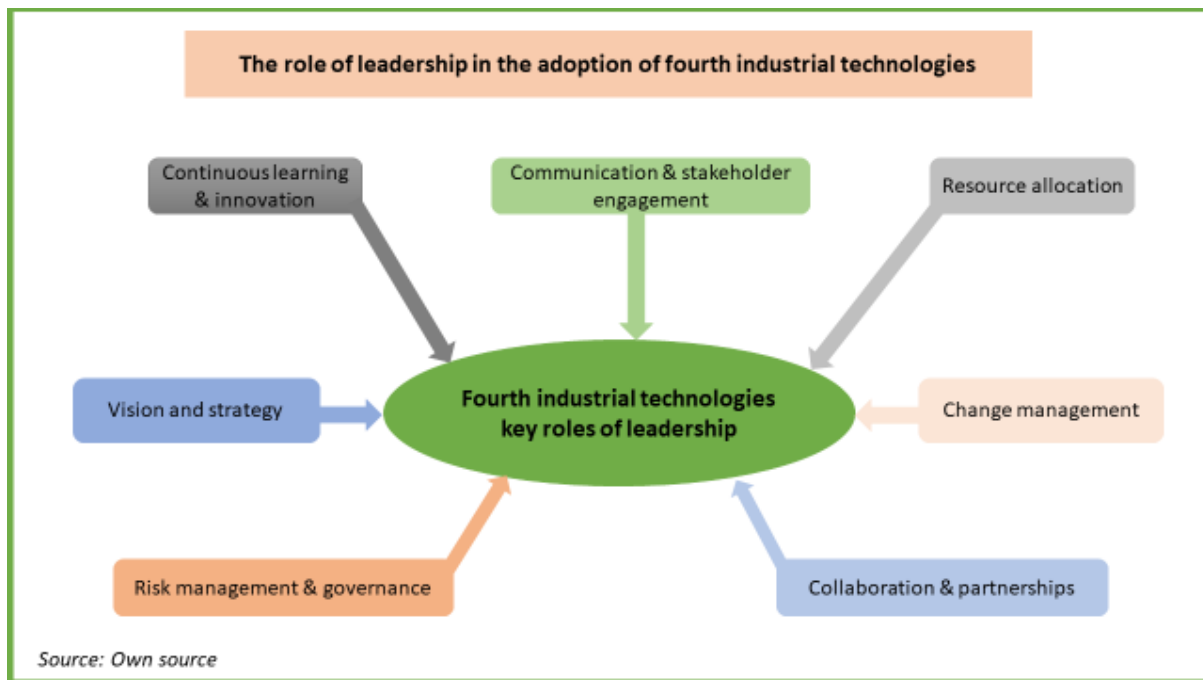
Figure 2: Roles of leadership in the Fourth Industrial era

Vision and Strategy

From literature analysis, it was revealed that organisational strategic objective embedded in a vision is an important pedal the leadership can utilise. The crucial role of effective leadership is to work towards the organisational vision, clearly outline strategies as well as aligning organisation strategic purpose with individual goals. This

can only be achieved if the leaders have clear vision and understand the impact of 4IR era technologies on the value creation and financial performance of an organisation.

Change Management

The adoption of fourth industrial technologies often requires significant changes in processes, workflows, and organizational culture. Leaders need to effectively manage this change by fostering a positive and adaptable mindset among employees, providing necessary training and resources, and addressing any resistance or challenges that may arise.

Resource Allocation

Leaders play a crucial role in allocating the necessary resources, including budget, personnel, and time, to support the adoption of these technologies. They prioritize investments in infrastructure, research, and development, as well as hire or train skilled professionals to work with these technologies.

Collaboration and Partnerships

Fourth industrial technologies often involve collaboration with external entities, such as technology vendors, research institutions, or industry peers. Leaders facilitate partnerships, alliances, and knowledge sharing to leverage the expertise and resources of others in accelerating the adoption and implementation of these technologies.

Risk Management and Governance

Leaders understand and assess the risks associated with adopting fourth industrial technologies, including cybersecurity, data privacy, and ethical implications. They establish robust governance frameworks and policies to mitigate these risks, ensuring compliance with relevant regulations and standards.

Communication and Stakeholder Engagement

Effective leaders communicate the benefits, potential challenges, and progress of fourth industrial technology adoption to various stakeholders, including employees, customers, investors, and regulatory bodies. They foster trust, actively engage

stakeholders, address concerns, and ensure transparency throughout the adoption process.

Continuous Learning and Innovation

Leadership in the adoption of fourth industrial technologies requires a commitment to continuous learning and innovation. Leaders stay updated on the latest technological advancements, industry trends, and best practices. They encourage a culture of experimentation, learning from failures, and adapting strategies to embrace new opportunities that arise from these technologies.

Conclusion

The aim of the study was to explore the role of leadership in the adoption of the Fourth industrial revolution era technologies. With the rapidly changing technological landscape and emerging 4IR technologies, a visionary approach to leadership is essential. This is because leadership plays a crucial role in driving the successful adoption of fourth industrial technologies. They provide a clear vision, facilitate change, allocate resources, foster collaboration, manage risks, engage stakeholders, and foster a culture of innovation. Their effective leadership sets the foundation for organizations and industries to leverage the transformative potential of these technologies. They strategise using practical measures to bring the vision to life and leading their workforce towards that goal. This study recommends development of personal learning networks (PLNs). PLNs are an essential tool to enhance 4IR leadership skills through connection and collaboration with fellow industry leadership.

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Effects of Turbulent Environments on Business Strategies: A Case of Zimbabwe's Petroleum Industry.

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to explore the business strategies that petroleum firms in Zimbabwe are using in the face of the turbulent operating environment. The aim of the study was to find out the competitive strategies being adopted and implemented by oil firms for survival. Other objectives were to establish how the strategies being executed by the oil companies were influencing sales revenues, profitability, and survival of companies in the sector and also to determine how government policy interventions are impacting the deployment of the strategies. And to recommend strategies that can be adopted by the petroleum firms during unstable economic environments. The research used an exploratory-sequential mixed methods research design where qualitative and quantitative data were collected separately. Findings from interviews were used to provide a basis for the collection of a second set of data using questionnaires. The research findings reveal that petroleum businesses face high regulation, price instability and heavy political control due to the strategic nature of the oil sector to the Zimbabwe government. The issue of high taxation and frequent changes to regulations in the sector are the main causes of uncertainty to operations of these firms. The research findings indicate that most petroleum companies in Zimbabwe are using the Cost Leadership Strategy for competitive advantage and survival.

Key Words: Survival Strategies, Petroleum Industry, Unstable Environment.

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1.0 Introduction

Companies today are operating in an increasingly unstable and tough environment because of fast changing technology, political and social forces. This has brought threats and opportunities to the operations of businesses compelling them to find strategies for their survival. The petroleum industry in Zimbabwean is facing a similar situation where the operating environment is unpredictable and fast changing necessitating firms to focus on the use of strategic management as a survival tool to better comprehend the environment around them (Wheelen and Hunger, 2008). Companies in the fuel business are subsequently using technology and constant innovation supported by the development of superior quality products to subsist in the turbulent economic environment (Wheelen & Hunger, 2008). This study was thus designed to explore the business strategies that petroleum companies in Zimbabwe are using to survive the volatile operating environment.

1.1 Background

The Zimbabwe fuel sector falls under the Ministry of Energy and Power Development and is regulated by the Zimbabwe Energy Regulatory Authority (ZERA) which monitor the acquisition, pricing, and marketing of fuel. The sector is comprised of big corporations with international links, big indigenous companies, Government owned, medium scale indigenous and small-scale fuel firms. The responsibility of managing the transportation of imported petroleum products is by the National Oil Infrastructure Company of Zimbabwe (Pvt) Ltd (NOIC) which is a government parastatal. The transportation of petroleum products in Zimbabwe is mostly through the pipeline from Beira in Mozambique to Msasa depot in Harare.

The bulk of fuel suppliers on the Zimbabwe market are finding it difficult to consistently provide fuel on the market because of the current monitoring and price regulations on fuel products by the government (World Bank, 2019). This is evidenced by unpredictable supplies and growing discontent from consumers who feel the petrol and diesel being supplier are of inferior quality (Bimha et al., 2019). Related to this, petroleum firms are no longer able to maintain their traditional loyal customers which they used as a source of competitive advantage in the past.

Similarly, Zimbabwean petroleum companies are having to endure government policy changes and excessive duties on imported fuel products (Bimha & Dumbu, 2018). On the other hand, the sector is surrounded by opaqueness with the big firms refusing to collaborate with smaller ones thereby negatively affecting the fuel supply chain (Bimha and Dumbu, 2018). The persistent meddling by the government in the industry is negatively impacting operations of petroleum firms and for that reason this calls for survival strategies by businesses in this sector. This study thus, sought to evaluate the survival strategies that firms in the sector are employing to ensure profitability, better market share and guarantee survival of the businesses.

1.2 Objectives

The main aim of this paper was to find out the strategies that businesses in the petroleum sector are embracing to remain viable in the existing volatile operating environment in Zimbabwe. The research also aimed to;

i.   affirm how government policy interventions impact the profitability and viability of oil companies.
ii. determine how the strategies being employed by oil firms are affecting the profitability and survival of enterprises in the sector.

2.0 Theoretical Review

Researchers agree that an unstable business environment disregards the fundamental rules of traditional strategic planning which apply mostly when the industry structures are stable (Mufudza, 2018). This consequently compelled this research to consider several strategic management theories suitable for use in this study. In particular, opinions for example on Porter's Five Forces model and the Resource Based View (RBV) of the firm were considered but were seen as unsuitable for use in this study as they are best useful in stable business environments. The arguments against these theories are that it becomes complicated to assess for example buyer, supplier, and rivalry power of firms in volatile situations as industries' boundaries become distorted and difficult to define in volatile environments. At the same time, the volatile environment makes the key assumptions of the RBV theory not to be applicable as factor markets appear to be in constant disruption due to issues such as innovation.

Given this background, the dynamic capabilities theory was considered as appropriate for use by companies operating in unstable situations (Luo, 2013). It was thus very relevant to apply this theory in the current study where enterprises in the petroleum industry in Zimbabwe are operating in an unstable environment. This theory was used in this research to define the suitable business strategies for the difficult, rapidly changing market in the oil sector in Zimbabwe by borrowing from its successful application in the volatile upstream oil sector in developed economies (Wernerfelt, 2014). This study feels that the same success can be simulated in the downstream oil sector where Zimbabwe's petroleum industry is found. In view of that, the use of this theory can empower managers to be able to figure out how resources can be apportioned in the oil sector in Zimbabwe by detecting those dynamic capabilities that if harnessed may help firms in the sector to come up with survival strategies (Luo, 2013). In this study, the theory was relied upon to inspect and spell out the resources and capabilities of oil firms that could produce and endure the firm's advantage in the volatile operating environment in Zimbabwe.

2.1 Strategies in use in the petroleum industry

Available literature shows that firms can understand the environment around them if they have in place vibrant business strategies to achieve competitive advantage (Wheelen & Hunger, 2008). Accordingly, oil firms all over the world are using several strategies for competitive advantage (Wairegi, 2009).

According to Schweitzer et al. (2011), mergers, acquisitions and alliances are practical strategies used by oil firms to fulfil the increased fuel demands and counter the persistent interference by governments in the pricing of fuel. Some of the oil firms that have successfully applied these strategies include Exxon Mobil who merged with Mobil in 1999, BP petroleum company which merged with is a merger of British Petroleum, Amoco and Arco and Royal Dutch Shell which was a result of the merger of the Royal Dutch Petroleum Company and Shell Trading and Transport Company (Yargin, 2008). Mergers and strategic alliances in the sited cases enabled the firms to harness their individual strengths and overcome individual firm inadequacies (Chepkwony, 2001).

Petroleum firms operating in volatile environments are using collaboration and information sharing (Richey et al., 2012) to integrate their economic, human, and technical resources to attain shared objectives (Cao et al., 2010). Oil firms in Nigeria have effectively cooperated in information sharing and this has improved business between the industry players, their suppliers and customers (Babatunde et al., 2016).

As explained by the World Bank (2010), the liberalisation strategy is being used in the oil industry by governments to eliminate monopolies and unfair trading in the sector. This augurs well with international expectations which encourages fair, healthy, and transparent competition in the downstream petroleum sector (World Bank, 2010). This strategy was used in Kenya causing many new players to join the sector but also resulted in stiff competition in the sector prompting some big multinationals to exit the market (Babatunde et al., 2016).

2.2 Business strategies and company operations in the petroleum industry

Butler et al. (2011) alluded to the fact that firms must be able to regulate their performance especially in unstable environments to enable them to react well and acclimatize promptly to variations in the business environment. In line with this, managers are expected to institute appropriate analysis of their financial, market and shareholder value performance to assist their firms to adjust and survive the changing environment (Livohi, 2012).

According to reviewed literature, firms in the oil sector are using performance measurement to gauge operations of oil firms (By accumulating data, analysing and reporting it to guarantee that adequate business decisions are made (Livohi, 2012). Babatunde et al. (2016) recommended the use of financial performance, market share performance and capacity performance to conduct performance measurement of firms in the oil sector. Nevertheless, other researchers feel that oil firms can measure their performance by assessing how the firm is guiding its management processes, client coordination, and information technology application (Mutua, 2012).

Evans and Lindsay (2011) feel that the profitability of businesses is a necessary factor for survival of firms for long periods and is affected by the firm's market share in the industry where it operates. Therefore, corporates that control a large market share are

believed to possess the capacity to perform better than their competitors hence they also have heightened chances to survive volatile operating environments (Evans & Lindsay, 2011). In line with this, Chandler and McEnvoy (2000) revealed that the size of a firm's market share and its growth rate increase the prospect of survival of firms. Nonetheless, though the market share plays a big role in influencing good performance, it should also be supported by a quality management strategy to aid the improvement of firm efficiency (Evans & Lindsay, 2011). This is very key for this study as the research sought to find out how the petroleum firms in Zimbabwe were using business strategies to survive in the unpredictable economic environment in view of their market share.

3.0 Methodology

This research study used the mixed methods research methodology which involved the use of qualitative and quantitative methods consecutively. Qualitative and quantitative data were gathered at different stages, but qualitative data collection had priority (Saunders et al., 2012). The qualitative aspect of the study was done by use of personal interviews of petroleum firm executives while the quantitative data was collected using questionnaires.

The use of the mixed methods allowed the researcher to gather and integrate qualitative and quantitative data thereby benefiting from the strength of both approaches. This increased the reliability and validity of the research findings as the two approaches can be effective when used in combination (Creswell, 2014).

3.1 Qualitative data collection

In-depth interviews were used to assemble detailed qualitative data. The researcher used an interview guide which guaranteed constant management of themes in each interview session thereby lessening bias (Burnay et al., 2014). The sample size for qualitative data gathering was seven senior executives of the petroleum importing firms in Zimbabwe. The researcher used purposive sampling to select interview

participants (Maree, 2016). The selection of companies to participate in the study was based on the company size in terms of its presence in the market.

Purposive sampling was also used to choose respondents from the sampled petroleum companies and targeted senior executives who understood the issues of business strategies which was the focus of this study (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Purposive sampling permitted the researcher to gather information fast and efficiently (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.2 Quantitative data collection

Quantitative data was gathered using questionnaires which were designed by considering results from interviews which informed the questionnaires design. Questionnaires permitted respondents to record their responses to questions inside defined choices (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009). Questionnaires were appropriate for this study as they were less costly to administer. Senior Managers responsible for business strategy at the fifty-six petroleum importing companies in Zimbabwe were selected through purposive sampling technique to answer the questionnaires.

4.0 Ethical Considerations

Kaye *et al.* (2015) noted that it is the duty of every researcher to ensure that all participants are educated on the hazards and benefits of taking part in the research. Kaye *et al.* (2015) further suggested that all studies should seek informed consent and underscore the voluntary nature of respondent's involvement. This study took all the necessary steps to ensure that all the selected participants were given a letter of invitation which gave details of the purpose and nature of the study. The letter of invitation contained a consent form that explained to the participants the risks associated with participating in the research, the aim of the study and the procedures and processes to be followed during the research. The consent form also explained the voluntary nature of taking part in the research and how privacy and confidentiality issues would be handled.

5.0 Findings

Qualitative results from interviews carried out show that all the participants' companies are being adversely affected by the current unstable operating environment. All the participants pointed out that their firms are using the cost leadership business strategy to endure the tough and volatile operating environment. The participants indicated that the use of the cost leadership strategy has aided their businesses to reduce their operating costs. On the other hand, six of the interviewed participants indicated that their companies have witnessed increasing revenues from the sale of petroleum products, but this has not translated to increase in profits due to continuing increasing operating costs.

The interview results confirm that government policy interventions are negatively affecting their business strategies and are hindering new entrants into the sector. All the interview respondents feel that the existing operating environment require petroleum firms to work on cost containment to survive.

The quantitative results (Table 1) show that 99.1 % of the participants' firms are being adversely affected by the unstable operating environment whereas 0.9% specified that the current operating environment is good for their businesses' operations. The results imply that the present operating environment in Zimbabwe is negatively affecting the long-term plans of fuel firms. This is badly affecting how petroleum companies can prioritise their goals and compete effectively in the market to improve their performance.

Table 1: How petroleum firms are being affected by the current unstable economic operating environment

	Frequency	Percent
Negatively	106	99.1
Positively	1	0.9
Total	107	100.0

The quantitative results as shown in Table 2 indicate that the three main business strategies being used by oil companies are the Cost Leadership strategy (68.7%),

Differentiation strategy (19.1%) and the Focus Strategy (12.2%). The results signify that oil companies in Zimbabwe are putting most of their efforts in increasing efficiency and reducing operating costs by using the Cost Leadership Strategy. Nevertheless, the results also infer that a few firms still apply the Focus Strategy where they concentrate on a narrow part of the total market and Differentiation strategies.

Table 2: Strategies that petroleum firms are using in the current unstable environment.

		Responses	
		Number	Percent
Strategies being used in volatile environment to remain competitive	Cost leadership strategy	90	68.7%
	Differentiation strategy	25	19.1%
	Focus Strategy	16	12.2%
Total		131	100.0%

The results also show that in terms of whether the strategies being employed by oil firms are effective or not, the research results in Table 3 show that 20.6% of the participants strongly think that the strategies they are using are very effective while 70.1% agree that the strategies that their firms are using work for them. Conversely, 9.3% of the participants were neutral on the issue. The results submit that even though petroleum companies are operating in this undesirable environment, they are working hard to stay in business through cost minimization to survive.

Table 3: Effectiveness of the strategies being employed by petroleum firms.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	22	20.6
Agree	75	70.1
Neutral	10	9.3
Total	107	100.0

The quantitative results (Table 4) also show that 28% of the respondents strongly think that the strategies being used by their firms are effective whereas 61% thinks that their strategies are suitable for the current unstable operating environment. Equally, 12% of the respondents stayed neutral on the issue. These results suggest that petroleum firms feel that they have been able to put in place strategies that match the existing tough operating environment as shown by their ability to continue supplying the market.

Table 4: Suitability of the strategies being employed to the volatile environment.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	30	28
Agree	65	61
Neutral	12	11
Total	107	100.0

The mixed methods result revealed that the unstable operating environment have forced Zimbabwean petroleum firms to re-allocate their resources and capabilities to suit the environment to survive. This perspective which is consistent with the dynamic capabilities' theory views the firm's resources and dynamic capabilities as the basis for ensuring the survival and sustained innovativeness of the firm. According to both

qualitative and quantitative findings, this approach has helped Zimbabwean petroleum firms to constantly adapt and survive in the evolving market conditions through reshaping the opportunities and threats that the firms are facing.

The result of the study also shows that petroleum industry in Zimbabwe is the most severely taxed sector. Taxes being levied on fuel has pushed the price of the product up causing some fuel companies to find other illegal means of survival such as false declaration of the product at the port of entry. Also, government policy interventions in the sector are very uncertain and are adversely affecting the deployment of long-term business strategies. Policy inconsistencies have also become a barrier to new entrants thus negatively affecting the fuel supply chain resulting in fuel pricing instability.

The research findings also revealed that the fuel sector in Zimbabwe lacks sufficient enforcement of regulations put in place by the government resulting in an unfair playing field and unhealthy competition in the sector. This according to the findings has ruined investment confidence and produced monopolies and cartels in the sector.

The findings further show that mandatory blending of petrol has affected customer loyalty and is contributing to inefficiencies in the sector. Further, the results show that the continued government intervention in the determination of prices of fuel has rendered the sector uncompetitive.

The results also revealed that Zimbabwean petroleum firms are managing to navigate the difficult operating environment by relying on their staff and managerial competencies which they must continue harnessing through re-training so that they can adapt to the changing environment. On the other hand, the petroleum firms expect the government to loosen its control on the sector, reduce taxes on petroleum products, and provide a supportive role through policy consistency to complement the efforts being put in place by oil.

6.0 Discussions

The main objective of the research was to establish the most effective strategies being adopted by companies in the petroleum sector in the volatile environment to remain

competitive. The research results show that petroleum companies in Zimbabwe are mostly using the Cost Leadership Strategy to survive the volatile operating environment. Firms in Zimbabwe are adopting this strategy mainly because they do not have a leeway to influence the price that they charge on their petroleum products as this is done by the government. In view of this, firms put their focus on reducing costs to continue operating.

To sustain competitiveness using the Cost Leadership Strategy, petroleum firms in the country are mainly emphasising on installation of new technology that help to enhance efficiency and reduce costs through minimising errors in the supply chain. However, the use of this strategy has been observed to require capital, skills, and efficient distribution channels (Thompson et al., 2012). Research results show that indigenous oil companies are struggling in this regard as they complain that the distribution channels that are currently controlled by the government favours the big petroleum firms thereby putting them at a competitive disadvantage. The indigenous petroleum firms feel that the government should give them the leeway to control their entire value chain so that they can eliminate unnecessary and costly processes.

In line with the second objective of the study which was to establish how the strategies being implemented by petroleum firms in Zimbabwe are influencing sales revenues, profitability, market share and survival of companies in the petroleum sector, the research results show that petroleum firms have experienced an increase in sales volume but have witnessed a continued fall in profits over the years. This is mainly caused by increasing operating costs and low prices being charged for petroleum products. This situation has only helped firms in the sector to stay afloat without experiencing an increase in market share. These research findings are in tandem with Thompson et al. (2012) who posited that pricing policies in the fuel sector can have a huge impact on the supply efficiency and survival of firms in the sector.

The petroleum sector in Zimbabwe is severely taxed and this has influenced the dynamics of supply and demand of fuel (Zuva, 2013). As a result, some firms are being involved in product adulteration, over blending of petrol with ethanol and false declaration at the port of entry (ZIMRA, 2016). All this has led to lack of industry

competitiveness which has negatively affected the profitability, market share and survival of companies in the sector.

7.0 Conclusion

This research looked at the business strategies that petroleum companies are using in the current unstable operating environment in Zimbabwe. The research established the strategies that companies in the petroleum sector are using to survive and remain competitive and how the strategies are influencing sales revenues, profitability, market share and survival of companies in the sector.

The research results show that petroleum firms in Zimbabwe are operating in a turbulent environment hence the need to employ proactive business strategies for survival. Zimbabwean petroleum firms are mainly using the Cost Leadership Strategy to survive the volatile environment through implementing cost containment strategies.

8.0 Recommendations

i. The Government of Zimbabwe should encourage the exchange of information with oil industry players to establish how costs can be reduced in the oil sector supply chain.

ii. the aims and possible mechanisms of regulations and policies that government intend to introduce in the sector should be clear to all players through genuine and transparent engagement with affected parties.

iii. The local petroleum sector policies should be regularly aligned with global trends by the government by accommodating the changing local circumstances.

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Understanding Multicultural Communication for Effective Business Management: An Integrative Review of Literature

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to review the literature on intercultural communication problems encountered in business organisations and discuss the implications of intercultural communication on organisational performance. The study was guided by the following research questions; how does intercultural communication in the workplace affect organisational performance; in what ways does intercultural communication affect business operations; and how can management foster multicultural communication to improve organisational efficiency? The study adopted an integrative review of literature conducted following the Seven-Step Model of critical literature review. This review was conducted on the backdrop of research on multicultural communication conducted at a communications company in Luanda, Angola. The data from the review indicated that multicultural communication problems are inevitable; hence management should implement strategies that help to increase the cross-cultural competencies of employees. The researchers proposed a new framework; the Intercultural Communication Analysis Model (ICAM) for analysing the impact of multicultural communication in an organisation. The model can be tested for practicality through empirical research.

Keywords: Communication, culture, cross-cultural, intercultural, multicultural

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1.0 Introduction

Business success and growth depend on a variety of internal and external variables. One such variable that has an impact on organisational performance is communication. The quality of communication determines how information flows in an organisation; however, communication is usually value-laden because of attitudes, perceptions, motivation levels, and levels of team cohesion (Mullins & Christy, 2013). Without attention to detail, communication in a multicultural set-up can be difficult to manage, and the problems arising from cultural differences within the workforce can reduce operational efficiencies in an organisation (Robins and Judge, 2015). African societies, besides the reasons of globalisation, migration and other socio-economic factors causing people from all over the world to seek employment in other countries, are already multifarious because of different ethnicities and cultures— hence business organisations are also built of a multicultural society. Adler and Graham (2017), indicate that the greater the cultural differences, the more the misunderstanding resulting from multicultural communication becomes.

Several studies reveal that in international trade, multicultural communication is central to all business activities. Lauring and Selmer (2010) say that there is a need for research to investigate multicultural communication problems in business organizations because some business ventures fail because of a lack of intercultural communication skills and an inability to communicate effectively. Chitakornkijsil (2002:6) also says, "Etiquette, manners, and cross-cultural, or intercultural communication have become critical elements required for all International and Global Business executives, managers, and employees." Experience of multicultural differences is thus an essential ingredient to business management that gives an organisation the comparative advantage it requires at all market levels— global, regional, large, or small scale.

Therefore, this study analysed various literature sources and discussed multicultural communication problems faced in business organisations, the impact thereof and the strategies that can be implemented to salvage a business that could be facing such problems. The researchers concluded that multicultural communication is a vital cog in running a business and that multicultural communication problems in organisations

revolve around four variables: intercultural communication, environmental factors, organisational performance and management strategies.

1.1 Research Questions

1.1.1   How does multicultural communication at work affect organisational performance?

1.1.2   In what ways does multicultural communication affect business operations?

1.1.3   How can management foster multicultural communication to improve operational efficiencies in business organisations?

2.0 Material and Methods

This study adopted the Integrative Review of Literature method. As advocated by Snyder (2019:333), literature review can be used in research as a method. It is anchored in the interpretivist research paradigm in which various sources are interrogated through content thematic coding and discourse analysis, or content analysis methods to draw out conclusions. The Integrative Review of Literature method is a powerful way of "integrating findings and perspectives from many empirical findings…to address research questions with a power that no single study has." Onwuebuzie and Frels (2016:49) also say that "the literature review process can be viewed as a data collection tool…" According to Snyder (2019), a literature review can be defined as "a more or less systematic way of collecting and synthesising previous research." As a research methodology, the literature review can be a powerful source for developing a body of knowledge, discussing a particular topic, generating or evaluating theoretical models, reviewing and comparing research results, and investigating the effect of research findings in a particular context (Snyder, 2019; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014; Saunders et al, 2016).

There are several approaches for reviewing literature which depends on the goal or purpose of the review. The approaches include the narrative, integrative, systematic, meta-analysis and semi-systematic approaches. This study adopted the Integrative

Review of Literature approach as the methodology for the study to discuss the topic and to set an agenda for further research on the subject. The literature review process was conducted following Onwuegbuzie and Frels's (2016) Seven-Step Model for Integrative Review of Literature which are; Step 1: Exploring beliefs and topics, Step 2: Initiating the search, Step 3: Storing and organising information, Step 4: Selecting/ Disseminating Information, Step 5: Expanding the search, Step 6: Analysing/ Synthesising information, and Step 7: Presenting the literature review report.

The major literature sources for the study included; the Journal of Organizational Innovation, International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management, Economic Journal of Hokkaido, University Intercultural Communication in Business, International Journal of Media, Journalism and Mass Communications (IJMJMC), other published works and various other publications on the internet as shown in the references section. The theories; Face Negotiation Theory (FNT), Conversational Constraint Theory (CCT), and Expectancy Violation (EVT) were analysed to inform the understanding of multicultural communication problems from a theoretical perspective.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

The following theories about multicultural communication were reviewed to inform the study; Face Negotiation Theory (FNT), Conversational Constraint Theory (CCT), and Expectancy Violation Theory (EVT). These three theories focus on cultural variability (Gudykunst, 2005; Gudykunst, 2012; Ting-Toomey, 1988; Burgoon, 1993).

3.1 Face Negotiation Theory (FNT)

According to Face Negotiation Theory (FNT), collectivistic cultures are more concerned with the "saving face" of their hearers or audiences to avoid causing offense. Ting-Toomey (1988) explains that communication by members of collectivistic cultures is relationally oriented and inclined towards conflict resolution. In contrast, communication in individualistic cultures tends to be more substantive and outcome-oriented rather than focused on "saving face" (Gudykunst, 2005).

In individualistic cultures, people tend to prioritize task completion and may overlook relational aspects of achieving goals or tasks. However, in collectivist cultures, friendly and warm relations within a team or group are essential for motivation and working together to achieve goals and solve problems (Ting-Toomey, 1988). FNT suggests that cultural differences impact communication tendencies and classification. Collectivist cultures prioritize relationships and conflict resolution, while individualistic cultures prioritize task completion over relational aspects (Gudykunst, 2005; Ting-Toomey, 1988).

3.2 Conversational Constraint Theory (CCT)

Conversational Constraint Theory (CCT) proposes that conversations should be goal-directed and require coordination among communicators. The theory identifies two types of conversational constraints: social-relational constraints and task-oriented constraints. Social-relational constraints prioritize the quality of communication in terms of concern for the hearer to avoid disharmony, while task-oriented constraints prioritize clarity of communication over concern for the hearer (Gudykunst, 1995; Gudykunst & Kim, 2003).

Gudykunst (1995) suggests that the orientation towards interdependence is greater when communicators are interdependent and need approval from each other. In contrast, when communicators are independent and desire dominance, they are more inclined towards clarity of communication than concern for others. The theory also extends to gender variables, with more masculine individuals placing greater importance on clarity and more feminine individuals placing greater importance on relationship building (Gudykunst, 1995; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988). The CCT suggests that communication is goal-directed and requires coordination among communicators. Social-relational and task-oriented constraints influence communication quality and effectiveness, with different orientations towards interdependence and dominance impacting communication style. Gender variables play a role in communication style, with masculine individuals emphasizing clarity and

feminine individuals emphasizing relationship building (Gudykunst, 1995; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Gudykunst & Kim, 2003).

3.3 Expectancy Violation Theory (EVT)

Expectancy Violation Theory (EVT) proposes that every culture specifies norms of behavioural expectations, and interpersonal communication is framed within the context of how people expect others to behave and react to violations of such expectations (Burgoon, 1978; Burgoon & Hale, 1988). The theory also suggests that violations are interpreted or evaluated in terms of the communicator's characteristics, such as attractiveness or fame. The violation of behavioural norms may be tolerated and accepted more readily if the communicator possesses exceptional characteristics than if they are an average or modest member of society (Lauring & Selmer, 2010).

According to Burgoon (1978), the EVT posits that individuals form expectations based on social norms, personal characteristics, and contextual factors. Burgoon and Hale (1988) further suggest that individuals evaluate and react to expectancy violations based on their interpretation of the violation, their relationship with the violator, and contextual factors. The theory suggests that expectancy violations can be positive or negative, depending on the communicator's behaviour and the interpretation of the violation by the receiver (Burgoon, 1978). Lauring and Selmer (2010) suggest that EVT can explain cross-cultural communication in terms of how individuals from different cultures interpret and react to violations of behavioural norms. The theory proposes that cultural differences in expectancy violations and reactions to violations can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts in intercultural communication. The EVT suggests that every culture has norms of behavioural expectations, and violations of these norms are evaluated in terms of the communicator's characteristics. The theory also highlights the role of interpretation and evaluation in reactions to expectancy violations. Expectancy Violation Theory explains cross-cultural communication and its potential for conflict due to cultural differences in expectancy violations and reactions to violations (Burgoon, 1978; Burgoon & Hale, 1988; Lauring & Selmer, 2010).

4.0 The Integrative Review of The Literature

To understand the concept of multicultural communication, the term culture is defined first because it forms the central theme of all the discussions about multicultural communication.

4.1 Culture defined

In Hofstede (2005) as cited by Luthra and Dahiya (2016) culture refers to the collection of beliefs, values, practices and behaviours of a particular group of people. The authors also define culture as "the collective programming (thinking, feeling and acting) of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another." Macleod (2002) in Emuze and James (2013) includes elements such as language and religion in their definition of culture which reads"...behaviours related to language, religion, values, standards, and customs that are shared by a group of people and learned from birth." Culture, with its elements, influences people's ways of thinking, perception of the world around them and relations with others. Nguyen et al., (2013) say that culture also defines people's attitudes towards others as well as how they express their emotions and their perceived status to others. Therefore, culture largely influences people's behaviour, thinking and communication styles.

4.2 Multicultural communication defined

According to Zhao and Peng (2020:1), multicultural communication or cross-cultural communication is defined as "communication between people who are native speakers and non-native speakers and between any people who have differences in language and cultural background." Multicultural communication also refers to "issues about speech and culture of those belonging to an environment or land different from their own" (Kegeyan, 2016:2). Constantinescu (2013:45) describes intercultural communication in terms of cultural diversity and points to attributes like "…race, nationality, gender, and ethnicity" as main indicators of cultural diversity". Intercultural communication studies help to understand communication differences and expectations that might create communication barriers and other challenges.

Boy *et al.*, (n.d.) say that multicultural communication refers to communication between people of different national cultures. The definition is also broadened to mean communication between individuals of different national cultures or ethnicities, social status, age, gender and lifestyle. This definition captures other dimensions that form part of people's communication culture based on other differences besides nationality, ethnicity or language. Variables such as status, age, gender and lifestyle form other sub-cultures that also influence people's behaviour, thinking and communication patterns. These definitions show that communication in any group of people can be affected by their cultural differences.

4.3 Problems of intercultural communication in organisations

Hussain (2018:45) identifies several challenges associated with multicultural communication in contemporary international organisations. Some of the identified challenges include "language barriers, stereotyping, culture shock, and ethnocentrism, negative attitudes toward conflict resolution, lack of priority for completion of tasks, delays in decision making, and disrespect to personal privacy". Inegbedion *et al.* (2020) also indicate challenges associated with workplace diversity and identifies; "gender discrimination, communication barriers, ethnic marginalisation, and resistance to change" as the major problems. Rijamampianina (1996) also asserts that the level of education of employees in an organisation affects their work culture and team efficiency.

The language barrier is a common problem in multicultural organizations (Hussain, 2018). While employees may speak different languages, the meanings of words are value-laden, making communication subjective and requiring a cultural relativist perspective (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 1984). English has become the "lingua franca" for many multicultural organizations, but in some countries, English is spoken minimally, posing communication challenges for foreign nationals working in those countries (Hussain, 2018). Even in organizations where English is the business language, not all employees can speak it fluently, leading to communication difficulties and potential discrimination (Martin & Nakayama, 2013).

According to Hussain (2018), with the growth of multinational corporations, language barriers are inevitable for international organizations. Jenifer and Raman (2015) suggest that stereotypes and ethnocentrism also affect multicultural organizations. Stereotyping involves making value judgments about others based on their culture, ethnicity, language, or nationality (Kramer, 1998). Ethnocentrism refers to the belief that one's own culture is superior to others, leading to misunderstandings and conflict (Berry, 1980). Both stereotypes and ethnocentrism can affect team building and employee relations in multicultural organizations.

Cultural shock is another challenge faced by employees in multicultural organizations. Cultural shock occurs when an employee encounters an unexpected cultural practice, leading to confusion and disorientation (Oberg, 1960). This may affect the employee's perception of others and their communication style and performance at work (Hussain, 2018). Language barriers, stereotypes, ethnocentrism, and cultural shock are common challenges faced by employees in multicultural organizations. A cultural relativist perspective is necessary for effective communication, and organizations must take steps to address these challenges to promote a positive and inclusive work environment (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 1984; Kramer, 1998; Berry, 1980; Oberg, 1960; Hussain, 2018; Jenifer & Raman, 2015; Martin & Nakayama, 2013).

Orientation towards conflict resolution and task completion, are the other facets of intercultural communication in organisations (Hussain, 2018). Different cultures have a different orientation towards conflict resolution; others confront conflicts directly and others prefer solving conflicts quietly and surreptitiously. Hence when others confront conflict directly, they tend to be provocative and unreasonable thereby creating more conflict and communication problems. While it matters not in some cultures, in other cultures it is regarded unwise and provocative to disprove others or disagree with them in public.

Concerning task completion, other cultures are individualistic and want to complete one task at a time, while in other cultures; people believe in collectivism and

collaboration and can complete several tasks at a time (Gudykunst, 2005). Thus, bringing people with different orientations towards task completion together may be difficult. Teamwork, work schedules and deadlines for completion of tasks may be compromised (Hussain, 2018). Therefore, multicultural communication in organisations may be affected by the employees' orientation towards conflict resolution, and or their orientation towards task completion.

4.4 Impact of intercultural communication on organisations

Jenifer and Raman (2015) aver that multicultural communication may impact the organisation both in negative and positive ways. According to Jenifer and Raman (2015:332), the negative effects of dysfunctional multicultural communication include "anxiety, uncertainty, stereotyping and ethnocentrism". The positive outcomes of good or balanced cross-cultural communication in business organisations include gaining an advantage for free trade policies with other organisations, effectiveness, wider business networks, international marketing, customer loyalty, improved industrial relations, improved interpersonal relationships in the organisation, good organisational climate and opportunities to foster global peace and prosperity. The advantages of balanced multicultural communication in a business organisation are wider and far-reaching.

Jenifer and Raman (2015) posit that differences in multicultural communication are prominent, to begin with, with language barriers and then behavioural patterns, preferences, understanding of relationships and the orientation towards tasks and rules. If people do not understand each other because of language differences, their communication becomes dysfunctional. Hussain (2018) notes that communication behaviours or non-verbal communication about gender relations, eye contact, touch, proximity, expectations for formal and informal relations, dress, and etiquette are critical in understanding multicultural communication in an organisation. For example; according to Hussain (2018:1);

> *East Asians presume that people from Western countries treat strangers like friends, and friends like strangers. Communication in Western cultures is*

generally direct and explicit. The meaning of the message is very clear. But, this isn't the case in other countries, like Japan, where formality and etiquettes play a major role in their communication. For some cultures, eye contact is considered discourteous while for others refraining from the same is considered disrespectful. Further, in Western cultures, and Africa, giving a hug is considered very informal and fine but it may not be so in Asian countries. Furthermore, some cultures treat women as subordinate and for men belonging to such cultures, it becomes near impossible to work shoulder to shoulder or have women as their superiors. Additionally, in some cultures, the appropriate greeting is a handshake, in others a bow, in others an embrace.

According to Hussain (2018), understanding cultural variants and behavioural patterns, perceptions and stereotypes ensuing from cultural differences help people to understand each other better and to be tolerant and respectful of others different from them. Ignorance of multicultural diversity creates barriers to effective communication. Hussain (2018:1) says, "Knowing the cultural diversity helps in team building, trust formation, conflict resolution, effective collaboration, and more importantly, in assessing the performance of the team members." These aspects are critical to the success of multicultural organizations.

4.5 Strategies for fostering multicultural communication in business organisations.

Jenifer and Raman (2015) say that to improve multicultural communication in organizations there is a need to increase the cross-cultural competencies of employees in the organization. Jenifer and Raman (2015:334) define cross-cultural competency as "the ability to participate in a set of activities…" based on three pillars which are "cross-cultural sensitivity, cross-cultural awareness, and cross-cultural ability." Therefore, to achieve these, Jenifer and Raman (2015) suggest several ways of fostering cross-cultural communication in business organizations. The suggested strategies include cross-cultural knowledge training, language training, and enforcement of mutual benefit policy.

On another note, Verwey and du Plooy-Cilliers (2003) in Emuze and James (2013) indicate that there should be a willingness by employees to share their cultural perspectives in open discussions so that people get sufficient motivation to improve their communication in the cross-cultural setting and not rely on stereotypes to understand past and future behaviours. Emuze and James (2013:46) say;

> *Without direct interaction, people have less psychological empathy for each other's work environment and limitations. Parties should have the opportunity to discuss their perceptions of each other and find ways to correct misconceptions.*

Therefore, managers should give sufficient motivation for intercultural interactions in the organization.

5.0 Discussion of Findings

5.1 The impact of culture on organisational communication

The study established that culture, as the confluence of beliefs and practices, can influence communication in positive and negative ways. Therefore, managers should promote a positive organisational culture that embraces cultural diversity to foster growth through inclusivity and tolerance. A multicultural organization is one where people from diverse cultures and backgrounds work together to achieve common goals. In this context, culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours that characterize a particular group of people as noted by Hofstede (1991). The impact of culture on organizational performance and growth can be both positive and negative, depending on how well the organization manages cultural diversity through cross-cultural knowledge training (Jenifer & Raman, 2015; Emuze & James, 2013). Cox and Blake (1991) indicate that the primary benefit of a multicultural organization is that it can lead to a more diverse and inclusive workforce. Richard (2000) concurs by saying that a diverse workforce can bring different perspectives and approaches to problem-solving, leading to more creative solutions and better decision-making. In addition, a multicultural organization can create a more attractive work environment for employees from diverse backgrounds, which can help attract and retain top talent.

5.2 Impact of multicultural communication on business organisations

The definitions of multicultural communication and intercultural communication highlighted the importance of understanding cultural differences in communication. Communication is not just about language, but also about cultural norms, beliefs, values, and behaviours. As Constantinescu (2013) notes, cultural diversity can manifest in various ways, such as race, nationality, gender, and ethnicity. This diversity can create communication barriers and misunderstandings if not properly recognized and addressed. Therefore, it is crucial to be aware of cultural differences to facilitate effective communication and avoid potential conflicts. Issues like gender roles and expectations may differ across cultures, affecting communication styles and behaviours. Age differences may also impact communication preferences and norms. Therefore, cultural competence, which involves understanding and appreciating cultural differences, is essential in fostering effective communication and building positive relationships among people from diverse backgrounds (Boy *et al.,* n.d.).

5.3 Problems of intercultural communication in business organisations

The reviewed literature highlights the challenges associated with multicultural communication in contemporary international organisations. Language barriers, stereotypes, culture shock, ethnocentrism, negative attitudes towards conflict resolution, lack of priority for task completion, decision-making delays, and disrespect for personal privacy are among the challenges identified by Hussain (2018). Inegbedion et al. (2020) also identified issues such as gender discrimination, communication barriers, ethnic marginalisation, and resistance to change, as major problems in workplace diversity. The level of education of employees also affects their work culture and team efficiency (Rijamampianina, 1996). These challenges can lead to misunderstandings, conflicts, and decreased productivity in multicultural organisations.

There is a need for cultural competence in overcoming these challenges. Understanding cultural differences, including language, values, beliefs, and communication styles, is essential in facilitating effective communication and building

positive relationships among people from diverse backgrounds. As noted by Jenifer and Raman (2015), stereotypes, ethnocentrism, and cultural shock can also affect communication in multicultural organisations. Therefore, it is important to promote cultural awareness and sensitivity in organisations to reduce misunderstandings and conflicts. In addition, organisations should encourage open communication and conflict resolution strategies that are acceptable to all parties involved, while also being mindful of individual differences in orientation towards conflict resolution and task completion. By promoting cultural competence and effective communication strategies, multicultural organisations can create a more inclusive and productive workplace culture.

5.4 Strategies for fostering multicultural communication in business organisations.

The study revealed the importance of cross-cultural competencies in improving multicultural communication in organizations. Jenifer and Raman (2015) identify cross-cultural sensitivity, cross-cultural awareness, and cross-cultural ability as the three pillars of cross-cultural competencies. They suggested that the strategies; cross-cultural knowledge training, language training, and enforcement of mutual benefit policy, foster cross-cultural communication in organizations. Verwey and du Plooy-Cilliers (2003) in Emuze and James (2013), also emphasize the importance of direct interaction and open discussions to improve cross-cultural communication. Managers should, therefore, encourage employees to share their cultural perspectives and correct any misconceptions to promote cultural awareness and sensitivity.

Therefore, these findings suggest that promoting cross-cultural competencies and direct interaction among employees can be effective in improving multicultural communication in organizations. By providing training and opportunities for cultural exchange, organizations can foster a more inclusive and productive workplace culture. Moreover, encouraging open discussions and mutual understanding can help employees overcome cultural barriers and build positive relationships with colleagues from diverse backgrounds.

Cross-cultural knowledge training helps employees to appreciate that cultural differences exist; these include different perceptions, beliefs, and value systems among people of different cultures. Language training helps to eliminate the language barrier when meeting foreigners or when communicating with employees who speak a different language. Enforcing a mutual benefit policy ensures that there is equal treatment of all employees regardless of colour, race, or creed. Intercultural communication is enhanced if all employees know that they are entitled to the same benefits and opportunities in their career advancement path.

6.0 Implications of the study

Multicultural communication has been defined in the context of multiculturalism which refers to diversity in terms of ethnicity, gender, religion, and social belonging. This diversity is a source of various challenges which requires a careful approach by management to solve the problems.

The reviewed theories, the Face Negotiation Theory (FNT), Conversational Constraint Theory (CCT), and the Expectancy Violation Theory (EVT) all help to understand the attitudes, perceptions, and reactions of people communicating with each other. The theories also help in understanding the impact of such attitudes and perceptions on organisational performance. This means that there is an expected behaviour of every member of the organisation depending on their role in the organisation or their status in society. This exposes various stereotypes in the form of expectations or perceptions which affect people's communication.

Various problems of multicultural communication have been discussed in the review. Generally, the problems like language barriers, stereotyping, culture shock, ethnocentrism, and lack of conflict resolution skills, are higher-order problems that cause organisational inefficiencies. The lower-order problems include poor decisions across managerial levels, resistance to change, and disorientation towards task completion. The individualist orientation to task completion may spur feelings of neglect, marginalisation, or segregation. On a personal level, multicultural problems

experienced in organisations discussed in this review include gender discrimination, marginalisation, disrespect to personal privacy, lack of trust, and misinterpretation of non-verbal language which affect the decoding of messages and cause general inefficiencies. The study also established that language affects the operational efficiencies of employees in business organisations.

Multicultural communication problems may appear subtle, but they can impact the organisation immensely through gradual losses emanating from inefficiencies, high employee turnover, low employee motivation, and poor organisational performance. On a positive note, multicultural communication if managed effectively, helps to gain an advantage for free trade engagements, talent retention, a healthy working environment, international business opportunities, customer loyalty, improved industrial relations, and general business growth.

7.1 Recommendations of the study

- Managers should design training programmes starting with orientation for new employees to include language training for foreign nationals or expatriates. Training for intercultural awareness will help employees to appreciate their cultural differences and learn to work together on common tasks. This will also help employees to be able to respect personal preferences and opinions without prejudicing others based on gender, ethnicity, race or language differences.

- Team building activities in which all employees are encouraged to participate can also be used to foster cooperation among the employees. This will solve all problems with task completion and bring employees to share responsibilities and collective efforts towards business tasks.

- Managers should implement effective and efficient communication systems, tools and technologies that help in the following; performance management, grievance

handling, surveys and general observations. These mechanisms can be used for training needs assessment in preparation for future training programmes.

- Managers should also monitor their communication protocols at all levels and create an enabling environment where everyone can express themselves without fear or prejudice. The communication systems in place should foster cooperation, equality and mutual respect of all persons regardless of nationality, race, ethnicity, gender or language.

- When the organisation is experiencing problems, management should take positive measures to address the problems and when communications are improving, management should maintain the status through rewards, regular training of employees and team-building activities.

- Managers should also implement regular training programmes for employees. The training should include training for cross-cultural competencies, ross-cultural knowledge training, language training, and enforcement of mutual benefit policies.

- Managers should take positive steps towards maintaining employee satisfaction. Employee satisfaction is crucial in the production equation and goes a long way to solving intercultural communication problems in the organisation.

- Other strategies include fostering the mutual sharing of cultural knowledge by employees through fostering good communication and listening skills.

- There is a need for continuous research in business organisations to continually assess the impact of multicultural communications following business trends in international, regional and local trade. Such research would yield data useful about industry or company demographics or cultural representations. This data can be used for strategic planning concerning training and marketing logistics.

In that regard the researchers proposed a model; the Multicultural Communication Analysis Model illustrated in Figure 1, for studying multicultural communication elements in an organisation.

7.1.2 The Intercultural Communication Analysis Model (ICAM)

Figure 1: Multicultural Communication Analysis Model
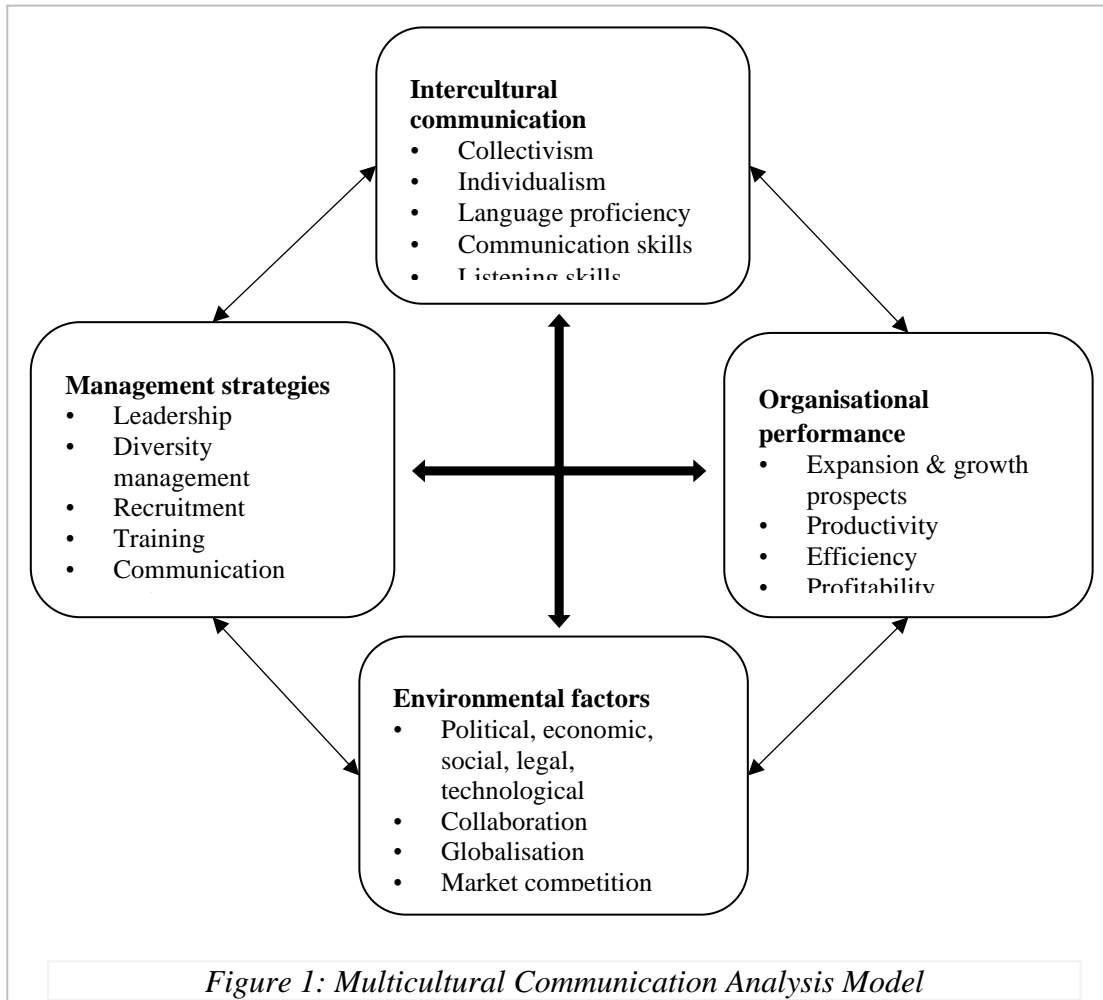
Based on the findings of this study a model for analysing multicultural communication in business organisations can be proposed. The model consists of four components: intercultural communication, organisational performance, environmental factors and management strategies.

7.1.2 Intercultural communication

Intercultural communication refers to the communication between people from different cultural backgrounds in the workplace. This includes language barriers, cultural differences, and communication styles. The effectiveness of intercultural communication has an impact on organisational performance.

7.1.2 Organisational performance

Organisational performance includes productivity, efficiency, and profitability. Intercultural communication can impact business operations in various ways, such as affecting decision-making, teamwork, and customer relations.

7.1.3 Management strategies

Management strategies are used to foster multicultural communication and improve operational efficiencies in business organisations. This includes training employees on cultural awareness and sensitivity, implementing communication tools and technologies that support cross-cultural communication, and creating a culture of inclusion and diversity. Effective management strategies can enhance intercultural communication, which can lead to improved organisational performance.

7.1.4 Environmental factors

Environmental factors refer to external and internal factors that can impact multicultural communication and the overall performance of an organisation. These factors may include political, economic, social, and technological factors that affect the organisation's operations. For example, political factors such as government policies and regulations can impact the recruitment and retention of employees from diverse backgrounds. Economic factors such as globalisation and market competition can influence the organisation's decision to expand and operate in different countries, leading to increased multicultural communication challenges. Technological factors such as advancements in communication technologies can facilitate cross-cultural communication and improve operational efficiencies. Environmental factors can have

both positive and negative effects on multicultural communication and organisational performance. Therefore, management strategies need to be adaptive and responsive to environmental changes.

The proposed model can be used to analyse the impact of multicultural communication in business organisations and to identify management strategies that can improve operational efficiencies. By understanding the interconnection between intercultural communication, organisational performance, environmental factors and management strategies, organisations can create a more inclusive and productive workplace culture that promotes cross-cultural competencies and fosters effective communication among employees from diverse backgrounds.

8.0 Conclusion

The study was conducted to explore the problems of intercultural communication affecting business organisations, analyse the impact of intercultural communication on business operations, and determine intercultural communication strategies to improve organisational efficiencies. The study was an Integrative Literature Review conducted following Onwuegbuzie and Frels's (2016) Seven-Step Model for Critical Literature Review. The findings point to theoretical and practical implications for multicultural communication in business organisations. Various problems have been unravelled and from the study findings, it was clear that multicultural communication is a vital cog in business. We, therefore, proposed a four components model; Intercultural communication, Organisational performance, Environmental factors and Management strategies, as presented in Figure 1. Multicultural Communication Analysis Model in to be used as a framework for monitoring and analysing multicultural communication in business organisations.

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Examining the Sustainability Perspectives of Beneficiaries and Benefactors in Community Based Projects in Masvingo province, Zimbabwe.

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Abstract

Informed by Marcus and Mao's (2004) Participation Theory, the Rotary International (2014) recognises that Community Based Projects (CBPs) are central to development across all levels of society; and embracing sustainable practices enables these projects to promote democratic coexistence, mitigate environmental woes, foster social equity and ensure long-term economic viability. However, in developing countries, most such projects are funded from overseas and they often face sustainability challenges such as lack of continuity when the funders pull out, which motivated this current research. The aim of the research was to examine the project sustainability perspectives in force among CBPs implemented in Masvingo Province. The research adopted a mixed methods approach called concurrent triangulation (a convergent or parallel design) for the purpose of applying both qualitative and quantitative data, allowing the views of different stakeholders to be thoroughly appreciated in the study. Quantitative data from 256 representatives of project implementing agencies was examined using descriptive statistics and factor analysis; while thematic analysis was employed in the analysis of qualitative data gleaned from 15 beneficiary representatives. Quantitative analysis yielded that many organisations were in conformity with common sustainability practices. For example, the mean statistics for all considered measures of project sustainability were all above the theoretical mean. Factor analysis too produced results where all the rankings were above half, which could suggest mere operational efficiency. However, a closer look into the qualitative findings indicated that the compliance left many sustainability gaps. Qualitative findings showed that some agencies were using a one-size-fits-all approach to project identification, formulation, assessment, and implementation thereby involving the communities only as a formality while the projects are predesigned. The chief recommendation to drive sustainability in CBPs is for the implementing agencies to directly involve the grassroots communities for inclusivity and cost-effectiveness. Moreover, this study recommends gradually substituting local financing systems for foreign aid as well as propagating essential skills among the project end-users rather than non-locals who will soon leave the community.

Key Words: Sustainability; Community Based Projects; Sustainability Influencing Factors; Sustainability Measures

INTRODUCTION

Using Rotary International (2014)'s measures of sustainability, this research examines sustainability perspectives in community-based projects in Masvingo Province of Zimbabwe where CBPs have proven to be necessary and critical to communities as they give control of resources to communities. Across the developing world, CBPs are mostly overseas funded, and they are ideally expected to treat the poor and marginalised communities as assets and partners in the development process (Tugyetwena, 2023). When applied efficiently and effectively, this approach has a lot of benefits to beneficiary communities who become more geared to make use of their efforts, institutions and resources for their own local development sustainability as laid out in the Global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Ceptureanu, Ceptureanu, Luchian et al (2018) consider that achieving the 17 sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda requires innovative approaches that are socially inclusive and environmentally benign in implementing CBPs effectively. According to Reed, Vella, Challies et al (2017), CBPs have the potential of reducing poverty by being more inclusive, sustainable and cost-effective but most CBPs funded by overseas funders tend to be less sustainable because funding often ends when the communities have not established their own local sources of funding leading to those projects becoming white elephants which are expensive to maintain or difficult to complete. It can thus be judged that the prevailing foreign dependency by CBPs in less developed countries is a cause for concern among developmentalists and development scholars. In the current study, the researcher picked this concern and sought to reexamine sustainability perspectives surrounding CBPs in a largely rural setting in Zimbabwe.

The research site climatically falls under Natural Ecological Regions IV and V where rainfall is unreliable and most of the soils are unproductive, yet agriculture is the backbone of the economy. This situation is representative of over 60% of the country's geographical territory constituted mainly by rural communities (Chingarande, Mugano, Chagwiza and Hungwe, 2020). The provincial capital is the City of Masvingo located equidistant to all the country's major cities with an average distance of 300km from Harare, Mutare, Bulawayo, Gweru and Beitbridge. The province that hosted the study comprises 7 rural districts namely Bikita, Chiredzi, Chivi, Gutu, Masvingo, Mwenezi

and Zaka where agencies associated to the National Association of NGOs (NANGO) are running a variety of CBPs. The projects are classified into 10 thematic sectors namely Child Protection; Land and the Environment; Economic Issues; Disability; Health and HIV; Youth Development; Arts and Culture; Human Rights; and the Humanitarian sector. NANGO Southern Region which houses Masvingo province has a membership of 60 annually subscribing organisations. Focusing on this organisation means that the findings will be somewhat generalisable nationally because the structure is replicated across the country with 4 other regions namely Eastern, Midlands, Northern and Western which operate in a similar manner under NANGO.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainability is a concept in development literature that refers to the improvement and sustainability of a healthy economic, ecological and social system for human development. It involves the efficient and equitable distribution of resources within a finite ecosystem and the interaction between the population and its environment (Ceptureanu et al., 2018a; Gohori & van der Merwe, 2022; Masud-All-Kamal and Nursey-Bray, 2021a; Nhamo & Katsamudanga, 2019). Community development is a people-centred change process that involves identifying community needs, setting priorities, establishing locally available resources, assessing external resources and experts, determining community preferences and balancing competing interests based on both local and external resources (Suriyankietkaew et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2020; de la Cruz López et al., 2021; Kashwani, 2019; Chundu et al., 2022; Nhamo & Katsamudanga, 2019). Contrary to this theoretic balance, local experiences in rural Masvingo indicate imbalances between local and external influences on projects sustainability, which was the object of the current study.

Then sustainability theory, where the abovementioned Participation Theory belongs, is a new branch of community development theory that borrows heavily from various fields of economics, science and social development engagements, such as those put forward by the World Commission on Environment Development (WCED). The theory emphasises the importance of empowering people, increasing community participation, fostering social cohesion, enhancing cultural identity, strengthening institutional development and promoting equity and fairness (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2021; Bartniczak & Raszkowski, 2019). The theory recognises

that uncertainties exist in communities and requires flexible processes to improve the lives of community people. It considers social, political, economic and cultural relationships as fundamental to community development. In community development initiatives, management requires three key competencies: contextual, behavioural and technical skills (Kashwani, 2019). According to Sarriot et al. (2022), the key indicators for community development sustainability include achieving project outcomes, maintaining project deliverables, resource mobilisation capacity and human capacity establishment, which the current study sought to decipher in the context of struggling rural communities of Masvingo, Zimbabwe.

This study made use of the Rotary International (2014) measures for ensuring sustainable best practices in community-based overseas funded projects. These measures include assessing community needs, using local materials, identifying local funding sources, providing training, education and outreach, motivating beneficiaries to take ownership as well as monitoring and evaluating progress. Their aim is to provide long-term solutions to community needs that beneficiaries can maintain after grant funding ends – a situation which has hitherto been lacking in the selected research site. The researcher was interested to learn if development agencies were consulting the local public, engaging stakeholders, making use of local resources, and advancing technological and infrastructural development as per the dictates of the Rotary Principles. Training, education and outreach should be provided to strengthen beneficiaries' ability to meet project objectives (Rotary International, 2014). This explanatory research assessed local development practices such as whether the agencies motivated beneficiaries to take ownership and prepare the community for project ownership once grant funds are spent.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed methods approach to explore CBP practices in Masvingo and understand stakeholders' perspectives on sustainability issues. For the quantitative component, a sample size of 460 participants was targeted, and it produced a return rate of 55.8%. Two hundred and fifty-six (256) participants out of the 460 successfully took the questionnaire and this is an acceptable rate according to Holtom, Baruch,

Aguinis and Ballinger (2022) who peg an excellent response rate at above 50%. At the time of conducting this study, there were 60 NANGO-registered agencies in the province, most of which had district and ward-level sub-offices. All in all, there were 460 project offices including provincial offices, district sub-offices and ward-level stations. The researcher targeted all the 460 because they constituted a manageable number for statistical purposes (Kang, 2021). Then for the qualitative component, the researcher purposively targeted 15 community representatives and administered semi-structured interviews on them. The number of interviews was informed by Campbell, Greenwood and Prior (2020) who state that population and sampling are not important in qualitative inquiry but data saturation. So, community representatives were identified for their experience in CBPs which rendered them data rich. Both the questionnaire and the interview were implemented in 5 out of 7 districts mainly due to road network inaccessibility. Data was analysed using SPSS for quantitative data and thematic content analysis for qualitative data.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Quantitative questionnaire findings

The following table is a depiction of the quantitative findings gathered from 60 participants representing benefactor organisations implementing CBPs in Masvingo Province.

Current best practices on CBDPs for Sustainability	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis
People organize best around problems they consider most important when implementing community projects	256	3.63	.863	-.682	.583
Local people tend to make better economic decisions and judgments in the context of their own environment and circumstances	256	3.64	.732	-.663	1.211
Voluntary provision of labour, time, money and materials to a project is a necessary condition for breaking patterns of dependency and passivity	256	3.66	.729	-.479	.438

The local control over the amount, quality and benefits of development activities helps make the process self-sustaining.	256	3.67	.659	-.515	.817
Mapping or making use of inventory of the capacities and assets in a community/organization	256	3.67	.682	-.663	1.304
Building relationships and connections between community members and between community members and agencies, to change values and attitudes	256	3.69	.623	-.839	1.422
Mobilizing community members to become self-organizing and active by sharing knowledge and resources and identifying common interests;	256	3.71	.617	-.729	1.413
Leveraging outside resources only to things that community members cannot do for themselves. Community members need to be in a position of strength in dealing with outside agencies.	256	3.69	.623	-.643	1.182
Following up of all procedures required in line with Government in terms of community developmental projects implementation	256	3.70	.679	-.464	.756
Valid N (listwise)	256				

The survey results show that the participating CBPs were implementing sustainable practices. The survey characteristics include mean, skewness, kurtosis and standard deviations. The respondents highly rated the practices of mobilising community members to become self-organising and active by sharing knowledge and resources and identifying common interests. The highest mean statistic was 3.71, suggesting a platykurtic distribution with few outliers.

The best practices for CBPs sustainability were checked for sampling adequacy using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The results showed that the sample used for the factor analysis was adequate, and all the sustainable practices were being followed in the CBPs implementation.

The Principal Component Analysis was used to extract a single factor from the nine-line items used to measure the best practices used for CBPS sustainability being used by NGOs in which are overseas funded. The total variance explained by the components on best practices being used by the NGOs is 78.00%, demonstrating that all the best practices procedures were being followed in CBDPs implementation by the NGOs.

The rotated component matrix for current best practices for CBPS sustainability indicates that all the items had factor loadings ranging from 0.808 to 0.949 and loaded successfully to the best practices variable. All factor rankings are above 0.5, implying that the best practices were being implemented in the communities. This confirms the convergent validity of the line items used to measure the best practices with none diverging from the rest of the items.

Qualitative interview findings

The following table summarises the themed-up contributions of 15 randomly selected community members representing beneficiaries of CBPs in Masvingo Province.

Question	Responses	Theme
To what extent do you find local CBPs building relationships, connections and consultations for community development sustainability?	• I have seen them actively building relationships within this community. They play a vital role in fostering connections and promoting collaboration. A perfect example is in our income generation projects where they link us with businesses and individuals who matter, such as trainers.	Building relationships
	• CBPS are organising events, workshops and social activities for us. Thes help us a lot in mixing and mingling as villagers as well as encountering other people from elsewhere with different new ideas.	Community engagement
	• They are sidestepping our traditional leaders in decision making thereby	Community engagement

	rendering the projects dubious. In the past, we would come together under a tree and discuss our concerns with our village head, but these NGOs are now like our new village heads. Often, they are contradicting our traditional systems in their topics.	
	• They create for us opportunities to come together, exchange ideas and unite around common causes.	Community engagement
	• These organisations often establish partnerships with other local stakeholders such as schools, government entities and donor organisations. We gain a lot of exposure due to them facilitating.	Building relationships
	• Some projects are altering the social order of this community. Our overall well-being is now a dictated affair due to them.	Community engagement
Do local CBPs ever take stock of community capacities and assets for sustainable development?	• Not all but some of them thoroughly consider the local endowments. However, some of them hardly recognise our decisional strengths or our knowledge.	Ownership issues
	• Yes, they understand the resources we have in this community but are not able to effectively organise local hands to do work. Most of the work is done by their staff and they are the ones benefiting in the end.	Ownership issues
	• Their initiatives seem to align with our immediate and medium-term needs such as drought relief and other emergency interventions. Our long-term aspirations such as better homes and better community relations do not seem to bother	Community engagement

	them as if we have no social issues to care about.	
	• Rich members of this community are harnessed in decision making processes more readily than us. We are considered as people of less capacities materially and intellectually.	Relationship building
What efforts are the local CBPs making to leverage outside resources for only those things that community members cannot do by themselves?	• They often rely on foreign resources for almost all their tasks – so much that we have come to associate them with foreign donations. Sometimes they are the donors themselves.	Ownership issues
	• Resources like financial aid, technical expertise or equipment are often sourced as grants. I cannot remember a handful occasions where we used our own resources for community development activities except for government-initiated food-for work.	Ownership issues
	• CBPs turn to foreign resources for our benefit as we lack the financial means to tackle certain projects on our own. However, sometimes they use our plight as bait to lure grants for their own livelihood. • A project as big as building a school or a medical facility requires significant funding. Obviously, we cannot fund even a quarter of the costs, hence often seek aid from foreign donors through CBP platforms.	Ownership issues
	• We also often lack the specialised skills that can only be outsourced as hired labour for our community projects,	Building relationships

	especially technological know-how in this era of high technology.	
	• We have often seen outside resources being channelled for training healthcare workers or implementing sustainable farming practices. I see nothing wrong in that because to imagine us accessing the requisite resources locally is unrealistic. CBPs necessarily utilise foreign resources as an essential means to address all our community needs, they are all beyond our capabilities.	Ownership issues
How do local CBPs facilitate community engagement around problems of common concern?	• Though they sometimes fail, these organisations sometime bridge the gap between community members and key decision makers. Some impactful changes have been witnessed during or because of some of these interventions.	Relationship building
	• Some of their diverse initiatives have set us on a colliding course with our leadership and our culture. I blame them for the recent chaotic changes in our laws following their rabid advocacy. Now I cannot demand bride wealth when my daughter marries due to the new marriage law which is one of several hurried changes facilitated by these organisations.	Community engagement
	• Their community meetings, workshops and awareness campaigns provide a platform for individuals to voice their concerns, discuss potential solutions and actively participate in collaborative efforts.	Community engagement

	• They enable communities to come together, creating a sense of solidarity and empowerment. Personally, I gained problem-solving skills from some of the workshops that they organised.	Community engagement
	• These organisations foster an environment of engagement and participation. This is especially important for us people living with disabilities to address our common problems by collective bargaining. This has made tangible differences in our personal lives and our community.	Community engagement
Are local CBPs promoting local control of development activities for self-sustenance of processes in case of end of outside support?	• Local control of development activities is vital for communities to sustain themselves. Organisations often tell us about this but most of our people do not seem to comprehend this.	Ownership issues
	• As residents, CBPs have given us the power to make decisions about the development of this neighbourhood.	Community engagement
	• To ensure that our needs and priorities are met, we have often demanded genuine income generation projects that can be turned into viable businesses, but what these organisations are doing is making us participate in meaningless timewaster initiatives with which we cannot take our kids to school. Imagine a grown up like me doing a project that does not buy me a goat at the end of the year!	Ownership issues
	• We appreciate their efforts in many small projects, but we are growing weary of	Ownership issues

	those small projects which hardly lift us from poverty. Let them improve our infrastructure, preserve our local natural resources and support our traditional institutions.	
In what ways are local CBPs fostering community participation and equal ownership if any?	• They have sometimes provided opportunities for us to come together and actively engage in decision-making processes that directly impact our lives.	Relationship building
	• By organising events, workshops and public-level meetings	Community engagement
	• We have been taught by these organisations to voice our opinions and to bargain our rights as teams so as to enjoy the power of numbers.	Relationship building
	• They provide us platforms where we can share our various ideas with which we can contribute to the betterment of our community.	Community engagement
	• I strongly doubt CBPs promote equal ownership of anything in this community. They often tell us that they do not dabble in politics and yet political issues are our greatest concerns as sources of inequality. They are just touching on nonessential aspects of our community life.	Ownership issues
	• Their activities empower community members, regardless of their background or socioeconomic status, to have an equal say in shaping the direction of their own neighbourhood or town.	Ownership issues

Would you say local people are making decisions that influence community development as per local needs and demands?	• I do not see much local content in the decisions made in these CBPs. Most of them are designed in offices located far away in the towns and in our absence. The moment they are communicated to us during community assemblies, it would be senseless to add our views because that will be viewed as being argumentative.	Ownership issues
	• We are contributing to some extent through our community leaders. We sometimes hear they are called to workshops, but our only worry is that they go there to represent us without gathering our contributions.	Relationship building
	• Yes, local people are participating. Many improvements can be made such as mainstreaming youth, gender and disability issues. Consultations are taking place but they are not all-encompassing yet.	Community engagement
	• We may never agree on needs but at least we agree on the most basic things like schools, health centres and roads.	Community engagement
Have local people been providing voluntary contributions to CBPs such as labour, money and materials?	• We provide voluntary contributions to those local initiatives, the little that we afford. We have a deep sense of civic responsibility and commitment towards enhancing our community wellbeing. How we contribute depends on how they organise us.	Ownership issues
	• I have seen individuals willingly dedicating their time, skills and resources to support CBPs here. For example, some of us are	Ownership issues

	unpaid operates of the police and the civic protection unit.	
	• Collaborative efforts have been going on between these agencies and community members. Villagers do not demand payment but mostly public recognition because it gives us dignity as sensible community members. As a member of the neighbourhood watch group, I conduct community patrols free of charge and with pleasure.	Ownership issues
	• As a teacher I do not only teach in school but I also assist during community trainings. Sometimes I charge very little money but mostly I serve for free.	Ownership issues
Are local CBPs following any laid down procedures for sustainable development?	• There are instances where these organisations deviate from the laid-down procedures.	Compliance
	• Some of them have well-structured and systematic approaches but there are some which are often at loggerheads with authorities.	Compliance
	• Many fail to adhere to these established procedures. Some of their operations have been suspended and others banned as a result.	Compliance
	• Most of them are compliant but those into human rights and electoral processes often fight with government. This has hindered progress towards long-term sustainability.	Compliance

	• They understand the procedural guidelines designed to support sustainable development practices, but some wayward elements within their ranks are often seen overzealously undermining the trust placed upon them by stakeholders.	Compliance
	• As champions of good governance, most of these projects are demonstrating accountability, transparency and popular decision-making processes. Those which do this have remained on track with their objectives. They are the effective ones among the so-called agents of change. The few that deviate from this route are rather undermining sustainable development within their communities.	Community engagement

The import of the above table is that CBPs are essential for establishing ties and encouraging cooperation among members of a community. They help the villagers mingle and gather fresh ideas during social events and workshops; but they frequently avoid traditional leaders in the decision-making process, which casts doubt on their initiatives. They give locals a platform to interact and come together around shared interests. Certain CBP initiatives transform the social hierarchy by usurping the powers of local institutions. Some CBPS consider local endowments, but local people often lack the expertise to leverage these local resources. Better houses and improved community connections are long-term goals that are not given priority in CBPs projects; instead, the focus is on meeting immediate and medium-term needs. The CBPs frequently depend on outside resources, which are plainly a source of livelihood for CBP staff.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Community engagement

According to the study, some NGOs were criticised for not involving the communities they serve in decision-making processes. However, questionnaire responses indicated that these agencies were actually mobilising community members to share knowledge and resources and identify common interests. Despite this, 4 interviewees mentioned that Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) were failing to acknowledge the traditional social order in decision making. One of the 4 interviewees explained that in the past, community leaders and members would discuss issues together under a tree, whereas now NGOs are causing villagers to distrust their leaders. Another interviewee even feared that the role of the village heads was being seized by development agencies which were presenting themselves as the alternative leadership. This situation has led to a decline in traditional institutions that once facilitated collective action in rural areas, a finding which is in line with Sithole (2020) who states that local community establishments designed to smooth rural processes are diminishing thereby inhibiting a more cohesive and sustainable future. To address these challenges and promote a more cohesive and sustainable future, it is suggested that inclusive community centres be established to facilitate communication between individuals and their leaders regarding shared concerns. According to Muyambo and Shava (2021), this investment is crucial considering the diminishing role of local institutions.

Ownership issues

The study found differing opinions on equal ownership and community commitment in CBPs. Two interviewees believed these values were unattainable, while questionnaires indicated that equal ownership was already happening. Most questionnaires showed that CBPs were fostering connections and promoting positive values like shared responsibilities and project costs. However, one interviewee mentioned that socioeconomic factors like poverty and power dynamics hindered community members from making financial and other commitments in CBPs. The other one even believed that poor people were considered less capable to partake in CBPs because they had nothing to contribute. According to Polacko (2021), economic disparities, such as income inequality, hinder equal commitment. Case and Deaton

(2020) also stated that commitment to CBPs is typically limited to those with greater financial resources. Overall, the qualitative findings align with previous literature, while the questionnaire results differ.

Relationships building

The study revealed a lack of common understanding regarding relationship building among community members, organisations and government departments. According to one of the interviewees, limited resources and competing interests hinder the formation of meaningful relationships as stakeholders prioritise individual objectives over the collective good. However, quantitative questionnaires suggest that the prevailing situation is seen as normal and acceptable, with community-based partnerships facilitating sustainable relationships. Previous research has emphasised the importance of social connections and consultations in sustainable development. However, Avelino (2021) concluded that establishing and maintaining such relationships is challenging due to hidden agendas and infighting. The interview findings reinforce this previous finding while the questionnaire results provide some counter evidence, possibly indicating the limitations of close-ended questions. To achieve long-term success, it is crucial to develop inclusive platforms that foster power-balanced collaboration in community activities to gain trust and support.

Compliance

It has been found that some NGOs may not always follow prescribed procedures when carrying out their mandates in communities. While many NGOs adhere to guidelines as reflected by the questionnaire findings, 5 interviewees representing a third of all consulted beneficiaries believed that limited resources, bureaucratic inefficiencies and underhand dealings were hindering these agencies' compliance and commitment to sustainability. The World Bank (2020) has raised concerns about NGOs' adherence to established procedures for sustainability. This aligns with the findings of this study, which highlight the controversial nature of proceduralism. Other studies have also identified misallocation of resources, complex administrative processes and monitoring mechanisms as obstacles to NGOs improving their sustainability practices such as conformity to regulations (Kabonga, 2023). In light of these views, it is

recommended to implement standardised monitoring and evaluation systems that facilitate NGO compliance for sustainability.

CONCLUSION

The study found that NGOs are mobilising community members to share knowledge and identify common interests, but they are sometimes failing to acknowledge the traditional social order in decision-making. This has led to a decline in the role of traditional institutions, causing distrust among villagers. The study revealed contradictory views on equal ownership and community commitment in CBPs. A few interviewees believed these values were unattainable, while all questionnaire respondents indicated equal ownership was happening. Socioeconomic factors like poverty and inequality were among the notable hindrances limiting this commitment. Also revealed in the study was a lack of understanding of development relationships among community members, organisations and government departments, with limited resources and competing interests hindering meaningful relationships. Community-based partnerships were found to facilitate sustainable relationships, but establishing and maintaining these relationships was found challenging due to hidden agendas and power dynamics. Lastly, some agencies were found to dodge prescribed procedures, with limited resources, bureaucratic inefficiencies and the temptation of underhand dealings hindering their commitment to sustainability. Concerns were raised about the NGOs' nonadherence to sustainability procedures, and implementing standardised monitoring and evaluation systems is recommended to facilitate compliance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implementing agencies must directly involve the grassroots communities for inclusivity and cost-effectiveness.
- CBPs must gradually substitute local financing systems for foreign aid and propagate essential skills among the project end-users rather than non-locals.
- Authorities must adopt standardised monitoring and evaluation systems that ease NGO compliance for sustainability.
- Stakeholders must be seen developing inclusive platforms for power-balanced collaboration in community activities to gain mutual trust and support necessary for long-term success.

- Local area institutions must bolster communitywide linkages that promote a more cohesive and sustainable society.
- Researchers must help recognise underlying issues preventing equitable distribution of resources and opportunities.

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Challenges and Prospects of Children's Homes: Opportunities for Transition from Dormitory to Family Unit Setup.

Lenzeni Kamwendo[11]

Abstract

This study makes a cursory exploration of the challenges and prospects of transitioning childcare institutions from dormitory to family unit systems to promote child development. Desk research was utilised as the primary research approach in this paper, which is part of a wider qualitative research on childcare systems in Zimbabwe. This was complemented by a systematic literature review. Literature has indicated that variances in culture and contexts have persistently showcased the positive effects associated with family care on child development. There are dangers to children, associated with living outside family care. Accordingly, the present study proposes interventions that empower families to raise and care for children. In Zimbabwe, institutional dormitory care has emerged as the most dominant form of childcare. The responsibility of child placement rests with the Department of Social Services which unfortunately is known to have a history of being under-resourced to conduct all the necessary work required. Resultantly, this continually forces the department to 'relapse' and seek the services of non-state institutions as the only available remedy to their shortcomings. Institutions, which in most cases are organised in the form of dormitories face a fair share of challenges that affect child development hence the need to transition to family-based units. Children who suffer mostly from social problems associated with institutionalization have shown great improvements when placed in family care spheres.

Key words: Dormitories, Children's homes, Family units, Transition and Opportunity

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1.0 Introduction

In the global south, children's homes have remained the hope for the survival of vulnerable children. Traditionally such homes have been using dormitories to house their children. However, recent changes being promoted internationally have seen the transition from dormitories to family set-ups as one of the best recommended practices in line with changing global trends and promotion of the rights of the child. Article 20 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (2005) identifies the family unit or family set-sup as the ideal form of alternatively caring for the vulnerable child. Zimbabwe ratified the UNCRC of 2005 and as a signatory to this convention, has been trying to streamline policies and efforts to protect the rights of vulnerable children. In 2010, Zimbabwe formulated the National Residential Childcare policy which recommended orphanages to make a transition from the dormitory system to family units. Recent research on child development has indicated that dormitory housing of children negatively impacts their physical and psychological development/wellbeing world over, but little has been done in Zimbabwe.

Institutionalisation is placing or caring for orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) under a registered orphanage or children's village. Orphanages are often perceived as philanthropic and have largely been bankrolled by missionaries, individual philanthropists, and some businesspeople and this has been the gold standard for care work. However, institutional care has inherent limitations. Institutionalised children are often deprived of the experience of family life and therefore suffer emotional deprivation with long standing adverse psychosocial effects. In most instances orphans are disjointed or separated from their families, removed from their communities, and distanced from their culture, making reintegration of children into society difficult if not often impossible.

The government of Zimbabwe ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children together with the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children. Accordingly, Zimbabwe went a step further by formulating its own National Orphan Care Policy (1995) based on the recommendations from these global statutes. Its national policy correctly defines and highlights the need for deinstitutionalisation. Deinstitutionalization is described as the government's stance in moving away from

institutionalization. Orphanages are not entirely obsolete, but for the greater good, there should be more organisations shifting away from institutional care towards investing in supporting family-based care by funding fees, school uniforms, and stationery among other needs. To address this scenario, the Government of Zimbabwe designed and enacted the National Orphan Care Policy which was meant to offer support to traditional forms of childcare and subsequently discourage childcare methods that remove the child from their culture and community. This policy (National Orphan Care Policy) recommended a transition into family-based units. The policy further proposes how established children's homes can be renovated to enhance the state of childcare and more so, fulfil the psychological and developmental requirements of the child who is under institutional care. And one such way is to make a transition from Dormitory structured Children's Homes into Family Based Units in Children's Homes.

2.0 Methodology

The research is qualitative in nature, an approach that is grounded in constructive interpretivist epistemology. The paper used the qualitative approach as it allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the respondent's thoughts and feelings on the subject matter in the broader study. Qualitative methodology also allowed the researcher to maintain some relevance to both academic and non-academic audiences (Corbin and Strauss, 2008:13-14). Hubberman and Miles (2002) opine that there are generally five qualitative approaches, and these include grounded theory, ethnographic, narrative research, phenomenological, and case study. These approaches study phenomena differently though these approaches sometimes overlap. The paper also utilised the systematic literature review approach to gain an understanding of the debates surrounding transition from dormitories in children care institutions to a family setting-based care system. Yin (2009:18) defines a systematic inquiry as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its life context," especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clear. The researcher also used secondary sources that included academic journals and internet sources to enrich the discussion on the topic under study.

3.1 Evolution of Children's Homes in Zimbabwe

Traditionally, the institutionalisation of a child was unknown among communities in Zimbabwe given that the care of the vulnerable child was perceived as the responsibility of the extended family. Institutionalisation was popularised by missionaries during the colonial era mainly due to urbanisation and its destructive effects on the locals' social fabric. Missionaries also wanted a base for early conversions to their faith. It was also introduced as an avenue of delivering education especially to the African child whose parents would have rebelled against African culture through conversion and were therefore not welcome in the African communities. The first institution built to care for orphans or OVCs called SOS Children's Village was by Hermann Gmeiner (1927-1975) in Tyrol, Austria, in 1949. In Zimbabwe, the first SOS children's villages started in 1983 in Bindura, followed by another in Harare, 1989, and Bulawayo in 1995. However, before then, the Jairos Jiri Children's Home had been founded in 1950 by the late Mr Jairos Jiri. It was a home first set to take care of disabled children after Jiri had noticed their struggles and suffering in the urban areas of Bulawayo. Nonetheless, the founder of childcare homes, Hermann Gmeiner, believed that traditional orphanages did not provide opportunities for the proper care of European orphans and homeless children (Abebe, 2004). It is that argument which led to international protocols clamouring for putting OVCs in families and not in institutions.

3.2 Colonial Era

In Zimbabwe, the Probation Service was established in 1933 with an interdepartmental committee comprising members from the police, justice and education departments. The first official Welfare Provision was the introduction in 1936 of the Probation and Attendance Officer Programme which solely dealt with non-Africans. During this period European juveniles were sent to Cape Peninsular, girls to Durban Ville Reform School whilst mixed race children called coloureds also had their own institutions. African delinquents were sent to Driefontein Mission, a Catholic Mission station. In 1948 the duly constituted Department of Social Welfare was established, catering for white juvenile delinquents only. During this time the department was viewed as a mode of social control and not of social development. In 1949 the Highfield Probation was set up and later a remand home. Percy Ibbotson Hostel was opened in 1950 in Bulawayo,

and this was followed by the building of a prison in Mrewa where a portion was offered for reformatory purposes. Also built were the Northcot Training Institute and Remand Home in the 1950s and then Blue Hills in Gwelo in 1961. It was in 1950 that the first African officer, Mr Mali, joined the Department of Native Affairs which included Relief Services including Public Assistance. That is when Mr Mali and other subsequent Africans in this department began to be known as social welfare officers. Their duties included investigating the needs of families and recommending to relief officers for assistance. Since then, there was a gradual expansion of the Department, which was then including Child Welfare Public Assistance

3.3 Post- Colonial Era

After the attainment of independence in 1980 the department of Social Welfare under the Ministry of Public Service, Labour, and Social Welfare, was tasked with the management of these juvenile homes. In 2002, the Social Welfare department was transformed into the Department of Social Services which is now responsible for coordinating children's issues, especially dealing with children's homes. The Department of Social Services (DSS), which is the main focal point of the assignment, is responsible for finance and administration, rehabilitation, family and child welfare, policy, and programming. In due course the DSSs, like other government departments, were enormously affected by the economic decline in Zimbabwe, caused by the high inflation rate which peaked at 231 million percent in 2008. The decline was characterised by high prices and unemployment which left 1.5 million households in poverty, homes to some 3.5 million children. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a 'child' as a person under the age of 18. The Department of Social Services was mandated to care for children and all the admissions were authorised by them in accordance with Section 14, 15 and 16 of the Zimbabwe Children's Act Chapter 5.06. If anyone finds or identifies a child in need of, or without any adult's attention, the person is supposed to go to the nearest police station or any organisation that deals with vulnerable children to report. These in turn would second the child to the responsible authority, the Department of Social Services.

3.4 Procedures

The police would place the child at the nearest children's home while waiting for the next working day for the Department of Social Services to take over. Then the child will be taken to the Department of Social Services who in turn will place the child under Place of Safety in the home for 14 days while they are doing family tracing and looking for the reasons which led to this circumstance, this is according to Zimbabwe Children's Act Chapter 5.06 Section 14. If the parents or relatives are located during this period, the child will be taken to his/her family. If there is an element of abuse, the case will be handled accordingly, or the child can be admitted to the home through the courts. If the department fails to locate the child's family within 14 days, either the place of safety period can be extended if there is a promising result or hope of locating the family. If there is no traceable information found during this place of safety period the Department of Social Service will, through the court, commit the child to a children's home, according to Zimbabwe Children's Protection and Adoption Act Chapter 33, Section 21 (1)(a). The Department of Social Services will prepare the Probation Officer's report with all the information available like place of origin, the name of the parents and medical report and siblings if available. This information is restricted for the protection of the child's privacy and confidentiality (African Charter Article 10). The Department of Social Services together with the home's responsible authority would appear in court to take an oath that they are able to take care of the said child and the judge will grant permission to the institution to take care of the said child with the court order valid for the next three years.

Also, on admission a development plan for the said child is written up. This should be drawn based on the child's needs, life situation and origin etc (African Charter on Rights and Welfare of the Children, Article 5). During these 3 years the Department of Social Services would continue to investigate the whereabouts of the child's relatives, if they are located within these 3 years the child may be reunited with the family, depending on the reasons behind the disappearance of the child from the family. If they are offensive like any element of abuse the child can only be allowed to visit for holidays or for short periods of time to give room to the department to do their investigations to establish whether the child is no longer in any form of danger (African Charter Article 16). This would also help the two parties to bond so that when the child

is finally discharged from the home, there will be some common understanding. For a child who is rejected or dumped, the Department of Social Services would try to find foster parents or organise for adoption as the institution is the last resort for childcare. During the three years of the valid committal court order, if they fail the three-year court order is reviewed according to the National Residential Child Standard of 2010 (NRCCS 2010).

In the case that both parents are deceased, and no one comes up to claim the child, normally the community would alert the police, or the Department of Social Services would in turn make the same procedures but there is no need for tracing as they would know the background of the child. Such cases would be mostly for Children categorised as alien or foreign and there are no known relatives to claim the child. In such cases, the court will review the case every three years and obtain the court order until the child is eighteen years old when they can be discharged from the institution. In some cases, the relatives might come up way after the admission of the child in the home and still, the necessary assessment is done to find out if the relatives can take care of such children. This will be to avoid children running away from their relatives due to different circumstances, such as abuse and not being accustomed to family rules and regulations. According to the Zimbabwean Constitution Chapter 4, Part 3, Article 81 (1) the children are discharged from the institution at the age of eighteen. In the case of the relatives being located or there being families who would have come up for adoption, the child can be discharged whenever possible as explained above. In the case of adoption, the Department of Social Services would do the assessment over a period, while the family would be allowed to take the child for a while so that they can get used to each other before the adoption takes place.

3.5 Types of Children's Homes

An 'institution' for children is defined as "as a group living arrangement for more than ten children, without parents or surrogate parents, in which care is provided by a much smaller number of paid adult carers. Residential care implies an organised, routine, and impersonal structure to the living arrangements for children (e.g., all children sleep, eat, and toilet at the same time) and a professional relationship, rather than a parental relationship (is fostered), between the adults and children." (Browne, 2009:1). This definition may include children in boarding schools, summer camps, prisons, and

asylum detention centres. This paper focuses mainly on residential homes in developing countries. It has been estimated that approximately 2.7 million children under eighteen years of age are living in institutional care worldwide (Petrowski, Cappa, and Gross, 2017), although the quality of available data from many countries is poor and under-reporting is a problem, as many institutions are unregistered and the children living them are not officially counted (Petrowski, Cappa, and Gross, 2017, p. 394; UNICEF, 2009, p. 19; Bunkers et al., 2014). Most children in institutions are not orphans, 50 to 90% have at least one living parent (Bunkers et al., 2014). Most children in residential care are placed there not as orphans, but due to poverty; the parents' inability to provide care, and the perception that better care and education could be provided at an institution (Bunkers et al., 2014:6-7). Children with disabilities are at a high risk of institutionalisation (Bunkers et al., 2014:7).

Models of residential care in Children's Homes are basically two, the dormitory style and family-based units. Homes could be further classified by their architectural design, either western style or traditional. Dormitory style is the conventional institutions style in which children are housed in dormitories and share communal dining and living areas, with staff undertaking a variety of domestic, administrative, and care-giving roles (Maranda, 2010). Dormitories are usually segregated by age and sex. This model deprives children of the experience of normal family life and has been associated with a poor level of psychosocial development. Family-based (Children's Villages) is a modern concept of residential care and aims to replicate a nuclear family setting where children have a constant relationship with a parental figure(s) and several siblings of varying age and sex (Maranda, 2010). The "family" lives as a unit and prepares food, eats, and performs household chores as they would in a normal home.

According to Powell et al (2004) the great majority of Zimbabwean institutions have been constructed in conventional, Western building style as required under the current regulations for the construction of children's homes, drafted during the colonial era. In several cases, however, a waiver was obtained, and rural children's homes have been built utilizing the traditional, thatched rondavel style. These are less obtrusive in rural areas and may assist the home's integration with the local community. They also allow the children to grow up in a culturally less alienating environment.

3.6 Challenges Faced by Homes

According to Freidman (2000) (cited in Moyo S, Susa R & Gudyanga E, 2015 study on Mtoko orphanage) the impact of institutionalisation on children is an acknowledgement that institutionalisation has a deep negative impact on the life of a child. Santrock (2004) further stated that institutionalisation affects children developmentally, emotionally, and psychologically. Hence, having unconditional love is a crucial element for the caregivers. Apart from this, institutions should be very short-term transitional centres where the needs of the children can be evaluated before being resettled (Santrock, 2004). In addition, there is a school of thought that says that institutionalisation is linked to developmental problems amongst children and should only be used as an absolute last resort. Institutionalisation's negative effects are revealed by the social and behavioural abnormalities portrayed by these children (Keenan, 2002). Cases of behavioural problems, inattention, hyperactivity, delays in social, emotional development and autism can further be witnessed in these children.

The potential for exploitation in care institutions is significant. Many care homes are unregulated, meaning staff is poorly trained, recruited without background checks, and unaccountable (van Doore et al., 2016). Children, who are abused, neglected, or subjected to violence have no recourse to legal or civil reparations (van Doore, 2016). The most common forms of abuse reported are physical violence such as beatings as punishment, sexual violence perpetrated by staff or peers, neglect, under nutrition, and bullying (Sérgio Pinheiro, 2006). Some of these are categorised as exploitation. A clear form of exploitation is child labour within the institutions. It is very commonly reported that children cook, clean and wash clothes in their care home, to an unacceptable degree in some places. A further form of exploitation is the trend for orphanages to recruit vulnerable children from their families as a profit-making enterprise (van Doore et al., 2016). Many orphanages in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia rely on donations and international volunteers, and children are often used as a commercial entity to attract funds and may be sent out to beg or perform on behalf of centres. In some cases, children are kept in destitute or unhealthy conditions to appeal to donors and volunteers. Evidence is already pointing to alarming irregularities, including recruitment of children for international adoption, "child laundering" through altering and forgery of records, inducement of birth parents to

relinquish children, and extortion of funds from prospective adoptive parents (Cheney & Rotabi, 2014). Additionally, poor regulations and oversight means that abuse is often rampant. There is a high risk of sexual exploitation by international volunteers because many residential care centres and tourism operators offering volunteer placements do not require police clearance reports, do not conduct background checks, and do not provide adequate supervision of volunteers when they spend time with the children (Cheney & Rotabi, 2014).

Evans (2006) postulates that children living outside of family care demonstrate a significant deficiency in sensory perception, including responses to and understanding facial emotions. Thus, their emotional reactivity is poor and cannot define some of the non-verbal communication signs given by teachers. This then negatively impacts an orphaned child's academic performance. According to Johnson, a physician cited in Robertson and Simons (2000), an orphanage is a terrible place to raise an infant or a young child. This is so because there is lack of stimulation, consistent caregivers, sub-optimal nutrition and physical or sexual abuse which all conspire to delay and sometimes prelude normal development. They further stipulate that institutionalised orphaned children fall behind in large and fine motor speech acquisition and attainment of necessary social skills. This negatively impacts the educational capabilities of the child whose physical growth is impaired.

Congregate living conditions foster the spread of diseases of multiple infectious agents which can further cripple the academic performance of these orphaned children. Gulliford (1997) identified intestinal parasites, tuberculosis, and hepatitis B, measles, and chicken pox, middle ear infections, as diseases found more commonly in institutional care settings. This increases stress and causes children to have more emotional problems or to perform worse in school academically. Institutionalisation has an impact on the self-concept of an individual. Ormrod (2000) holds that the main factors determining the formation of the self-concept of an individual are the environment as well as people with whom the individual lives. If care givers praise and love the orphaned child and again if playmates respect and give attention to the individual, he or she forms a picture of himself or herself as a desirable person, hence develops a positive self–concept. However, if on the other hand, care givers and peers reject and criticise the individual and are indifferent, this leads to a derogatory self-

picture resulting in inferiority complex. Thus, the orphaned child's academic performance is greatly affected because the child would have negative personality traits such feeling incompetent, low self-esteem and lack of confidence because of the environment he or she has been raised in. By and large, institutionalisation has dire consequences such as poor growth, emotional reactivity, deficit in IQ, social and behavioural abnormalities, physical growth only to mention a few (Ormrod, 2000). All these negatively affect the wellbeing of the orphaned children.

4.1 Opportunities for transition from Dormitories to family set-up

From a background of the challenges discussed above, there are opportunities associated with transitioning dormitories to family set-ups. The most common adverse effects that children who grow up in residential care experience include developmental delays; behavioural problems; attachment disorders; lack of life skills; institutionalisation; and difficulty forming and maintaining healthy relationships. The literature is extremely clear that residential care should be a last resort for children separated from their parents, following family support, community support, and fostering (Browne, 2017). As such, the literature strongly supports deinstitutionalisation and reintegration of families whenever possible and provision of extra support to families as the best intervention. Evidence shows that many children can recover from problems experienced in residential care when placed in family care environments, although they have incomplete catch-up compared to their never-institutionalised peers (Browne, 2017). Several studies over many years in a wide range of cultures and contexts have consistently demonstrated the positive impact family care has on children's growth and development (Faith to Action Initiative, 2014; UN, 2010). It has also illustrated the harmful effects that living outside family care can have on children (Faith to Action Initiative, 2014).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child has the right to live with his or her parents or to stay in touch with them, unless this would harm the child's development (United Nations, 1989). It also states that every child has the right to grow up in a supportive, protective, and caring environment that promotes his or her full potential. Positive child development is sometimes compromised by development-threatening child characteristics, adverse family

circumstances, or interactions between both areas. When these risky circumstances cannot be effectively addressed by appropriate outpatient support, 24-hour out-of-home placement of the child is usually considered a meaningful strategy for remediating the developmental risks (Bhatti-Sinclair and Sutcliffe 2012; Heffner et al. 2010; Pinto and Maia 2013; Vanschoonlandt et al. 2013).

Many reasons at international and national levels have called for a transition from institutionalising children to putting them into family units. Every child has the right to live in a family. And the fact that children in institutions are denied a family is a denial of a child's rights which cannot go unchecked. Sixty years of global research details the adverse impacts of residential care on the physical and emotional development of children (Bhatti-Sinclair and Sutcliffe 2012). This paper posits that, residential care can result in clinical personality disorders, growth and speech delays, and an impaired ability to re-enter society later in life. Residential care has also been shown to place children at risk of physical and sexual abuse.

Transition from Dormitories to Family set-ups creates better opportunities to deal with the challenges faced by traditional Homes given the importance of the family in child development. One promising option is to convert and enlarge orphanages into children's villages. This is not a new intervention; it has been tried in some countries in Africa (Angola, Rwanda, and Uganda) and elsewhere (Pinto and Maia 2013). There are numerous advantages to such an approach: (a) children's villages attract NGOs relatively easily; (b) economies of scale can be realised (for example, a children's clinic located in a children's village would be substantially cost-effective); (c) when situated within communities, children's villages can seek help from nearby community members in times of need; and (d) when located close to religious institutions, children's villages can strike direct partnerships with church groups, which would render the approach more sustainable (Little, 2010).

The family is profoundly important to the developmental, emotional, and cognitive growth of a child (Gold, 2013). In a normal set up children should grow in a family set up. According to Embletton et.al (2010) family encourages a holistic development of the child. The family simultaneously addresses the physical, emotional, relational, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of a child's life (Little, 2011). "Family life is where the child spends most of his or her learning time," Also family structure and consistency

give the child security and self-esteem (Embletton et al, 2010). Unfortunately, most children's homes are institutions with dormitory set up. International human rights standards provide that institutionalising children who need alternative care should be a last resort only used after care by members of the extended family, or opportunities for adoption or foster care are deemed unsuitable and not in the child's best interests.

Current dormitory styled children's homes result in over-institutionalisation, which is a problem for children in such homes. Studies by Williamson (2012) point out that a high proportion of children living in institutions suffer from some form of disability such as mild intellectual or emotional disabilities. But more than the physical conditions, the very nature of life in these institutions is troubling. Children lack privacy. New standards in 2011 raised the living space requirement per child in institutions to just 4.95 square meters and opportunities to develop a bond or trusting relationship with an adult care giver (Richard, 2002). Care workers rotate in and out and are often too overworked to provide consistent care to individual children. Life in an institution does not seem conducive to learning important life skills, whether forging human relationships, developing communication and social skills, or gaining daily coping skills that children in regular families would naturally learn, such as how to cook a meal or eat in a restaurant. According to Speight & Hoghughi (2008) the road to turning dormitory child homes into family set-ups is not any easy one, the cost includes, the transition in terms of emotional effect on the children initially involved, the administrative challenges and other related costs, but this is necessary and effort must be put on as the Bowlby Attachment Theory, explains that positive and effective attachment is encouraged by a family system. The theory argues that attachment to a parent or guardian is very important in the holistic development of the child that is, emotional, social, psychological, and physical wellbeing of the child.

Other earlier studies confirmed that in child institutions (Orphanages, Children Homes) which are dormitory styled do not offer adequate opportunities for effective attachment of children to their guardians a significant factor according to Powell, Morreira & Ngonyama (2004), resulting in limited or flawed child development for children growing up in institutions. Thus, there is need for a family set-up, which encourages meaningful attachment of children to their guardians to promote positive child development. A robust body of evidence shows that nurturing family environments are associated with

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positive outcomes for children's development (Williamson & Greenberg, 2010). A family can provide a child with love, a sense of belonging, and a lifelong connection to a community of people. Within families, children learn and participate in family and cultural traditions, have a sense of shared history, and learn important social skills that help them engage and interact as family and community members later in life.

4.2 Family Care and Better Outcomes

Foster care is also found to offer children better outcomes than what they would be expected to experience if raised in orphanages or other institutions (Hutchison, 2011). In general, the quality of foster care tends to matter. The best evidence of gains seen among institutionalised children after they were placed in foster care was reported in the Bucharest Early Intervention project, in which the quality of foster care was exceedingly high. Studies report that children in the project who were randomly assigned to foster care showed better physical and mental development – particularly children placed with foster families' at younger ages – than those who stayed in institutions (Hutchison, 2011).

Many more children remain in institutions than are adopted or placed in foster care in most countries. For them, research suggests, interventions that improve the quality of their interactions with their caregivers can be critical to their developmental outcomes. In a study of Russian Federation orphanages, interventions that encouraged caregivers to be warmer, more engaged, and more responsive was coupled with improvements in the orphanage environment to better promote such practices. After such steps were taken, children's physical and socio-emotional development improved substantially compared to children in control institutions (Guo et al, 2012). The family-based institutions are meant to solve the inadequacies of traditional orphanages. Powell et.al (2004) found in their study on children in Zimbabwe that institutional care tends to separate children from their biological families and communities and to be associated with a "regimented, depersonalised environment in which children have no opportunity to experience a caring family". This environment has negative psychological and social consequences on the children. Considering such findings, traditional institutions for the care of orphans are now regarded as a last resort. Instead, modern institutions for the care of orphans and vulnerable children

prefer the creation of family units. Nandita-Kapadia-Kundu (2006) contends that "Group foster homes provide a more humane and family like environment compared to institutional/orphanage placement. The concept of family units with a surrogate mother and siblings fosters a family like environment."

5.0 Conclusion

The study concludes that as a matter of policy, there is need to restrict the construction of new dormitory styled institutions and deregister existing dormitory styled homes which have not converted to family-based homes within a specified period. The Department of Social Services should lobby donor agencies to assist institutions in securing funding for this transition. There is a need to introduce compulsory certification of care staff employed in institutions through a process of training and examination and incorporate a maximum child-to-care-giver ratio into the regulations governing institutions. Ensure that sufficient resources are made available for the efficient processing of applications for formal foster care and adoption of infants and children.

5.1 Recommendations

Several successful examples of both formal and community fostering have been identified. If adequately promoted and supported foster-care can be an effective way of removing children from institutions and placing them in secure family settings. The main constraint to formal fostering has been the inability of the DSS to screen prospective parents and to process their applications. These constraints can be overcome by providing sufficient resources or allowing social workers outside of the department to function as Probation Officers.

The family units should not be set under one or at the same location. This is because the tag or stigma from some sections of the community like those "children from the orphanage" would persist. Rather, have homes constructed in separate locations. Even where the children's villages are in rural areas, they should be in different villages or even under different headmen or chiefs.

Though houses should be built in different locations, the houses should be in the same social status level. For example, if they are to be built in a high-density suburb, then

all should be built in the high-density suburbs to maintain the same social status and avoid conflicts. Where children are in different houses, the social service department should relax their rules and regulations to allow these children from different houses to visit each other. This is a way of promoting family values and social interactions.

The housing unit should have extra rooms for the relatives who visit the families so that the children learn the African culture of extended families. The foster parents' relatives should be free to visit this family like any other family and vice-versa. The children should be allowed also to visit the relatives of their foster parents without any restrictions or permission asked from the Department of Social Services like any other children, especially to rural areas where they would have a chance to learn the traditions and cultures of their communities.

In cases of illness, as is the norm, we should see the other family members coming in to visit the hospitals like any other relatives would. In the case of death in such families we should see their counterpart families coming in for the burial of the family member as well as other relatives would do. Even in the case of celebrations like weddings or parties, they should do it together.

The house mothers and fathers should get a salary like any other family and be encouraged to involve and train their children how to budget and buy household accessories, like any other family. This will expose the children to the day-to-day family expenses and to prepare them for life in the world.

Central distribution of commodities should be done at a very low level or be avoided altogether so that the normal home set up is maintained. If at all these administrations do exist, they should only be exposed to the foster parents and very minimally to the children. All this will be to make a normal home like any other home and minimise discrimination which might help to groom vulnerable children like any other children in the society and to avoid the children from adopting the donor syndrome.

This paper further notes that a range of alternative care options, primarily family-based, must exist to respond to children's individual needs and circumstances. This continuum of care, including both prevention and response services, is at the core of any child welfare system. The process of decreasing reliance on orphanages, ensuring quality of care, and providing a range of care options with an emphasis on family care,

requires significant investment of human and financial resources, and public support. It requires time and conviction. Investing in efforts that support families and children, such as early childhood education programs, reduces stress on parents and helps increase the likelihood that children will develop into healthy and productive members of society later in life.

Evidence from literature demonstrates that children thrive best in a family. Literature further shows that in the absence of interventions and services to strengthen the care of children within families, homes can proliferate and "pull" children from families for the wrong reasons. Parents and communities may see homes as a solution to difficult circumstances. Local governments and communities might also see this as an easier quick fix solution to the challenge of OVCs rather than investing time, human, and financial resources into strengthening families and addressing the root causes that place families at risk of separation. Homes are too frequently promoted as offering more, in a material sense, than some families can provide, without recognizing the vital role that emotional and social relationships play in a child's development. It is the latter that is found within a family setting. It is essential that factors contributing to the loss of parental care are reduced and fewer children are placed in homes. Communities can be mobilized and strengthened in ways that lead to a stronger safety net for parents, families, and their children. For example, increasing the number and support of community-based social workers who can identify, assess, and refer vulnerable children and families to appropriate services is critical. Additionally, research has shown that a combination of access to basic services, together with economic support, is fundamental to helping families stay together.

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Early Childhood Teaching and Learning in Zimbabwe – A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

The main aim of this article was to critically examine Early Childhood Education (ECD) teaching and learning provision in Zimbabwe, with the challenges and successes thereof. The approaches and focus of early learning education and provision during the three different epochs of Zimbabwe's history, which are pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial were analysed. The study used a qualitative research methodology based on document analysis and further employed historical research design to obtain data on the evolution of Early Childhood Education in Zimbabwe. The challenges and success of post-independence Early Childhood Education were presented and recommendations were given.

Key Words

Early Childhood Education, Pre-colonial, Indigenous, Wisdom traditions, Colonial, Post-independence

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1.0 Introduction

The article focuses on a qualitative critical analysis on the provision of Early Childhood Education in Zimbabwe from pre-colonial to colonial period, ending with the provision of post-independence initiatives. Since ancient times Early Childhood Education has been recognised as critical to the child`s cognitive and social development. Empirical research on human brain development has also shown that during early childhood years the human brain develops rapidly. Research has further shown that during this period the brain is most malleable and highly impressionable[13]. Cognitive development theorists like Piaget (1936: Vygotsky (1962) and many others have also similarly established that the experiences a child is exposed to in early childhood affect brain development and impacts on their brain functioning, hence influencing future learning abilities. Educational psychologists have also weighed in by adding that the early childhood period provides a critical window of opportunity for language, cognition, vision and social emotional development when the child is still able to learn and acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes very quickly with minimal efforts (Thorndike 1927; Freud 1923). Child psychologists (ibid) have also noted that early childhood is an opportune period of socialisation, where nurturing the character of a child and inculcating social norms, values and habits are easy.

Zimbabwean families have generally viewed Early Childhood Education (ECE) as a vehicle for the long-term eradication of poverty for the poor, where their children are thought to be given an equal opportunity of improving the chances of success at school. It has also been argued that ECE promotes primary school readiness and increases cost efficiency, which reduces grade repetition and dropout rates and ultimately leads to greater success in school. Furthermore, it has been argued that if ECD programmes are well managed with sound national enforcement strategies in place, they foster learning and encourage school attendance in children [14].

It is against the foregoing background that this study sought to analyse the development and importance attached to the provision of Early Childhood Education in Zimbabwe. The analysis starts off by analysing the contributions of indigenous (pre

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[13] UNESCO, 2018; Dipietro 2000

[14] Young, 2002; UNESCO, 1996

– colonial) teaching and learning philosophies and practices on early learning education in Zimbabwe. It then moves on to the colonial period and then lastly, post-independence realities.

2.0 Methodology

The research design chosen for this study was the historical research methodology. Historical research design was found appropriate because of the nature of the research which was qualitatively analysing the provision of early childhood education during three different historical epochs of Zimbabwe. Adlin (2023) states that historical research is a specific type of qualitative research which provides the author with the ability to gain meaningful insights from the past, and the possibility of looking at the past to make predictions about the future. Historical research categorises sources of information or data as primary, secondary, or tertiary. The originality of the information and its proximity to the source determine whether data is classified as primary, secondary, or tertiary. In turn, the reader can determine whether reported information is first or second hand. The latter obtains when information used simply conveys experiences and opinions of others[15].

3.0 Early Childhood Teaching and Learning in Pre-colonial Zimbabwe

The education system in Zimbabwe has been influenced by several ideological, political, historical, social, cultural, economic, as well as environmental factors. The 90 years of colonial rule that ended with independence in 1980 left legacies which have had enduring impact on the nature and orientation of the education system of Zimbabwe. Not much has been written about Indigenous forms of early childhood teaching and learning in pre-colonial Zimbabwe because of the colonial agenda which deliberately targeted the indigenous pre-colonial forms of education for eradication and extinction by regarding them as 'primitive and backward'.

In pre-colonial Africa, Zimbabwe included, education was viewed as a way of passing down a community's accumulated knowledge to the next generation for smooth transition into adult roles and, ultimately, ensure offspring and community survival and continuity. In short, education in traditional Africa was practical, purposeful and

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[15] Jovita, J. Tan 2015

functional. It taught the young how to manage their environment and imparted critical survival skills, including farming, hunting, fishing, food preparation and preservation, and how to construct dwellings and run homes[16].

The principal methods used to process and propagate knowledge production, acquisition and dissemination were dialogue and collaboration. The acquisition of knowledge required learners to be embedded in their communities where they attained essential skills and socialised as active participants. Hence, from this perspective, learning was conceived as a form of social interaction taking place within a context where active participation was essential for effective acquisition of knowledge, mores and vocational skills required for learners towards community development[17]. The education of children was a community affair. The child belonged to the whole community and thus, every adult was responsible over the socialisation of the child, passing on practices, mores and values to the children.

Apart from passing on knowledge in these 'on the job' training ways, the Africans also had a wisdom tradition which passed relevant education to the young through proverbs, idioms, rituals, beliefs, mythical folktales and folksongs, community work songs, poetry, art symbols as well as many other informal ways of educating [18].

Okpewo (1985) observed that the narration of stories must have been one of the peak achievements in the development of communication in non-literate societies in Africa. Using the 'wit' of the narrative genius and the vitality of the songs of the group, folktales spoke directly to and advised the community. These were pivotal in the socio-economic induction of the young and impart important values of holding the community together.

In most of the indigenous communities, teaching and learning were informed by the environment in such a way that the learning process became directly linked to the nature and pattern of work in the society. Rodney (1983:375), cites a good example of children from the Bemba community who "by the age of six could name fifty to sixty species of tree plants without hesitation, but they knew very little about ornamental flowers …" The young children were able to name the trees because knowledge of

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[16] Nhundu, 1995
[17] Lauzon, 1999
[18] Nhundu, 1995; Matsika, 2014

trees was a necessity in an agricultural community that often-employed slash-and-burn techniques.

In Zimbabwe, Christian missionary learning institutions acted in cohorts with British formal education to deliberately undermine and debase the wisdom traditions and indigenous ways and purposes of education through cultural imperialism, thereby despising and repudiating the values of the colonised and undermining their cultures. These cultural strategies employed by colonisers were subtle and more effective than overt forms of colonial control and subjugation, such as policing and the legal system because they fostered inferiority complex in the colonised while, inadvertently, embracing Eurocentric ways of being[19].

3.1 Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) in Colonial Zimbabwe

As attested above, the colonial education system was used by the white minority population as a tool of domination and to systematically subjugate the majority African population and deprive them of their right to education. In Zimbabwe and elsewhere, the history of colonised was shaped through *social abjection*[20]*.* Theirs was a deliberate early childhood pedagogy that was designed to accomplish both theoretical and practical disconnection of African child from the world of life.

Christian missionary education institutions colluded with British formal education and change the purpose of education by using cultural technologies of domination which created social discontinuities. These strategies made school knowledge accessible only to neophytes and focused on the provision of literary training, teaching of crafts, agriculture, and some semblance of technical training to meet extant labour needs of the colonial administration[21].   Wa Thiong'o (1986) and Achebe (2000) add that one of the main objectives of colonialism, especially via its Christian missionary institutions of education, was to destroy as much as possible the psycho-cultural being of the Africans.

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[19] Kallaway, 1984

[20] "Social abjection" is associated with a process where exclusion is elected as a way of constituting power for the sole benefit of the elite or ruling class.
[21] Kallaway, 1984; Lugard,1922

Abdi (2012) concurs with the arguments above by positing that the discontinuities and annihilation of the psycho-cultural being of Africans, which resulted in the production of social abjection during Zimbabwe's colonial period (1890–1980) were to ensure that schools served as a key means of Christian conversion. Accordingly, colonial education was supposedly designed to help the colonized by bringing 'light' and 'civility' to perceived 'barbaric' communities. From early learning onwards, Christian missionary was designed to foster the belief that the African learner's lifeworld was myopic and superstitious. Upon the implanting and taking root of this belief, the colonial school became a space and tool for deliberate social uprooting of the African child[22].

Abdi (2009) further noted that the process of colonialism saw indigenous ways of learning rooted in the cultural history of practice of oral societies being regarded as stagnated in the past and lacking innovative alternatives that would make them attractive and acceptable in the new modalities of colonial relationships. The principal objectives of colonial pedagogy cultural dislodgment, othering, epistemological domination, and implanting mediocrity in the African child[23].

In later schooling, Rodney (1983:380) described the colonial schooling system as an "education for subordination, exploitation, the creation of mental confusion and the development of underdevelopment". The situation, according to Marechera (1980), was made worse by the fact that the social abjection that learners experienced emerged as a manifestation of the overbearing hegemonic relations, narratives, and institutions of late modernity that were brought into Zimbabwe by British imperial colonial rule—and were decided for the learners in their absence.

By the 1970s the Rhodesian government had been employing Black women as domestic workers. Some of whom had young children. In response to the need for childcare for these increasing numbers of children and free their parents for domestic work, the government made deliberate attempts to establish early learning programmes under two sets of colonial government regulations. The first was the Child

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[22] Ngugi wa Thiongo, 1986
[23] Shizha & Kariwo, 2011; Terreblanche, 2014

Protection and Adoption Regulations of 1972 which made provision for the establishment of Early Childhood Education in the form of nursery schools, pre-schools, and crèches. The Ministry of Education was not linked to these Early Learning centres for the African children and there was no deliberate educational dimension since the provision was not guided by a curriculum[24].

However, the Child Protection and Adoption Regulations of 1972 only served a paediatric function compared to the Nursery School regulations of 1973 which were established for White children and provided them with significant early learning advantages. For example, while the 1972 regulations for Black education served a paediatric function, the 1973 regulations for White education served a pedagogic function, which promoted and buttressed social and economic racial divide by providing White children with a solid foundation for their future development[25].

3.2 Early Childhood Development in Post-independence Zimbabwe

3.2.1 Focus on Equality

Pursuant to the attainment of political independence in Zimbabwe educational provision emerged as the most urgent Government strategy to address the inherited socio-economic inequalities which had favoured the minority White population[26]. Inequalities of education and land distribution had been the two most compelling reasons for the many youths who left to fight in the war of Zimbabwe's liberation. In recognition of these war rallying issues for the majority Black population, the newly independent Zimbabwe government in 1980 declared education as a basic human right. It regarded education as one of the vital strategies not only to redress the racial imbalances that existed, but also to achieve scientific and industrial progress. Emphasis was placed on the provision of infrastructure for schools and health services in geographical areas and among social groups that had been marginalized throughout the colonial era[27].

Early Childhood Education (ECE) was declared a basic human right, just like all the other forms of education in Zimbabwe, leading to a mushrooming of private Early

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[24] Nhundu and Chung, (forthcoming)
[25] ibid
[26] ibid
[27] Nhundu and Chung, (forthcoming)

Learning Centres. But the real transformation in Early Learning commenced in 1982 following the repeal of the 1972 Child Protection and Adoption Regulations and the Nursery School Regulations of 1973[28]. It is worth noting that the new Early Learning regulations were introduced by the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs and not the Ministry of Education.

The mushrooming of early learning centres was mainly in the urban area, 4000 of them were registered that year[29]. These Early Learning Centres were known by various names like crèches, nursery schools, day care centres, kindergartens and pre-schools and served children three years old or less. Most of these urban Early Learning Centres were private and had children from working parents who saw them as a relief strategy since taking up employment when the socioeconomic tide had opened to Blacks. In rural areas, on the other hand, Early Learning Centres were community-based programmes provided by local communities, which built and furnished the centres, paid teachers, and also provided equipment and contributed to infrastructure development. Since most of the communities were poor, most of these centres operated under trees and were run by untrained staff[30].

In 1988, the provision of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Zimbabwe was significantly enhanced when it was transferred from the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs to the Zimbabwe Ministry of Education[31]. This did not only mean that ECE now operated under a new Ministry, but more significantly, it was Government acknowledgement that Early Learning and care was indeed integral to the formal education system. Following the migration, the Ministry of Education soon developed a policy framework that guided the operations of Early Childhood Education Centres run by a hotch-potch of stakeholders, including private providers, NGOs, church groups local communities and quasi state institutions such as urban and rural councils and governing authorities.

The downside to the above caretaker approach to early childhood education was that it operated informally without a curriculum until 2004 when an Early Childhood Development (ECD) curriculum was adopted following the recommendations of the

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[28] Ministry of Education, 2006
[29] Nhundu and Chung, (forthcoming)
[30] Samkange, 2016
[31] Ministry of Education, 2006

1999 Nziramasanga Commission, which had observed that a majority of children, especially those from rural and poor areas had no access to early learning. Therefore, the Commission recommended the introduction of universal early learning programmes to increase access and provide every child equal opportunity. Accordingly, the Commission argued that Early Childhood Development Education should serve as a foundation on which to anchor basic national principles and philosophy of Zimbabwe[32].

The 2004 policy which was then known as the National Early Childhood Development (NECD) Policy offered guidelines for the implementation of Early Childhood Development services as recommended by the Nziramasanga Commission. According to the NECD Policy, ECD was considered an integral part of the formal primary education system and, hence, made it mandatory for public primary schools to provide an annex of at least one ECD-B class catering for 4- to 5-year-olds from 2005. The policy also mandated schools to attach an additional class, ECD-A for children aged between 3 and 4 years beginning 2006. The current provision mandates all primary schools to provide ECD A and B, so that children are eligible to continue to the Grade 1 primary school level on completion of ECD B[33].

4.0 Challenges

The main educational goal of post-independence Zimbabwe was to provide uninhibited opportunities to all children to an inclusive education regardless of colour, age, disability or creed. In this, the government had great success as exemplified in massive quantitative growth depicted in the following statistics.

Pre- and Post-Independence Enrolment in Educational Institutions

	1974	**1979**	**1981**	**1983**
Primary	836,500	892,651	1,680,143	2,164,118
Secondary	66,458	72,335	144,735	188,467
College	933	1,617	2,525	3,255

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[32] Nziramasanga,1999
[33] MoPSE, 2023

| **Total** | 903,891 | 966,603 | 1,827,403 | 2,355,840 |

Source: Government of Zimbabwe, "Monthly Digest "Parliamentary Debates," August 3, 1983

Nevertheless, although there was equality of opportunity to attend school, there was no equality regarding access to the same quality of education, though so freely provided to the formerly education-starved Black masses. Albeit the advent of Independence and the promulgation of the new policy on access to education, the colonial era legacy of racial inequality simply transformed to even a wider divide between social classes and between urban and rural children. While some Black families had moved into former white residential areas and were now accessing privileged former white schools with superior learning facilities and infrastructure, while the majority remained in overcrowded schools in poor urban neighbourhoods and rural communities[34].

In regard to Early Childhood Education, although the Ministry of Education had given much of the needed focus to it before the recommendations of the Nziramasanga Commission, the ECD programme has had drawbacks from many challenges which include, but are not limited to, lack of uniform curriculum, vague policy models, inadequate facilities and resources, inability to retain qualified teachers and many others.[35]

4.1 Shortage of ECD Teachers

The post-independence massive expansion of education in Zimbabwe was done without giving due regard to the corresponding availability of teachers. The shortage of qualified early childhood education teachers was worse than that of the other sectors of the education system, yet the government of Zimbabwe had instituted the Zimbabwe Integrated Teacher Education Course (ZINTEC) model of teacher education to fast track the provision of trained teachers. There were no such corresponding initiatives for ECD teacher education. Most of the ECD centres were run with teachers who neither had training nor the necessary professional early

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[34] Ndlovu, 2013
[35] Nhundu and Chung, (forthcoming)

learning experience. According to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) most teachers in early childhood education classes are still paraprofessionals or primary school teachers who have not been trained to cater for the development of toddlers and preschoolers. In most cases, these teachers face the challenge of large classes of children with diverse needs (MoPSE, 2023).

4.2 Curriculum Challenges

ECD centres which continued to multiply in numbers in Zimbabwe since 2004 have mostly been privately owned and lacked uniform curriculum. The UNESCO (2006) country report observed that although the Ministry of Education Sport and Culture, championed the development of ECD programmes, it was only able to provide a policy framework that guided the operations of ECD centres which were predominantly run by diverse stakeholders outside the Ministry. When an Early Learning Module was later provided for by MoPSE, the untrained and paraprofessional ECD teachers were and are still faced with overcrowded classrooms (MoPSE, 2023).

MoPSE has provided learning areas for ECD curriculum guidance, but the chosen learning areas are still lope sided towards the production of academics as emphasis is still theory based and less on practical and innovative skills.

4.3 Funding and Resources

The Education Act of 1987 was amended in 1991 because of prevailing adverse socio-economic environment. The amendment further introduced school fees at the primary school level, which had been tuition-free since independence. The reversal of the principle of free and compulsory primary education introduced by the 1987 Act had adverse consequences on access to ECE for poorer families that were forced to keep the younger children playing at home and allow their older siblings to attend school.

Apart from challenges which came with the Amendments, the employment in ECE of untrained teachers and paraprofessionals and the failure to provide teachers with pre-requisite tools and learning resources compounded problems for the implementation of early learning programmes. According to Bukaliya R and Mubika A (2012), teachers have the capacity to nurture and support the development of young children and to fully implement the early learning curriculum, provided funding and resources for early

learning are available. Important factors which contribute to the successful implementation of early learning programmes include learning resources and materials, teacher training and staff development, feeding and monitoring and evaluation of Early Learning programmes. For disabled children, UNESCO (2018) further notes that they require access to additional learning opportunities and/or specialized services that are costly and unaffordable to many schools and ECD education providers.

Several studies conducted in Zimbabwe have singled out lack of resources as a key factor that hinders progress toward the successful implementation of the ECD programme[36]. These findings have not been assuaged by the Nziramasanga Commission's Report which recommended cooperation between government and local communities as a strategy to enhance ECD implementation by providing adequate facilities and resources for ECD education. Despite the envisaged cooperation, there are still inadequate and inappropriate classrooms and furniture for use by the ECD A and B pupils who are learning in classes attached to existing traditional primary schools.

Disappointingly, one of the austerity measures announced by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development in the 2018 budget statement was to reduce funding for ECD. Simultaneously the plight of early childhood learners was also worsened by the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic which saw a lot of workers being laid off during lockdowns, the economic situation deteriorating and high inflation worsening. This situation has resulted in increasingly widespread poverty and has left many children vulnerable and out of school, especially ECD children`.

4.4 Accessibility

Many researchers have cited accessibility as one of the factors that hinder the ability of young children to access ECD programmes, especially the poor and those living with disabilities. Key factors revealed include inappropriate infrastructure, environmental setup, distance travelled, appropriateness of equipment and furniture,

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[36] These studies include those by Magwaya et al. (2016), Samkange (2017), Chikwiri and Musiyiwa (2017) and Moyo et al. (2012)

and affordability in terms of cost[37]. Similarly, the findings of the Nziramasanga (1999) Commission revealed that most young children in Zimbabwe, particularly those in rural, remote and poor areas could not access ECD services because of some of the same hindrances.

While the Director's Circular Minute Number 12, 2005 and the Annual Statistical Report of 2012 addressed the distance factor by directing that no children should walk more than 5km to school, a study by Chikwiri and Musiyiwa (2017) revealed that many ECD children in rural areas of Zimbabwe still walk far longer distances than the stipulated 5km. Some walk as much as 6km to 20km one way.

5.0 Conclusions

Early Childhood and the ECD A and B programmes in Zimbabwe have had positive impact on the education system amid a plethora of challenges that are still being faced. Below are some of the successes:

i.   Children who attend ECD classes adapt easily to classroom procedures and learn with greater ease.

ii. There has been a noticed improved pass rate in subsequent grades.

iii. Pupils who have attended ECD adapt to classroom procedures quickly since they would have been exposed to some of the procedures during ECD A

iv. There has been a reduced educational expenditure because of little or no need for remedial action.

v.   The introduction of the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) project in 2000 as a demand led initiative provided financial grants to communities to keep vulnerable children in school.

vi. BEAM support has improved access to early learning by vulnerable children and those with disabilities. Such early learning opportunities have become a tool for the promotion of social equity and inclusion[38].

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[37] Bukaliya, 2012; Sibanda, 2018.
[38] MoPSE 2023

6.0 Recommendations

- MoPSE must consider developing National Early Learning Standards for all early learning teaching and learning providers and put in place enforcement strategies.

- There is urgent need to improve the provision of and access to quality ECD teaching and learning which has been adversely affected by high teacher-pupil ratio and unavailability of adequate human, material, and financial resources.

- Provide adequate and qualified teachers who have essential skills in early learning.

- Provide continuous review of the teacher education curriculum and teacher support.

- Enforce provision of age-appropriate infrastructure, play spaces, learning materials and equipment by all providers.

- Provide for special needs by timely assessment and appropriate placement of learners with disabilities.

- Integrate 21st century skills, e-learning, digital and financial literacy in the early learning curriculum which are in line with Vision 2030.

- The ECD curriculum must include learning areas which teach children productive and entrepreneurial skills.

- Prioritise on technologically driven science education for ECD teachers in their training.

- Enforce diversity and inclusivity in early learning institutions.

- Increase rural and poor community ECD centres to meet the 2 kilometres radius requirement.

7.0 Conclusion

This article has argued that ECD education provision and implementation has been nationally embraced as an indispensable tool for quality education in Zimbabwe. It is evident that while the challenges mitigating against access to quality early childhood education in Zimbabwe today are many and varied, the willingness on the part of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) to fight on is commendable.

But zeal alone is not enough, more still needs to be done if early childhood education is to meet the envisioned standards of Vision 2030.

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Academic dishonesty, a cancer devouring academia: A Case Study of Academic Dishonesty at Two Zimbabwean Universities.

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Abstract

Academic dishonesty has dominated academia for a long time with researchers defining it, identifying its causes, forms, and probable ways of reducing or stopping it. The outbreak of COVID-19 saw many institutions of higher learning adopt technology in their teaching and learning which brought about new forms of academic dishonesty. This study aims to understand the perceptions and views of students (n=6) from two different universities in Zimbabwe and writers (n=2) about practicing academic dishonesty when writing their Bachelor dissertations. This qualitative study adopted an explanatory case study research design. Interviews were mainly used for data collection and data was analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen phenomenological data analysis process. The study results showed that students practice academic dishonesty when writing their dissertations by manipulating the plagiarism check index, ghost writing, and spousal academic-based dishonesty. The students also gave reasons for practicing academic dishonesty, and the flaws of academic dishonesty. The recommendations of the study are varied but what stands out most is for academic systems to come up with a system that may do away with the current structure of dissertation writing.

Keywords: academic dishonesty, dissertation, ghost writing, plagiarism reduction, spousal academic dishonesty

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1.1 Introduction

There is evidence locally and internationally that university students practice academic dishonesty that is threatening institutions' integrity (Warinda, 2016). Many authors have defined academic dishonesty (Akakandelwa, Jain, & Wamundila, 2013; Bachore, 2016; Marshall & Vernon, 2017; Sayed & Lento, 2015; Thomas & De Bruin, 2015) but there is no universally accepted definition. For this research paper, a working definition was provided by Northern Illinois University (NIU). "Academic dishonesty refers to committing or contributing to dishonest acts by those engaged in teaching, learning, research, and related academic activities …" (Cizek, 2003; Whitley, Jr. & Keith-Spiegel, 2002 as cited by NIU, 2022).

Academic dishonesty may be intentional or unintentional, basically leading to a violation or breach of academic integrity. It is important to state that academic dishonesty is not practiced by students alone, but also includes all those in academia including lecturers and researchers. The prevalence of academic dishonesty by students is alarming (Skshidlevsky, 2022). Regarding students' academic dishonesty, some studies have found that some students do not know what constitutes academic dishonesty (De Lambert, Ellen, & Taylor, 2003) and academic integrity (Locquiano & Ives, 2020) and this may be linked to institutions failing to educate their students in that regard (Adele & De Bruin, 2012). Some studies refute this argument stating that even if students are aware of their institutions' academic dishonesty policies and may think twice before doing it (Warinda, 2016) they are likely to do it because they may have done it before at high school hence it has become a culture (Abel, Sima, Shavega, & Warinda, 2016). Although some students tend to be aware of the unethical nature of academic dishonesty, they would still practice it (Hasri, Supar, Azman, Sharip, & Yamin, 2022).

Some studies have shown that demographic variables have no relationship with the practice of academic dishonesty (Bennett, 2005; Warinda & Muchenje, 2013), although Hasri, et al. (2022) found that more female students admitted to having practiced academic dishonesty than males. There is also no correlation between incidences of academic dishonesty and age (Hasri, et al., 2022) although there is a general belief in the literature that younger students tend to practice it more than older ones.

2.1 Perpetrators of academic dishonesty and their reasons

Academic dishonesty is practiced by many in academia, but several studies have focused on students in high schools and tertiary institutions (Bachore, 2016; Kasayira, Musingarabwi, Nyanhongo, Chipandambira, & Sodi, 2007; Miranda & Freire, 2011; Sayed & Lento, 2015; Skshidlevsky, 2022). A study by Lin and Wen (2007) showed that freshmen practiced more academic dishonesty behaviors than other classes. Similarly, Warinda (2016) and Warinda and Muchenje (2013) found that full-time students, who are mostly young and straight from high school tended to practice academic dishonesty in comparison to part-time and older students. Working students were also found to practice academic dishonesty in courses they perceived as challenging (Premeaux, 2005).

The reasons for practicing academic dishonesty provided for in the literature vary from study to study. Students tend to practice academic dishonesty due to time management pressures, the difficulty of tests, pressure to get good grades (Bachore, 2016), and also, they believe that their friends also do the same (Hasri, et. al., 2022). Although some studies have shown that students are motivated to cheat to get better grades (Kasayira, et al., 2007), Warinda and Muchenje (2013) found that the main reason was to avoid failing the course. Failure to prepare enough for the exam or test is also another major reason for practicing academic dishonesty (Tsekea, Zivanai, & Madziko, 2021). The social environment, especially in Zimbabwe, where society is a collectivist one, promotes teamwork and mutual assistance. The group orientation supersedes individualism, where individuals are expected to look after themselves, whereas in Zimbabwe there is a propensity for students to assist others academically. But this is not unique to Zimbabwe, a Taiwanese study found that social pressure to assist or help others was one of the major reasons for practicing academic dishonesty (Lin & Wen, 2007).

Some students practice academic dishonesty because they consider themselves academically challenged (Warinda, 2016). Added to this are general extrinsic motivations (good salaries, up-scale lifestyle, etc.) that students have for future lucrative job opportunities (Locquiano & Ives, 2020) if they graduate, hence the desire and temptation to practice academic dishonesty. Some students did not view academic dishonesty as a bad practice (Warinda & Muchenje, 2013), but considered

it a part of the education process and system. Some students have normalized academic dishonesty (Miranda & Freire, 2011) such that the zeal to stop the practice becomes unthinkable and difficult. McCabe, Trevino, and Butterfield (2001) add that the failure of institutions, particularly faculties to discourage and dissuade academic dishonesty practices justifies students' continuance in practicing it. Some students have noted that institutions are not strict in addressing these cases of academic dishonesty, hence they continue to practice it. Students who practiced academic dishonesty did not want to be known by their friends as they would lose respect in their eyes (Warinda & Muchenje, 2013).

2.2 Forms of academic dishonesty

Literature is awash with different forms of academic dishonesty and these seem to be changing over time. The proliferation of technology and the recent outbreak of COVID-19 has witnessed new forms of academic dishonesty. This is so because most institutions of higher learning migrated to online learning to ensure the continuation of the learning process (Hasri, et al., 2022).

Students tended to practice academic dishonesty by helping a student with an assignment, copying other students' assignments, giving another student answers in an exam, (Lin & Wen, 2007; Warinda, 2016), submitting an assignment written by someone else, and not giving credit to a published source (Bachore, 2016) and having the exam question in advance (Kasayira, et al., 2007). Exchanging answer sheets in an exam is mostly done when friends sit next to each other (Warinda, 2016) and some institutions are now addressing this through a computer-generated sitting plan.

Male lecturers in institutions of higher learning tend to practice academic dishonesty by inappropriately assisting female students (Kasayira, et al., 2007) or by leaking an exam paper and giving additional reading material (Chireshe, 2014). This will in turn generate a ripple effect with male students practicing academic dishonesty openly in the full glare of the said lecturers knowing that they will not report them for fear of being exposed for their inappropriate conduct with female learners. They thus turn a blind eye to those who practice academic dishonesty (Chireshe, 2014). It will be coming to a question of who will police who, when the custodians (lecturers) of the policies are complicit in practicing academic dishonesty (Kasayira, et al., 2007). It is not only a

case of lecturers assisting female students as the students themselves write an assignment for their partners (Chireshe, 2014). Some lecturers' unfair assessment of students' work may push students to practice academic dishonesty (Tseakea, et al., 2021) as evidenced by giving different marks for the same work written by two or more students (Chireshe, 2014).

Zimba and Gasparyan noted that many students' forms of academic dishonesty are mostly plagiarism. The authors noted that students and other writers conduct the following ethical misconduct; "plagiarism of ideas, direct (verbatim) copying, paraphragiarism, text recycling, translational plagiarism, plagiarism of graphics, and plagiarism with citation manipulation, and compound plagiarism" (Zimba & Gasparyan, 2021, p. 134)

Increased use of technology in today's world of academia has led students to practice academic dishonesty such as the use of unauthorized material during an exam, the use of another student's work, and not properly referencing information (Sayed & Lento, 2015). Some students practice academic dishonesty by smuggling a cellular phone into the exam and texting a person outside the exam room for answers (Chen, Long, Liu, Wang, Wang, & Zhang, 2020). Another form of academic dishonesty that has recently surfaced especially in Zimbabwe is ghostwriting. This is whereby students subcontract someone to write an academic paper (assignment, thesis, dissertation) for a fee on their behalf and submit it as their own (Tseakea, et al., 2021). Whereas plagiarism may involve copying a text without consent, ghostwriting is done intentionally and willingly with ghostwriters writing a paper so that it can be attributed to another person (Bosch & Ross, 2012).

2.2 Reducing Prevalence of Academic Dishonesty

Reducing or even stopping outrightly the prevalence of academic dishonesty is a challenge and many scholars have provided sound suggestions. Abel, et al. (2020) suggested that it may be advisable for institutions of higher learning to offer a compulsory academic ethics course to make students aware of academic dishonesty and how it may affect them. Universities may also engage external examiners (Kasayira, et al., 2007), change assessment methods, change 'banks of questions' frequently, strengthen internal quality assurance systems, and have seminars for

lecturers on academic dishonesty policies (Abel, et al., 2020). Although some researchers have called for the imposition of stiff penalties (Chireshe, 2014), making students aware of the policies and consequences, and that it is unethical to conduct (Chen, et al., 2020), students continue to practice it.

Academic dishonesty may be reduced by informing students of the extrinsic rewards or punishment open to them if they practice it. Locquiano and Ives (2020) proposed that it may help reduce incidences of academic dishonesty if students are made aware that practicing it may compromise their career prospects, affect their social standing, and result in time and money lost through studying and paying fees.

3.1 The Purpose of Study

The purpose of this explanatory case study research design is to seek and get an understanding of the nature of current academic dishonesty practices at two universities as shared by recent graduate students and professional writers in two cities. The purpose is to explore their perceptions, worldviews, and beliefs about academic dishonesty at tertiary institutions. The explanatory case also sought to gain an insightful understanding and explanation of the uniqueness of the academic dishonesty practice. The following research questions have guided this explanatory case study research:

1. How and why do university students practice academic dishonesty during their studies?

2. What are the perceptions, worldviews, and beliefs that university students hold and have about academic dishonesty?

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Research Design

This qualitative research study utilized an explanatory case study research design. This specific explanatory case study research design sought to answer the questions 'how' or 'why' with little control over the academic dishonesty practiced by the students. The explanatory case study research design has been used to gain new insights into academic dishonesty in institutions of learning in Zimbabwe's two

universities. I was interested in discovering new ideas and also in increasing new knowledge (Burns & Groove, 2001) of academic dishonesty.

Academic dishonesty in institutions of higher learning may affect the reputation of institutions. Participants were selected using purposive sampling (Maxwell, 2013) focusing on those students who admitted to having practiced academic dishonesty. "The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for the study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (Patton, 1990; 169). Using the explanatory case study research design, enabled the researcher to understand various types, examples, and reasons why students practice academic dishonesty.

3.2.2 Participants

Through the purposive sampling method, eight participants were selected (3 from each university and 2 writers from two cities). Participants consisted of two male writers, two male students, and four female students. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select students who engaged in academic dishonesty and also writers who have helped students practice it. At the time of data collection, the six students were fully registered by their respective universities. All eight participants willingly took part in the research study after they were informed that there would be no compensation for participating in the study. For their privacy and anonymity, pseudonyms were used to identify all the participants and their respective universities and cities they came from.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of participants (n=8)

Name	Gender	Age Group	Designation	Location	Level of study
Sean	Male	41-45	Writer	City 1	Not specified
John	Male	35-40	Writer	City 2	Not specified
Charity	Female	31-35	Student	University 1	Bachelors
Adella	Female	31-35	Student	University 1	Bachelors
Brian	Male	36-40	Student	University 1	Bachelors
Chloe	Female	26-30	Student	University 2	Bachelors

Portia	Female	21-25	Student	University 2	Diploma
Ben	Male	31-35	Student	University 2	Bachelors

3.2.3 Data Collection

After the completion of the consent form by the participants, data were collected mainly through interviews. In addition to the information provided on the consent form, the researcher also explained the nature and purpose of the study. Initially, a total of eight students agreed to participate. Two of the students discontinued partaking in the research process and subsequently, their recordings and transcripts were destroyed. The interviews done were to gather from the participants the nature, process, types, and reasons for engaging in academic dishonesty. Interviews were conducted mainly in the English language with some students responding in the local Shona language and resultantly translated into the English language.

3.2.4 Data Analysis

The explanatory case study research design seeks to answer the question of how and why academic dishonesty happens, and what are the current forms of the practice. To answer these questions, I used the following steps in analyzing the data, popularly used in phenomenological data analysis. The idea was to search for patterns in the data transcripts to explain why the patterns exist (Bernard, 2013) and also at the same time draw meanings and relationships in the data explaining why and how students practice academic dishonesty. Hycner (1985) provided a detailed step-by-step qualitative analysis of data that has been adopted widely by other scholars. The process of data analysis was done except for the second stage.

- Transcription
- Bracketing and the phenomenological reduction
- Listening to the interview for a sense of the whole
- Delineating units of the general meaning
- Delineating units of meaning relevant to the research question
- Training independent judges to verify the units of relevant meaning
- Eliminating redundancies

– Clustering units of relevant meaning

– Determining themes from clusters of meaning

– Return to the participant with the summary and themes: Conducting a second interview

– Modifying themes and summary

– Identifying general and unique themes for all the interviews

– Contextualization of themes

Composite summary

In analyzing data, and going through the transcripts, I did not engage in bracketing as someone who has not practiced academic dishonesty knowingly. In coming up with the composite summary, I captured the relevant units that cut across the participants and came up with themes for all the interviews conducted.

4.1 Findings

The study investigated academic dishonesty practiced at two universities in two different towns. During the time of research, student participants were registered and currently studying at the respective two universities, writing their dissertations. All six participants stated that they had practiced academic dishonesty in many forms and for varied reasons. Of the six student participants, four of them stated that they practiced academic dishonesty on purpose while two stated that they did not do it on purpose.

4.1.1 Types of academic dishonesty

Manipulating the Plagiarism Check Percentage

One of the most shocking findings from this study was the presence of an academic official at University 1 who helped students practice academic dishonesty. After having written their dissertation, the students are supposed to submit an electronic copy of the work, and then the report is sent directly to the academic affairs. Students stated that if the similarity index is high (above 30%, which is not accepted by the university), they would then ask someone within the university to fix that for them. The students said that they had never met the person, but would send a message to have the similarity index reduced to which

the person would ask the student to send money to a certain number and a copy of the dissertation. Adella and Brian admitted to having practiced academic dishonesty in this manner. At the time of writing, the total cost was US$50. Adella had this to say:

> *I did send my dissertation for an anti-plagiarism check and the similarity index was 54%. That is when I heard of this guy. I could not afford to fail, so I had to do it. Losing $50 is nothing compared to failing the course*

Turnitin Originality Report

turnitin Turnitin Originality Report

Strategies employed to improve pass rate ... by

From BED Dissertation 20   (BED Education 20)

Similarity Index	Similarity by Source	
12%	Internet Sources:	8%
	Publications:	2%
	Student Papers:	9%

Processed on   -May-20   :46 PM SAST
ID: 3198
Word Count: 1 174

sources:
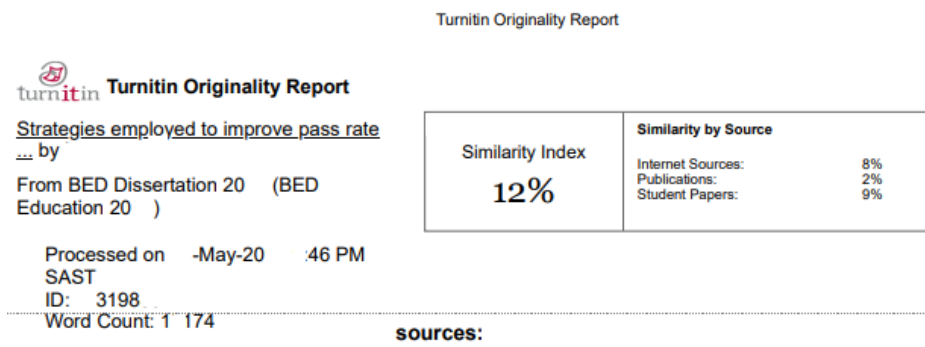
*Picture 1: A screenshot of the reduced anti-plagiarism report*

Adella stated that she knew other three students who had also paid the university official to have their similarity index for plagiarism reduced. After, sending the money, the students would normally wait for about three hours to receive the confirmation that the similarity index had been fixed. After getting the message, the students said that they would then send the dissertation via the official system and get the report that the similarity index was at an acceptable level.

The researcher asked for the cellphone number of the person within the university who did the practice but failed to reach out. The number was not reachable and could not process the Ecocash payment system. After having failed to reach him, Adella told me that the person keeps changing numbers for that particular purpose if he suspects that something is fishy.

Ghost-writing

Another finding from the study was that students would ask professional writers to write for them and this form of academic dishonesty is called ghost writing. Charity from University 1 and Chloe and Portia from University 2 stated that they asked professional writers from town to write for them. This finding was from the two

writers and three students. The students stated that they asked someone to write for them because they were afraid to fail, so they wanted to make sure they got the best from the professional writers. They said that they obtained the contact details of the writers from friends and also from Facebook. Below is a screenshot Portia had with the said writers.
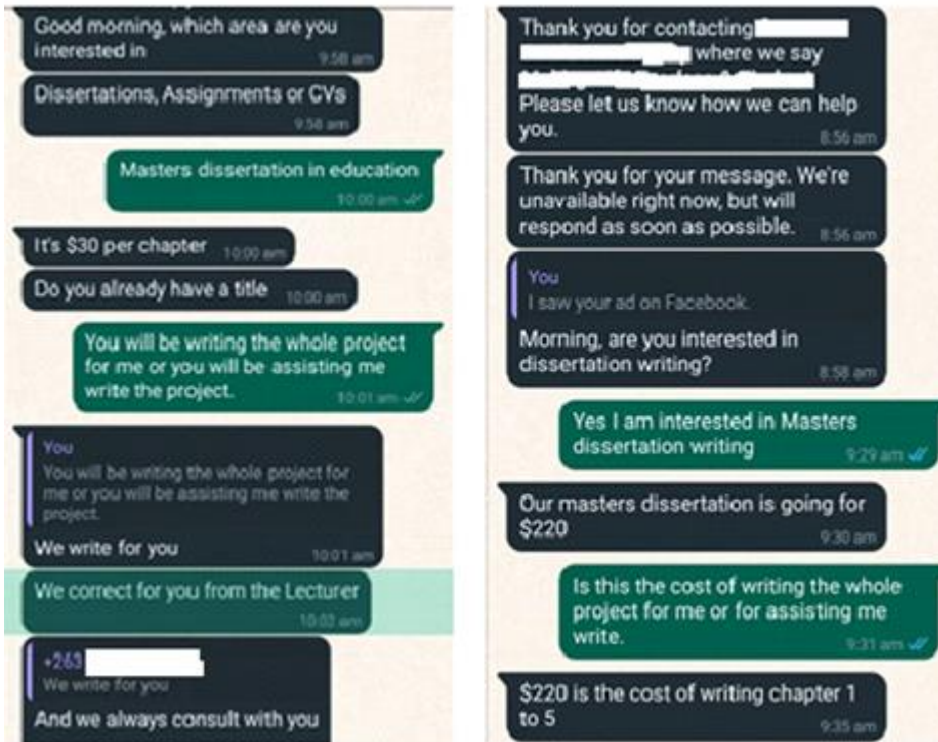
Picture 1: A screenshot showing the communication Portia had with the writers

As for the reasons why, she subcontracts writers to write on her behalf, Portia had this to say:

> I am just afraid to fail and that is why I ask someone to write my dissertation. I cannot say I am dull, but I just do it to make sure that I pass. Of course, I do read it and ask for clarification from the writer before I submit the work. Most students do it, so why not me?

Portia went on to show me the communication she had with at least three professional writers (Picture 1, above, and Picture 2, below). Since companies were not part of the research process and were not contacted, possible identifiers have been redacted from the communication process. The advert posted its services that said they offer "support services and supervision" in the writing process that also included "Reducing

Turnitin index" among many others. But it is clear from the communication screenshots that the writers stated that they would be writing the dissertation themselves.

Picture 2: A screenshot of services offered (to the left) by the companies and communication between Portia and the representative (to the right)

In addition to the communication messages that I got from the student participants, I managed to interview the two writer participants in the two cities, and they stated that they write for students for money. They stated that they could not find employment, and hence had to devise ways and means of survival, and ghost writing was a better alternative than, say engaging in criminal activities. The writers stated that there is no fixed charge for writing the dissertation, but that this depends on how they view the student. John had this to say about their operations:

> *Normally the student brings a topic approved by their university. If we have a dissertation in our archives that is similar, I just work it out make changes, and give it to the student. It is business, my brother. I normally look at the dress of the student and try to 'measure' if s/he can pay handsomely. Some pay as high as US$400 with some as little as US$150.*

Sean stated that normally the charges have to do with the nature of the topic as some topics require a lot of work. He added that if there is a lot of explaining to the student

on the nature of the dissertation, then the cost will be high. These writers also have anti-plagiarism checks and ensure that their 'customers' pass with fewer problems.

Spousal Academic-based Dishonesty

In addition to having a professional writer write for the student, another finding was that students would have their spouses write for them. This was the case with Chloe who admitted that her husband was an academic and would ask him to write an assignment on her behalf. The husband would write the paper the same way the professional writer would, and it would be the duty of the student to read and understand the paper written. The students also stated having someone write assignments for them increases the chances of them getting higher marks. Chloe reminisced:

> *If my husband writes an assignment on my behalf, I normally get higher marks. If I write on my own, I normally get just above half. So, if my husband writes, it will be a bonus come exam time. It will be difficult to score high marks in the exam, but since my course work will be high it will be easy for me to pass the course.*

When asked if the spouse would not refuse to write the paper, Choe laughed and stated that he is the one paying for her tuition, so would not want her to fail the course because it would mean a loss of money and a waste of time.

Why Practice Academic Dishonesty?

The study also investigated the reasons why students practice academic dishonesty in various forms. The students stated that they are adult learners who have many responsibilities and as such do not have the time to do all the work. They said they have personal as well as work-related responsibilities and as such it is just difficult for them to balance the workloads. Ben articulated how work, family, and school are taking a toll on him. He had this to say:

> *I normally do not ask someone to write for me, but what I do is I go to an exam with a small paper written all the information I think would be in the exam. Some students call these papers CDs. I just do not have the time to prepare for my studies because of job demands and family.*

Another reason why students cheat is that they want to produce quality academic work thereby increasing the chances of passing the degree. The students said that they cheated or practiced academic dishonesty because they just wanted to pass and graduate with a good degree class. The need to produce quality work is also linked with the fact that the students stated that some of the modules they took were challenging such that producing quality work would be difficult for them. Hence, they would ask someone to write the assignments on their behalf so that they pass. Brian had this to say:

> Some of the modules are just difficult and asking someone knowledgeable on the subject area to write for you is the best. Some of the material will be new to me. Some lectures would not have covered all the areas of the module … so it is challenging to produce good work.

The students also stated that they are given too many assignments or work to do by their lecturers such that it was difficult for them to meet the due dates. They articulated that since some of them work full-time, they do not have enough time to do schoolwork.

Asked why the students ask writers to write for them, the writers said that the students are just too lazy to do the schoolwork. Sean said that the students have all the material, but are just lazy to do the work. He added that students want to be 'spoon-fed' and then reproduce what they would have been given by their lecturers. John added:

> These students have everything for them to produce quality work. I mean … they have the Internet, free computers to do research, books, you name it. They have everything, but they prefer to have someone do it for them.

The writers stated that they knew that writing for students was a bad practice, but said that they were doing it for the money. They said the economic situation in the country was dire and for them to survive they had to do it for the sake of their families.

Flaws of Academic Dishonesty

This is an interesting finding of this study because the flaws of academic dishonesty were articulated by the students who practiced it. I was fascinated by how they stated the flaws of academic dishonesty, yet they still practiced it. Below, are statements each of the students said on why practicing academic dishonesty is bad.

From a Christian and academic point of view, it is just not right to claim other people's work as your own. It is like you steal from someone and say this is mine, yet you know you stole – Charity

When you have someone write for you and you graduate based on falsehoods, you may end up failing to do the work that you claim to know. You will fail to do work and this may give the university a bad reputation for churning out ineffective graduates – Chloe

The reputation of the university is affected and the university might fail to attract students in the future because it [university] will not be taken seriously. It will be disrespected – Ben.

If I lie that I am good at academics, whilst I know the work I produced is not mine; then I will not have the confidence to pursue further education. I would not have mastered the knowledge and hence cannot do advanced studies – Brian.

No new knowledge will be produced in academia as the work that is produced is redundant and belong to someone else -Adella.

The ranking of institutions of higher learning where academic dishonesty is rife may be lowered. That is just not right -Portia.

5.1 Discussion

The purpose of this explanatory case study research was to understand the perceptions, and worldviews of Bachelor students on their worldviews in the dissertation writing process about academic dishonesty. The students who participated in the study were drawn from two universities and the writers were drawn from two cities in Zimbabwe where these universities are located.

The major finding from this study is that there are many types of academic dishonesty being practiced by students, some of which tend to be new. Some forms of academic dishonesty seem to have been modified while some may be as a result of the use of technology. The variation and seemingly sophisticated strategies of practicing

academic dishonesty may point to inventiveness (Starovoytova & Arimi, 2017), riskiness attitude and whatever it takes attitude to get what they want. In light of this explanation, it is clear that students will continue to devise new methods to practice academic dishonesty.

The so-called professional writers who offer so many services in helping students write their dissertations are writing the projects themselves on behalf of the students. From this study, it is clear that ghostwriting is now prevalent in academia where writers are paid handsomely for their services. This finding supports the finding by Yadav and Rawal (2018) that ghostwriting is prevalent in the scientific world where big pharmaceutical companies fund ghostwriters to write a paper that is forwarded to a reputable journal to paint a positive picture of a drug. The key word is the issue of payment. Ghost writing is just viewed as dishonest, unethical, and unacceptable and hence must come to an end (Das & Das, 2014).

The study found that the ghostwriters attributed the nature of their business to the harsh economic climate prevailing in the country where they do not have jobs. The writers in this study argued that it is a matter of survival on their part rather than preserving the academic integrity of the students' institutions. Looking at the charges, (a maximum of close to US$500 and a minimum of US$150) in exchange for a written paper, is just unethical. The resultant qualification is for life, allowing a person to get employed, and purportedly qualified for the position. Sivasubramaniam, Kostelidou, and Ramachandran (2016) also reiterated that "unemployment issues for recent graduates who are well acquainted with the marking criteria, learning objectives, and outcomes" (p. 11) are the reason why ghostwriters are in this practice.

The finding by Yadav and Rawal (2018) is also commensurate with the findings of this study that while in pharmaceuticals, the drug's side effects are ignored, in this study knowledge innovation by the student is ignored. Through writing dissertations on behalf of the students, these professional writers are exacerbating academic dishonesty to the detriment of the student's future and also the economy in general. If this is happening at a large scale, then that means, universities are churning out 'pretenders' of the said professions who may lack the necessary prerequisite skills.

Another finding of this study was the availability of social media such as Facebook where ghostwriters advertise and communicate with potential clients. A WhatsApp communication tool that is available to students is used to communicate with 'clients.' The finding is corroborated by Sivasubramaniam, et al. (2016) who found that the availability of social networking plays to the advantage of the ghost writers who have seen the potential of these tools of communication to advertise and offer educational support. The current study found that ghost writers advertise their services on Facebook and communicate with their 'clients' on Facebook and WhatsApp.

A finding that is common from the students' side and the writers' side is the aspect of reducing the plagiarism index. So, if the writers, who write the dissertations for the students, are also capable of reducing the plagiarism index, there is a danger that one dissertation might be reproduced multiple times for different students at different universities and still obtain a good grade. Another disturbing finding is that a university official, employed, among other things to safeguard academic integrity, is the one who is responsible for academic dishonesty by reducing the plagiarism index for a fee. This means that the whole purpose of universities being creators of new knowledge is disregarded. Universities thus may become centers of reproducing old knowledge and presenting it as new under different names of students.

Previous research done by Sivasubramaniam, et al. (2016) found that ghost writers were also skilled in reducing the anti-plagiarism percentage index for their clients. Research studies done in the area have focused on how writers may ensure that plagiarism is reduced. Sivasubramaniam, et al. (2016) found that ghost writers would use "text matching detection software to reduce the [plagiarism] percentage matches" (p. 8). They specifically used the Turnitin anti-plagiarism tool to check for plagiarism.

The professional writers refused to disclose their professional qualifications and their real names. A question might be asked; if they are genuine and say they are doing the right thing as they say they are, why is it that they remain anonymous? The name of the writer redacted from the study is also fake, according to the student participants. Trying to get more personal information from them is difficult as they always respond that they provide the service and that their personalities and identities are not relevant.

Above all, the students shared various reasons why they believed academic dishonesty is bad and unethical. Although this was the case, they, continued to practice it, and the fear of being caught far outweighed the fear of failing the course. So, to the students, failing a course is not an option, but getting caught might be better. This finding is corroborated by Starovoytova and Arimi (2017) that failing a course is not an option because of external pressures, so any means necessary to pass will be employed by the students. In addition, students are not bothered about being caught cheating because the penalties for cheating might not be deterrent enough, hence the resultant effect of academic dishonesty.

It also seems like there is a mismatch between the reasons writers and students give why students ask someone to write dissertations for them. The writers believed the students were lazy while the students stated that they had so much on their plate (family, work, personal life), fear of failing, and a need to produce quality work. In supporting the students, Starovoytova and Arimi (2017) found that students blamed the lecturers' attitude to teaching which they argued was poor. Balancing academics and personal life seemed to be a challenge for the students in this particular study. So, a question might be asked; why study when you still have so much on your plate?

6.1 Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1.1 Conclusion

The results of the study have shown that dissertation-based academic dishonesty is rife at the two universities based on the responses of the participants who admittedly practiced it. The study has shown various ways the students practiced academic dishonesty, the flaws of their practice, and the reasons for practicing it.

The study has shown that the students did practice academic dishonesty at the penultimate stage of their studies. What is perplexing is that students in the study are aware of the flaws of academic dishonesty, but continued practicing it. The students gave various reasons for practicing academic dishonesty, with some taking the risk of getting caught. Ghost writing seems to have taken the world of academia by storm with unemployed professionals openly advertising and practicing it.

The problem of practicing academic dishonesty and letting it go will create a cycle, where those who cheated and did not get caught will also let their students cheat

because, to them, it is normal. It thus becomes an epidemic that will be common, contagious, and corrosive. Academic dishonesty is slowly becoming the culture being practiced at institutions of higher learning that if left unchecked, will result in the production of incompetent organizational and political leaders.

6.1.2 Recommendations

Previous studies have shown that completely eradicating academic dishonesty is a futile exercise. What is needed is to come up with "a comprehensive, multilevel, systems-based approach" that is holistic in nature and aimed at reducing the academic dishonesty epidemic while creating a culture of integrity (Stephens, 2019). More research is needed to devise ways to prevent this cancerous disease from devouring academia.

1. It is the recommendation of this study that those found intentionally practicing academic dishonesty be punished severely and blacklisted in academia so that would-be offenders may be dissuaded from doing it.

2. Another recommendation this study may make is for those in academia to come up with a new way of assessing students instead of having them write dissertations. This suggestion is beyond the scope of this study, but a way of replacing the process of writing dissertations with something that is as legitimate as the dissertation must be devised the world over. Chances are that writing a dissertation, especially at the Bachelor level might not be as productive and sustainable as academic dishonesty is coming into play with the process. It is just disheartening to find that students are graduating pretending to own dissertations written by others.

3. University officials found aiding academic dishonesty in any capacity must be taken to task and made to account for their actions. Having a university official manipulate the plagiarism check percentage of a student's work for a fee is just not right. Spouses who write dissertations and other assignments on behalf of their partners must be responsible enough, act ethically, and not help them.

7.1 Limitations

This case study was limited to two universities in two cities targeting registered university students writing their dissertations. The study also was limited to two writers in two cities where the universities are located. Generalizing the results of this study might not be possible due to the small sample of the participants and also the number of universities represented. The study found that students at the two universities practice academic dishonesty and the ghostwriters wrote for their clients when in reality they claim to only assist. Future research needs to look at how technology can be used to stamp out academic dishonesty that has become so cancerous that it is devouring academia.

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An Analysis of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) on Gender Inclusivity

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Abstract

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is the mother of all human rights instruments internationally. Other subsequent documents such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1976), Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and so on emerged as responses to the inadequacies and gaps within the parent document. While the document made significant achievements in human rights upholding during its own time, this study argues that the UDHR (1948) was never meant for everyone, but rather, it was a patriarchal document designed to further the interests of grown-up men to the detriment and exclusion of women and children. The thrust of the paper is to elaborate the importance of the semantics approach to human rights, and how inconsiderate language can cause irreparable damage to the rights of other groups in society. Presented in the paper are facts gathered through desk research which is also commonly known as document analysis. The study also employed interviews and focus group discussions. The study interviewed 5 key informants who are lecturers at a particular institution of higher learning. 30 students from the same institution participated in 3 focus group discussions of 10 people each, to make a total sample size of 35 participants. The study established that the UDHR (1948) contains 15 articles which used semantics referring to men "he, himself, and his" which clearly exclude women. The study further established that the UDHR (1948) rarely used gender neutral language specifying he or she, him/her, himself of herself, an action which grossly indicated gender discrimination from the semantics approach to human rights. Recommendations are made that policy formulators should always use gender inclusive language to include everyone.

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Key Words: Semantics, Exclusion, Human Rights, Inequality, Gender inclusive language, Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

1.0 Introduction

Human rights were defined by the United Nations as rights inherent in human beings by virtue of being human regardless of age, sex, ethnicity, race religion or any other status (Nweke 2020). There are three approaches to human rights analysis and these include the normative approach, the pragmatic approach and the semantic approach. This study focuses on the semantic approach to human rights which focuses on meanings and nuances portrayed by words in any document, particularly those used in the 30 articles enshrined in the UDHR of 1948. It explores the views and opinions of human rights students and lecturers at an institution of higher learning. This is a document review, an analysis of important aspects of language and semantics used in international human rights instruments, focusing on the Declaration. The gist of the paper is to find out if the international human rights instrument used gender inclusive and gender-neutral language to speak to humanity as a whole. This study might therefore inform other stakeholders who draft such important human rights documents to be wary of inclusivity so that they do not exclude other groups of people in a document meant for everyone.

2.0 Background to The Study

Human rights can be divided into three parts, that is: divine and natural law, national law and international law (Gonzalez, 2018 and Nweke, 2020). Divine and natural law views human rights as closely related to morals and ethics, thus philosophers such as Locke (1660), Voltaire, (18th century) and Rousseau, (1754) always viewed them as natural law (Gronewaller 2019). Christian thinkers who include Augustine of Hippo (354-430) and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) viewed human rights as divine law (Nowakowski,2010 and Nutt, 2018 and Gronewaller, 2019). Nations, regarded as state parties in the human rights discourse have to pick up human rights laws from an international level and domesticate them into national laws for easy implementation and monitoring, thus human rights are meant for everyone internationally by virtue of being human. The UDHR (1948) despite being the first international instrument drafted

to represent the rights of everyone, on the 10th of December 1948, it had its own weaknesses and strengths. However, the drafting of this international instrument was largely influenced by the World War II atrocities, the Nazi holocaust against Jews and Gypsies, subsequent executions, deportations, and the proliferation of slave camps in Europe. The rationality was therefore to bring peace and sanity in the whole world by coming up with a document which promotes the value of human life, giving dignity and respect for each individual person (Ecketi 2001 and Kuwonu 2019). Although the document was only a declaration and not legally binding, it was a critical unique document at its own time which created a roadmap to show people ways of giving respect and dignity to humanity in all aspects of life (Kuwonu 2019). However, studies revealed that not all countries world-wide participated in the drafting and signing of this historic document (Bhosale 2015; Brown 2016). The countries present were mainly European, and the assumption was that they represented the whole world. During that time, there were only 56 member states in the United Nations (UN) compared to today's 193 members, thus the majority of the members were not involved directly. Forty-eight (48) of the present members voted for it, while 8 members states abstained including South Africa and Saudi Arabia (Ecketi 2001; Adjami and Hemington2008). Looking at the African continent for example, most nations were still under colonial rule. So, in 1948, only 4 African countries, 6%, that is, Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia and South Africa attended. South Africa was one of the states which abstained from voting for the document despite its presence (Eckert, 2001 and Kuwonu, 2019). This is a clear indication that Africa was underrepresented or represented by questionable countries. If an analysis is to be done on the backgrounds and status of these countries by 1948, a call back to the drawing board may be necessary in this era when most states are now sovereign so that they contribute to what they want to see enshrined in such an essential document. While some states did not sign due to cultural differences, South Africa did not sign because of the Apartheid System within in at that time which continued until 1994 despite the existence of all the human rights declarations, instruments, and conventions (Kuwonu 2019). This paper is going to utilise the semantics approach to human rights in analysing language used in Articles 30 of the (1948) UDHR document.

Studies have established that language is heterogeneous across the globe, particular attention will be paid to the pronouns used to refer to the human race in different

articles, thus the gender equality and social inclusivity dimension is the main focus of this paper. It is the main argument in this paper that the proliferation of human rights instruments including the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW 1976) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC 1989) just to mention a few, arose. This was due to the inadequacies in the parent human rights document including the use of wrong terms to refer to everyone, thus some sectors of the population felt left out and marginalised leading to the formation of numerous other instruments. Women for example are a special group who normally constitute more than 50% of the population globally, with spatial differences here and there. Such a significant percentage of population cannot be brushed aside when drafting important documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, by assuming that one term can cover all humanity when there are so many words which particularly refer to males and females in the different languages worldwide. This paper therefore, argues that the UDHR was deliberately crafted in a gender biased way which did not include women and children but the views, rights and expectations of fully grown-up men.

3. 0 Literature Review

Lyons (2010) posits that the UDHR (1948) was a result of the aftermath of the Second World War (1939-1945), because the crimes committed against humanity during that period were unbearable (Supti 2020). Although the term 'human rights' is younger than the concept itself, the world had realised the need to put an end to racial discrimination, abolishing of slavery, genocides and all other bad events of the 19th Century. The League of Nations had only managed to abolish slavery by 1920, only to find that many countries continued with slavery until much later. Supti (2020) established that the League of Nations had failed dismally to prevent totalitarian regimes and prevent another war, thus it existed on paper until 1946 but had ceased all activities by 1940, which was enough reasoning for the international community to craft a new international document to promote the human rights of all people irrespective of colour, sex, ethnicity, economic status and so on.

Although the UDHR (1948) had positive impacts and achieved some of its objectives, human rights violations continue now in the year 2023, almost 72 years after its inception. This shows gaps in the document. These include supervisory gaps

normative gaps and implementation gaps. Greater challenges are emanating from a changing world, presenting the effects of globalisation, urbanisation and modernisation which are raising awareness and sensitisation of the contents of the same original document, to be able to analyse and critique it for gender sensitive language and inclusivity (Brown, 2016 and Bhosale, 2015). Some nations are making a lot of effort to uphold human rights guided by this international document while some countries are extremists and they believe the contents of the UDHR should never be followed at all. Shannon (2008) posits that Saudi Arabia remains an extremist state because they did not sign the UDHR on the 10th of December 1948 citing differences in cultural beliefs. The country never abolished slavery until 1962 and they are practising "gender apartheid" (Shannon 2008 because women are still considered as inferior to men, and they do not have their own rights as autonomous human beings). Despite the fact that other countries in the Muslim community ratified CEDAW (1976) to improve the respect and dignity of women, the Saudis did not ratify it, a clear indication that achieving gender equality remains an elusive goal world-wide with so much gender inequality even in countries that ratified all the international documents on gender equality. According to Rahman (2006) every individual should get all rights not just civil and political, but also economic and developmental rights for everyone. The rights which were presented in the UDHR of 1948 are critical for every individual, male and female. The semantics used in some of the articles are biased towards men, thus it is not possible to assume that women were given priority during the drafting of the document. According to Adjei and Hemington (2008) Article 15 of the UDHR 1948 attributes to citizenship and that rights should abolish statelessness for everyone. This article is using gender insensitive language, leaving it questionable whether women are also supposed to be protected by this same article. In addition, Article 25 attributes to economic and survival rights, a critical right which was re-emphasised by the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 and described as universal and inalienable (Rahman 2006). The same right in the UDHR of 1948 was crafted by Article 25 as 'everyone is granted a good standard of living for himself and his family', making a woman only a beneficiary of the proceeds granted to the men if she is part of a family, not an autonomous human being born free and equal just like part of article 1, article 2 and article 3 of the UDHR 1948 specify (UN 2015). Other excluded women include single women, widows and divorcees, increasing the list of excluded groups of people.

According to the UN (2018), the drafting and signing of the UDHR 1948 was done by people largely comprising of European community, only one country, the Dominican Republic sent a woman to sign. Then the other two female delegates were from India and Pakistan. This could possibly be one of the reasons why it was not easy for the few women to push for representative semantics in the historic human rights document. It is also worth noting that the phrase'' equality of men and women" in the preamble of the document was pushed for by Minerva Bernadino of the Dominican Republic, a diplomat and leader in the feminist movement in Latin America and the Carribean. Begum Shaista Ikramullah from Pakistan, pushed for the inclusion of article 16, which she thought was going to end child marriages and reduce unfair sharing of property during marriage dissolutions. Hansa Mehta from India, a champion of women's rights in her home country revised the phrase all men are born free to" all human beings are born free" to try and dilute the patriarchal dominance in article 1 of the document (Each Other 2018,UN 2018), otherwise most of article 1 was going to be largely male dominating in its semantics. These 3 female delegates in addition to Eleanor Roosevelt took part in the shaping of the human rights document which finally presented 30 articles, 15 of which used gender insensitive language and appeared to exclude women so much. It may be imperative for this paper to concur with Elkins, Ginsburg and Melton (2017), who argue that the UDHR, although it was a unique document of its own time, may not have been as influential as we think because 50% of the articles enshrined within it which use gender insensitive semantics.

A brief review of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW 1979) shows that it arose due to the failure of the UDHR 1948 to comprehensively address the needs and rights of women. Adopted on December 18 1979 with a vote of 130 member states for it, none against it and 10 abstentions, with 64 member states signing it in 1980, the document came into force and legal effect in September 1981, once it had been ratified by twenty member states (UN, 2009 and Napikoski, 2019). The convention is ratified by more than 180 countries although other states such as Saud Arabia USA did not sign for different reasons(Baldez, 2014 and Feeman, 2009).The reasons for crafting CEDAW(1979) included the pressure mounting from women activist groups, the growing awareness and realisation that women have always been exploited, religiously, culturally by traditionalist patriarchal societies despite the existence of the UDHR which claimed to stand for the rights of

women (Raday, 2012 and Zwingel, 2016). The general objectives were to give women the dignity, respect and empowerment they deserved on the same status with men. The Convention used the words "woman, her, herself, men and women" more than any other human rights document, thus it was quickly adopted as a gender inclusive document in its 30 articles divided into VI (6) parts. The Convention was adopted faster than any other human rights convention considering the period it was drafted to the time it was legally effected. All this arose from the inadequacies of the UDHR, which was initially crafted in a gender biased way as seen through the semantics analysis done by this paper.

Maybe the source of gender exclusive language could have originated from religious documents such as the Bible where some verses clearly state "without counting women and children" (Mathew 15:38; Mark 6:44). John 8:4 narrates the story of a woman caught in adultery and the law stated that such women should be stoned to death. Surprisingly, adultery is committed by two people but only one person-the woman was brought to Jesus and was expected to be stoned to death according to the law. This shows gross inequality and exclusion of women which dates back to the biblical times, making all efforts of eradicating gender inequality an illusion, a mirage, an elephantine task to achieve.

4.0 Methodology

The paper used a purely qualitative approach in data collection. Document review, interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were the main data collection methods. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948 was examined and analysed for the semantics used if there was any portrayal of gender inclusivity. Related literature was also review for relevant theoretical frameworks and views of various scholars. In addition, the paper employed interviews with 5 key informants who are lecturers at the same institution of higher learning. 30 university students were chosen on the basis of them being human rights students with enough knowledge of the document under review, being enough justification for the study to seek the views and opinions of the students in terms of gender inclusivity of the document. The students participated in 3 focus group discussions of 10 people each. The students who participated in the study were all adults ranging from 20 years to 25 years, and they participated voluntarily, after being given enough information on the objectives of

the research and purpose of the gathered data. Anonymity was promised to the participants and the study never revealed any names or the years which the students were studying human rights at the institution under study. The data gathered was presented in citations and tabular presentations, giving themes and summaries of focus group discussions findings

5.0 Findings

5.1 Findings from Document Reviews

On analysing the UDHR (1948), the paper found that the document contains 15 articles which use gender insensitive language which are presented below:

1) **Article 1** of the UDHR talks of being born free and equal and encourages all to act in a spirit of "Brotherhood" towards one another. The word brotherhood here is used to refer to everyone, male and female and the assumption may be that using the word sisterhood would be a repetition and everyone should be satisfied by being referred to as brothers, which is not the case.

2) **Article 8** emphasises that everyone has a right to an effective tribunal …… granted him by the constitution or by the law. The use of the pronoun "him" here implies the right being referred to here is for every male member of the world. Assuming that it is referring to all human beings, male and female will be an overgeneralisation of the interpretation of the rights enshrines under this article. The introduction in the international instrument talks of 'everyone' 'everybody'. Using him to mean everybody is a serious error and act of exclusion.

3) **Article 10** in the international instrument grants everyone a fair and public hearing ……………of "his" rights and any criminal charge against "him". The semantics here again clearly show that the male member of the society is being referred to. It appears the men are the ones being granted this right or they are the only ones believed to commit crimes. The language used is not all encompassing.

4) **Article 11** grants everyone the right to be innocent until proven guilty………at which "he" has had all the guarantees necessary for "his"

defence.   Assuming that the female members of the society is being included here is not acceptable because of the use of the words "his" and 'he' within the article.

5) **Article 12** gives people the right to privacy"…….his privacy….attacks upon his honour and reputation." This is a very important right which every human being surely needs, but only that it is being granted to male members of the population by the looks of the semantics being used.

6) **Article 13** of the UDHR has two parts. While part one is neutral in semantics, part 2 goes on to grant the male person the right to leave any country, including 'his' own. Nowhere is it mentioned that she can also leave her own country at any time she deems necessary.

7) **Article15** (part 2), states that no one shall be denied….'his nationality," despite the fact that part one had neutrally said everyone has a right to a nationality. By enshrining citizenship in this document, the UN has placed a special relationship between individuals and states which must be enjoyed by everyone but the semantics used indicate that only the male members of humanity are being granted that right.

8) **Article 17** gives everyone the right to own property in part one, but part 2 says no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of 'his' property. This shows exclusion of the other sex, leading to a violation of the rights of women at the onset before the international instrument gets operational.

9) **Article 18** gives people the freedom of religion, but which people are being referred to remains the question, until we reach the phrase which says "…….to change his religion…..to manifest his religion or beliefs." That is the point we clearly realise that people mean 'him,' a statement which shows a lot of selfishness and inconsideration for gender equality.

10) **Article 21** has three parts, and 2 parts (most part of it) are giving the male members of the society the right to participate in the governance of their country" ……..his country (2)….public service in his country"

11) **Article 22** emphasises the security of person……" his dignity and free development of his personality". Every individual could have been happy to enjoy this right but unfortunately the semantics here is referring to the patriarchy.

12) **Part 3 and 4 of Article 23** gives the male members the right to work………. just and favourable remuneration for himself and his family (part3). In addition, the right to join trade unions is given for pursuing his interests (part 4).

13) **In article 25**, the right to a good standard of living is granted ……". for himself and his family"………and the right to security due to "circumstances beyond his control". This again shows that the men become the subject of the formula. This article therefore does not take into consideration the existence of female headed households by widows, divorcees and orphaned girl children.

14) **Article 27** grants all people the right to participate in the cultural life of their community…..but the article assumes only men as authors…."in protection of any material which he is the author"

15) **Article 29** has three parts, of which 2 use gender insensitive language. While the article is talking about full development of the person and giving the person responsibility of the rights of others, the semantics imply that the communication is addressed to males only……….'his personality (part 1)…….his rights and freedoms (part 2)."

5.2 Findings from Interviews

The participants to this study gave their opinions on the concept of inclusivity in the international human rights instrument of 10 December 1948.

Respondent 1(R1 a male lecturer had this to say" The problem with the UDHR of 1948 is that it was crafted by men and sometimes it can be subconscious for someone to write he/him/himself when referring to everyone, which is very wrong and it excludes the other gender" This response brings out the view that men were the authors of most documents, so the semantics used in those documents can be a result of subconscious acts or deliberate acts in an effort to show male dominance".

Another Respondent R2 had this to say" The UDHR od 1948 is very biased that's why gender equality can never be achieved when we have people with such a mentality. How can someone say 'in the spirit of brotherhood? (article 1). What about sisterhood?

This document should be re-written to accommodate both genders" This response shows some emotions in it but it gives an opinion on the impacts of the semantics used in the UDHR of 1948.

R3, another female respondent had this to say

"Men have always been considered to be the superior sex and that has to change. Socialisation is the source of all this bias because men have been given the priority in all facets of life that is why they find women and the pronouns referring to them as not necessary when drafting such important document"

R4, male respondent had this to say

"It was an old-time error but nowadays things are changing, that is why both pronouns are being used every time. A lot of education, training, awareness and sensitisation is still needed for people to understand that semantics is important for humanity to achieve milestones towards gender equality".

R5, a female respondent says

"semantics may not matter as long as I am given my space to breathe, get an education, lead or own an organisation without anyone blocking me. We still have a long way to go in terms of gender equality. What is reflected in that document is the mentality of all male leaders in terms of the role of women, the document is very insensitive and men think women do not matter".

5.3 Findings from Focus Group Discussions

Table 1. FGD Responses and Themes

Group	Summary of Responses	Themes emerging
1	-Men think they own the world - It could have been subconscious but there is need for change -The semantics is not inclusive at all, its marginalising women and girls	**-The UDHR of 1948 uses gender insensitive language, in 15 of the 30 articles and male pronouns are meant to**

	-Women are not invited to such events -Gross exclusion of women and that's inconsideration	**represent all humanity which is wrong**
2	-The document is an old one and new documents have to be crafted -Going back to the drawing board with 50/50 representation can help -There is need for new documents -Reviews could have been done before publishing or sharing, but men wanted it to their advantage	**-There is need for a new document, or new documents on human rights should use gender- neutral language which give every individual a representation**
3	-It could have been an error -Its deliberate and men are always like that -It is not men's fault. They were the majority present -Women do not participate in such events -Some women usually do not speak when given a chance to represent others	**The few women representing others on such important forums should speak out. Women should participate at a 50/50 ratio and they should VOICE out on any issues concerning them**

Source: Author 2023.

The responses from Table1 indicate that the respondents agree that the UDHR 1948 used male pronouns and disregarded the use of gen der neutral language. Malae pronouns cannot be used to represent all humanity, so the semantics used in the international human rights instruments does not promote gender equality at all. The second theme emerging is that the document is a very important document, but because of low representation of women and other countries when the instrument was crafted in 1948, there might be need to craft a new document which is all

encompassing. Lastly, women sometimes do not say anything when sent or chose to represent others. Very assertive women should be sent to such important events so that they raise out concerns for their constituency.

6.0 Discussion

This analysis is not about destroying the importance or meaning of any of these rights as stated by article 30 of the same instrument, but the intention is to highlight weaknesses in the document which may be contributing to the low adherence and upholding of these rights internationally. The paper takes a swipe at the way the original document was written with gender insensitive language, an indication that women never mattered in the human rights discourse as far as the UDHR was concerned. Using assumptions to believe that everyone is being addressed by the international document is overgeneralising issues, and those who are paying particular attention to detail may find the document exclusive, and giving so much patriarchal dominance to the detriment and exclusion of women through the use of the semantics. There is no shortage of pronouns so male should be specified as he/his/him while females are specifically referred to as her/she/hers/herself. The articles listed and analysed above constitute half (50%) of the document, and women constitute just over 50% of the population worldwide. Making the male members the subject of the formula or the centre of reference changes the way the document is viewed by more than half of the world population, thus such sectors of the population will tend to have a negative attitude towards the whole human rights discipline all because of the wrong choice of words. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is grossly showing Gender Inequality and Social Exclusion (GISE) for women through the use of semantics meant for one sector of the population to address everyone. Only part of the preamble, the foreword, article 16 and article 25 (part 2) contains the word woman in the whole 30 article document. In the preamble, it was pushed for by a female delegate (Minerva Bernadino of the Dominican Republic), as well as article 16 which Shaista Ikramullah pushed for. This is an indication that the limited numbers of women were not effective enough to make meaningful impact on the whole document. However, it is clear that if women are included on any development forums, they do not come back home without making an impact. This may also be an encouragement to those who got an

opportunity to lead to make sure that they make an impact and give others role models to follow despite the low numbers as compared to men.

In the foreword, the Secretary General had no option because it was time to make a commitment and break humanity into man, woman and child (one of the few areas the word child was also mentioned in addition to article 26 on education, but it's the parents who were being given the right to choose the education for their children, not the children being given a say in their own education).On article 25 part 2,it is highly recommended that the UDHR specifically enshrines a part on motherhood and childhood because these are special members of the family. This article contributed in the promotion of maternity leave for working women as well as feeding time granted to nursing mothers. The same part also enabled nations to put in place child rights policies to protect all children born in and out of wedlock. Examples can be mentioned here of maintenance Acts enshrined in various constitutions across the world to promote the care of children from both parents in case of divorces and unwanted pregnancies by paternal parents. Some countries may have used the same style to write their own constitution and human rights documents, thus the women in such nations and communities are found excluded, oppressed and at the mercy of men to gain access to capital, property, leadership, privacy and above all equally which the document appears to be emphasising for all humanity. These 15 articles presented above neutralise the efforts by the United Nations to grant freedom, dignity and respect for all when some sections of the document selfishly refer to men only. For example, article 2 of the UDHR states that everyone is entitled to all rights irrespective of race, colour, sex and so on, only for article 8 to come in and emphasise that one should enjoy rights granted him by the constitution as if all human beings are referred to as "him". In addition, article 10 and 11 grants people the rights to a fair hearing and the right to be innocent until proven guilty. These articles are granting people a well-deserved dignity so that everyone can be fairly treated. However, the two articles are referring to the men again as nothing is said about women, and neither is gender neutral language used so that everyone can qualify in the benefits. Unless the assumption here was that women do not commit crimes, then these two articles are part of the articles denying women their equal share of human rights through the semantics used. The reasons for such oversights may be due to religious and cultural beliefs where the man is always taken to be the centre or port of call for everything,

but surely in this modern world each man and woman have to stand up for themselves since there are a lot of female-headed households and some matriarchal societies in the world as well who also practice polyandry (Celis et al 2013). There is need therefore to be cautious on how semantics is used in the human rights discipline because "he" cannot mean "she" and the other way round. It is always best to use gender sensitive language by using 'they', 'he' or 'she' separately, not a one pronoun for all style.

If these semantics analysis may be considered petty issues in human rights and development issues as some people may want to view it, why would the human race not be referred as she or herself to refer to everyone just for argument's sake? This shows that equality of sexes is still far from being achieved and it is worsened by gender insensitive language like the semantics used in the UDHR, an international document granting equal rights to all men and women worldwide. Just to mention in passing because it is not the major aim of this paper, maybe the bible could be the source of reference for this kind of gender inequality where women have always been considered as an inferior race, with other verses clearly stating" without counting women and children". For what reason women and children were not being counted, no one is sure except that it was according to the law. Some verses state that when two people are caught committing adultery, only the woman is stoned to death. One would wonder if the woman was caught committing adultery with a tree, because one would expect two people to be brought before the law. Efforts should therefore be made by preachers and leaders in churches to ensure equality and give equal rights to men and women. In a similar way, human rights documents written in the contemporary society should make an effort to correct the gender exclusiveness shown by the international human rights document, the UDHR of 10 December 1948.The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), appears to be a gender inclusive document which uses the terms men, women children, to specifically mean those groups of people.

For human rights to be adhered to by everyone, neutral semantics like they or them/they/theirs (to mean he or she) should be used so that no group of people feels left out or appear to be forcing themselves into laws, treaties and conventions which were never drafted with them in mind in the first place. Specific semantics for men and

women, (he, she, him, her and so on) should be used where special reference is being made for men and women without making blanket statements and assumptions that one term can mean everyone as if there is a shortage of time and words. Maybe the best thing to do for the international community is to come back to the drawing back after wide consultation with all groups of people and all nations so that a new document can be drawn using ideas and contributions from all stakeholders. This may promote adherence and upholding of human rights for a greater number of people in the world if each sector of the population is specifically referred in the wording and semantics. In addition, the drafting of the UDHR was male dominated and there was no way anything better was expected. The encouragement is for such international conventions to be on a 50/50 representation everywhere so that humanity can accept and practice the idea of gender equality in all facets of life. If it is made law and mandatory to have 50/50 representation in all critical forums, then there may be a possibility of adherence and the male members of humanity will get used to having the female members of humanity besides them all the way through. On the other hand, the female members of humanity have to continue to claim their share and be up and ready to take up the positions and perform on merit otherwise the cries would be useless and ineffective.

Most of the marginalisation originates from the way men and women are socialised. It is not always the fault of men to exclude women. Sometimes the women themselves allow such marginalisation and exclusion to take place without raising their concerns. Through the same socialisation processes in different sovereign countries, they were taught to be submissive to their husbands and never challenge anything. As a result, they may not be able to speak out at a public international gathering. A change in attitude, mentality and socialisation is a process not an event. There is need foe deliberate efforts from household, community to national levels to promote gender equality through economic empowerment for all as well as the use of gender sensitive language.

7.0 Conclusion

This paper concludes that the UDHR of 1948 is a patriarchal document which does not represent everyone but a specific sector of the world's population to the exclusion of women and children as shown by the semantics used in 15 of its articles. Although

the UDHR remains the point of reference for the human rights discourse, it was crafted in a language which did not pay particular attention to the inclusion of women. The themes emerging from the FGDs indicate that the UDHR0f 1948 shows gross exclusion of the other gender and there is need for deliberate use of gender inclusive and gender-neutral semantics which do not violate anyone's rights. The inclusion of 15 articles which used semantics referring specifically to men at the expense of women who constitute half of the world population is grossly a violation of the rights of women, promoting gender inequality, social economic and developmental rights exclusion. Conventions which came later than the UDHR for example CEDAW were responding and filling in the gaps left by the parent document and managed to achieve this by using gender sensitive language which is neutral as well as referring to each group specifically by the semantics which refer to them like men, women, and children. The word woman was used in CEDAW more than it was used in UDHR, portraying an oversight which is deeply rooted in traditional patriarchal structures favouring men in all facets of life to the detriment of women and children. Semantics does matter in human rights instruments and treaties; thus, gender inclusive language should always be used since there is no shortage of words. This paper therefore recommends that:

8.0 Recommendations

Based on the key findings of this study, it was recommended that:

- Human rights instruments, treaties and conventions should be documented in gender sensitive languages which refer to each individual with the correct specific word or pronoun to promote acceptance and effectiveness.
- Religious and cultural documents should always consider the semantics used to be gender inclusive so that all humanity is specifically referred to without excluding other sectors of the population.
- A multi-stakeholder approach should be encouraged in promoting human rights, where churches, traditional structures, national constitutions and many more all use gender inclusive language and give men and women equal opportunities in terms of all developmental facets. This should be evidenced by equal statistics in traditional leadership (more female chiefs should be seen), parliaments and other organisations.

- The UDHR (1948) was a historic instrument of its own moment. Contemporary instruments, documents and presentation in theory or practice should be inclusive of everyone since there is no shortage of pronouns.

- Writing such important documents in all languages at national level might help eliminated marginalisation and exclusion.

- Gender neutral pronouns like they/them/themselves/theirs can be useful to avoid unintended gender discrimination especially in international or national documents representing everyone.

- Gender equality policies and economic development policies should be developed and implemented on a a50/50 basis so that everyone understands the importance and need for gender neutral language when everyone is represented

- The women chose to represent others should not relax or swallow the bitter pill but take a swipe when gender inequality is being perpetuated in any facet of life.

- Socialisation must change and be inclusive of everyone so that males and females are taught to move together from a tender age. Gender stereotypes should end so that all children, boys and girls can do anything together as families. This will teach them to respect and value each other from a tender age.

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Gender Differences in Workplace Diversity and Inclusion: A Study of Higher Education Institutions in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to investigate the intricate interplay between gender dynamics and workplace diversity and inclusion within the higher education sector. Utilising a mixed methodology, the study employed online surveys and virtual interviews to collect data from 320 women across ten higher learning institutions in Zimbabwe. The findings of the study revealed that women encountered challenges in various aspects, including achieving a work-life balance, meeting familial expectations, the absence of paternity leave, a dearth of women in leadership positions, and instances of sexual harassment. Within their professional environments, women encountered obstacles such as biases, stereotypes, inadequate support, and barriers impeding their career advancement. The study recommended the full implementation of gender-inclusive policies and practices, the promotion of gender-responsive leadership and mentorship, and the fostering of an inclusive campus culture through educational initiatives. This research significantly contributes to a deeper comprehension of the role gender plays in shaping inclusive environments and provides valuable insights for developing strategies to create equitable and diverse workplaces.

Keywords: Gender, diversity, inclusivity, innovation, productivity, Zimbabwe

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1.0 Introduction

This study explores the multifaceted dimensions of gender, diversity, and inclusion within the context of higher education workplaces, highlighting the importance of fostering an inclusive environment for all employees. This is because the landscape of higher education is undergoing a significant transformation, as issues of gender, diversity, and inclusion gain prominence from researchers, leadership in higher education institutions (HEIs), human resources practitioners, and gender advocates (World Economic Forum, 2021; Thomas, Plaut and Zumbo, 2018). A growing number of women and non-binary individuals are stepping into the historically male-dominated sector, championing the cause of fair treatment and amplifying the complexities that already exist in the field of higher education (Schiltmans and Davies, 2023). According to Mott (2022), HEIs are regarded as the breeding grounds for future thought leaders and societal influencers. Establishing HEIs and fostering environments that actively promote and exemplify gender equality norms, as well as recognising and elevating the voices and ideas of women, represent some of society's most potent instruments for expediting advancements toward women's and girls' equality and empowerment on a global scale (Zvavahera et al., 2021).

Even though there is global recognition of gender equality, there is a persistent presence of multiple layers of discrimination and stigma that further curtail women and non-binary individuals' chances, their contributions at work, and their rewards from work, adversely affecting their well-being and professional growth (Paoletti et al., 2020; Heijstra et al., 2017). Often, instances of workplace discrimination, biases, and power imbalances reflect broader societal beliefs and values, posing obstacles to achieving workplace equality, diversity, and inclusion; unless comprehensive leadership and accountability are established at every level to deliberately advance the interests of female employees (European Commission, 2019; Hearn, 2020; Husu, 2020; Kachchaf et al., 2015). Research conducted by Cahyati et al. (2021) in Indonesia unveiled that women working in HEIs encounter difficulties arising from familial obligations, inadequate support, and the prevalence of a patriarchal culture in the home which is extended to the workplace.

According to Coleman (2001), women holding positions of authority in HEIs represent a minority not only in the United Kingdom but also in most countries, spanning both developed and developing countries. Despite various initiatives aimed at rectifying gender imbalances in HEIs, the prevailing notion that "women teach and men manage," as highlighted by Greyvenstein, and van der Westhuizen (1991, p. 271), continues to hold true within the higher education system across the globe. However, the changing demographic landscape is reshaping the workforce scenario, with HEIs now managing a more multi-generational workforce (ILO 2019a; ILO 2019b). A workplace prioritising equal treatment, diversity, and inclusion is pivotal in bolstering resilience and facilitating growth (ILO, 2022).

Gender equality in higher education has been a prominent issue in Zimbabwean HEIs since its independence in 1980. However, as noted by Zvobgo (1986), the focus of these universities has primarily been on gender imbalances in education, particularly concerning student enrolment and performance at various educational levels. According to Zembere (2022), the gender-related policies implemented by HEIs in Zimbabwe have not significantly influenced the promotion of women into leadership positions because male dominance persists in leadership roles. Achieving equality and justice is essential for fostering diversity and inclusivity in the workplace, as emphasised by Ortlieb and Sieben, (2014). Zimbabwe's Constitution Amendment (No. 20) Act, 2013, the Gender Commission, and the National Gender Policy as amended in 2017 have supported these initiatives. However, the 2020 Report of the Gender Commission of Zimbabwe highlighted that women and girls still face numerous gender-related challenges in the spheres of politics, the economy, and society, hindering their ability to reach their full potential. Even though Zimbabwe's Constitution mandates equal representation of both women and men in all positions across sectors of the economy, women's involvement in leadership and politics remains limited. This is supported by data from the 2018 harmonised elections where women's representation declined, with figures of 48% in the Senate, 31.5% in the National Assembly, and 13.3% in Local Governance (Zimbabwe Gender Commission, 2020). Zvavahera et al. (2021), corroborates that women in HEIs in the country encounter similar challenges. This could be pointing to a structural problem within the highest offices where gender equality is not appreciated. Recognising the importance of

women's empowerment is fundamental to upholding women's rights and achieving gender equality.

Gender encompasses socially constructed roles, behaviours, expressions, and identities of individuals across the gender spectrum, influencing their behaviour, self-perception, societal power dynamics, and resource allocation, with gender identity existing on a fluid continuum beyond a binary framework, shaped by roles, expectations, interactions, and institutionalised norms sources (Morgenroth and Ryan, 2018).

As described by Shore et al. (2011) and Thomas, Plaut, and Zumbo (2018), inclusion goes beyond representation, emphasising the creation of respectful, valued, and fully integrated work environments where individuals from diverse backgrounds and identities can actively participate.

Diversity in this study encompasses a wide range of individual differences, including race, gender, age, and more (Jackson and Ruderman, 2017). Valuing diversity means respecting each person's uniqueness and leveraging differences for an inclusive and enriched work environment (Ankita, 2014). Historically, discrimination based on these factors has persisted, resulting in a heterogeneous workforce. Managing diversity is challenging for HEIs, but it is vital for building resilient and productive teams (Herring, 2009; Jackson and Ruderman, 2017).

Despite the existence of legal and policy frameworks, women in HEIs in Zimbabwe encounter persistent difficulties as they navigate the transition into the world of work and contend with the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles within Zimbabwean universities. To identify the challenges being faced by women in higher education, the following objectives were formulated:

i)   Assess gender disparities in workplace representation and leadership;

ii)   Examine gender-specific challenges and experiences;

iii)   Evaluate the effectiveness of gender-inclusive policies and initiatives; and

iv)   Proffer recommendations to policymakers.

2.0   Theoretical Framework

Social Identity Theory, developed by Tajfel et al. (1979) underpins the literature of this study. The rationale is that individuals' identification with particular social groups, such as gender, influences their attitudes, behaviours, and interactions within HEIs. According to the Social Identity Theory, individuals categorise themselves and others into social groups (Tajfel and Turner, 1985). In the context of this study, individuals working within higher education institutions categorise themselves into groups based on gender. The theory posits that people tend to favour their in-group (the group they belong to, in this case, their gender group) over their out-group, (the opposite gender group) (Saqib and Khan, 2023). In the workplace, this can manifest in various ways. For instance, individuals may show a preference for colleagues of the same gender when forming professional networks or collaboration opportunities (Saqib and Khan, 2023). Women in HEIs feel that they are segregated from their male counterparts (Zvavahera et al., 2021). Conversely, men exhibit biases against women (Zvavahera and Chirima, 2023). In the context of this study, this involves gender-based stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours toward women by men. Social Identity Theory also involves social comparison, where individuals evaluate their own group (in-group) favourably compared to other groups (out-groups). In this study, this relates to how women perceive their own gender group's contributions to workplace diversity and inclusion compared to the opposite gender group (men). The theory suggests that the salience of a particular social identity (gender) becomes more prominent in certain situations. For instance, in workplaces where gender diversity and inclusion are actively discussed or when specific gender-related issues arise, individuals may become more aware of their gender identity, which can influence their behaviours and reactions. Social Identity Theory also addresses the concept of identity threat (Blake, 1989). When individuals perceive a threat to their social identity (through gender discrimination), in this case, women, may respond defensively or engage in strategies to protect their identity and group status.

In this study, the Social Identity Theory is used to investigate how women within HEIs identify with their gender groups, how this identification affects their perceptions of workplace diversity, and inclusion, and how it influences their behaviours, attitudes,

and interactions with colleagues of the same and opposite genders. By applying this theoretical framework, more insights will be gained into the role of gender identity in shaping women's experiences within HEIs and how it contributes to or hinders workplace diversity and inclusion efforts. Additionally, it explores potential strategies to mitigate in-group favouritism, out-group bias, and identity threat to promote a more inclusive and equitable workplace environment.

3.0 A Global Overview

Discriminatory practices persist and hinder workplaces in HEIs across the globe, impeding productivity, talent utilisation, and cohesiveness, thus undercutting competitiveness and growth (Zvavahera and Chirima, 2023; Rodrigo and Clavero, 2022). It is of utmost importance that every employee feels valued, and receives fair treatment, respect, and empowerment through inclusive institutional approaches, within a culture that fully embraces inclusivity, and under the guidance of leadership, that embodies inclusiveness (Vignoles et al., 2006). Even though there are calls for inclusive organisational cultures where all individuals can flourish and contribute their skills equitably, there are still considerable barriers to overcome (Zvavahera and Chirima, 2023). HEIs possess significant potential to advance gender equality, diversity, and inclusion, influencing not just the realm of higher education but also the broader society (Rodrigo and Clavero, 2022). It is important to recognise that universities themselves are influenced by and contribute to gender norms and values (Rosa, Drew and Canavan, 2020). Despite efforts by governments and civic groups, gender disparities and wage inequalities persist among both high-ranking and lower-level positions within the academic hierarchy in some parts of the world (Brower and James, 2020; LNVH, 2016). Gender-based divisions are evident in HEIs and other sectors of the economy, while the incorporation of gender viewpoints in teaching and research remains insufficient (Zvavahera et al., 2021; Chabaya, Rembe and Wadesango, 2009). It is imperative for employees to experience a sense of value, respect, equitable treatment, and empowerment through the implementation of inclusive institutional practices, fostering an organisational culture that embraces inclusivity, and promoting inclusive leadership (ILO, 2022).

Women in HEIs in Africa face the general trend of exclusion and marginalisation that applies to both administrative and academic career paths, but it reaches its peak when it comes to senior academic and research positions (Mama, 2006). While persistent gender inequality is attributed to external social and familial factors, it is contended here that there is substantial evidence to indicate that, contrary to institutional and managerial assertions of administrative impartiality, African institutions exhibit underlying sexual and gender dynamics within their institutional and intellectual cultures (Sabharwal, 2015).

For the past three decades, Makerere University in Uganda has actively pursued greater gender equality in its student, academic, and administrative population (Kigotho, 2021). Policies to support women's academics, backed by budgetary allocations, have been making an imprint on the statistics. The number of women academics increased from about 15% in the 1990s to the current level of 35%. During the same period, the number of women leading large research teams has risen from 5% to 15%, while the number of those in senior administrative positions has shot from 5% to 25%. Furthermore, about 30% of research funding in Makerere is allocated to female researchers. A study conducted by Miller and Katz (2002) prompted a transition in the discourse from managing diversity to leveraging diversity, emphasising that solely adopting practices to manage a diverse workforce falls short of the mark. As a result, the term 'inclusion' became intertwined with diversity in the 1990s (Holvino et al., 2004). Consequently, it becomes essential to scrutinise the concept of inclusion alongside diversity. This examination is crucial to address important inquiries about how to effectively leverage the potential of a diverse workforce.

4.0   The Zimbabwean context

According to Guzura (2017), achieving Sustainable Development Goal number 5, which is gender equality, is regarded as an essential element. However, in Zimbabwe national gender machineries encounter financial difficulties because they are frequently provided with insufficient resources, hindering their ability to function effectively. As pointed out by Clisby in 2005, there is still a substantial amount of work to be undertaken to transform gender mainstreaming into tangible outcomes at the

grassroots level. Zvavahera et al. (2021) note that female leaders should actively promote and create opportunities for other women. Collectively, men continue to enjoy advantages throughout their academic journeys. Although women often outnumber men at the beginning of higher education, as they advance through academia, men overwhelmingly occupy senior positions (Zvavahera, 2023). Men receive more opportunities and greater discretionary rewards. Additionally, students consistently rate male instructors more favourably than they consistently rate their female counterparts, a pattern observed even in experiments where the gender of the instructor is artificially altered (Chabaya, Rembe and Wadesango, 2009). There exists a biased assumption of incompetence among students toward academic educators who are female or belong to other minority groups. Advancing gender equality and empowering women and girls are crucial components of any endeavour aimed at diminishing human suffering, vulnerability, and poverty. These actions are integral to fostering positive societal transformation, which, in turn, leads to increased prosperity, growth, and development, as well as enhanced security and stability (Mott, 2022; Mukeredzi, 2022). The study's methodology is covered in the section that follows.

5.0   Methodology

This study utilised the mixed approach method and concentrated on a sample drawn from an online community of practice (CoP) that included both academic and non-academic staff representing 10 out of the 21 universities in Zimbabwe. By focusing solely on women, the study wished to generate recommendations and strategies that are tailored to address the specific needs and concerns of women in HEIs, leading to more effective diversity and inclusion initiatives.

The CoP is a voluntary and informal group where professionals with shared interests learn from one another, collaborate, and enhance their expertise in areas of interest. Within this community, members exchange experiences and endeavour to address workplace-related challenges.

To collect data, the researcher administered an online survey containing both open-ended and closed-ended questions to all the 230 members of the CoP. One hundred

and fifty (150) completed questionnaires were received and 10 members of the CoP were purposively selected to participate in the online interviews resulting in a response rate of 74%. The selection of the ten participants was based on their willingness to take part in the interviews, their possession of over 11 years of higher education experience, and their access to a stable internet connection. The rationale behind selecting individuals with more extensive experience was rooted in the belief that they could offer valuable insights into the challenges faced by women in HEIs. The interviews were conducted primarily to validate and corroborate the responses collected through the online survey. By combining both an online survey and online interviews, the study intended to yield more comprehensive and nuanced data.

Prior to data collection, the researcher ensured participants provided informed consent. The purpose of the survey, data usage, and the right to withdraw at any point was thoroughly explained. To safeguard participant anonymity and confidentiality, no personally identifying information was solicited.

To enhance the study's validity, the survey questions were meticulously designed to minimise bias and ensure clarity, objectivity, and impartiality. A pilot test of the questionnaire was conducted on a small sample with similar characteristics to refine its content.

Data analysis involved transcription and organisation, followed by coding to identify themes, patterns, and categories within the textual data. Subsequently, content analysis was conducted to distil essential findings and insights. These findings were presented coherently, accompanied by verbatim quotations from participants to provide a rich contextual understanding. Figures tables were used to visually illustrate discernible patterns. The online interview participants were assigned anonymous labels ranging from P1 to P10, with "P" denoting Participant.

6.0   Findings and discussion

This section introduces and analyses the study's findings while establishing connections with existing literature and the study's theoretical framework. Additionally,

the study offers conclusions and provides recommendations. Subsequently, the upcoming section furnishes pertinent background information concerning the respondents.

6.1 Demographic data of the respondents

A survey was conducted online, targeting 230 women from 10 HEIs in Zimbabwe, and 150 responses were received. Out of the initial pool of 230 women, 10 members were selected for online interviews, leading to a response rate of 74%. The majority of the participants had over 11 years of work experience, with 14% falling into the 6-10 years category. Regarding their educational background, 74% held a Ph.D., 14% had a master's degree and 12% possessed a bachelor's degree as their highest level of qualification.

The 74% response rate is relatively high for an online survey, which indicates that the topic was of substantial interest to the participants, potentially reflecting the importance of diversity and inclusion in higher education. The fact that the majority of participants had over 11 years of work experience is noteworthy. It implies that the research may be able to capture insights from individuals with a considerable amount of experience in HEIs. This can be valuable for understanding how gender dynamics evolve over time in such institutions.

The educational qualifications of the participants are also an important aspect of the study. The predominance of Ph.D. holders suggests a high level of expertise in their respective fields, which can influence their perceptions and experiences in the workplace. This information could be useful for exploring whether higher levels of education impact gender-related issues in HEIs. The following section pertains to the first objective.

Objective 1: Assess gender disparities in workplace representation and leadership

6.2 Gender disparities in workplace representation and leadership

The data gathered through online interviews indicate that among the 21 universities in the country, only 2 women held the position of Vice-Chancellor. Moreover, when it comes to senior roles like Pro-Vice Chancellors, Registrars, Bursars, Deans, and

Heads of Departments, men overwhelmingly occupied these positions. This situation raises concerns about the prospects of women achieving prominent leadership roles in the future. P3 had this to say:

> *We are underrepresented in leadership roles, and management is not prioritising gender, diversity, and inclusion when it comes to promotion and access to opportunities. Cultural norms and values are perpetuating gender disparities within this institution because men hold most leadership positions and most decisions favour them. This has reinforced traditional gender roles and biases affecting how we interact with each other at the workplace.*

The underrepresentation of women in prominent leadership roles within higher education institutions raises several important concerns and considerations. This finding corroborates the research conducted by Schiltmans and Davies (2023) as well as Zvavahera et al. (2021), both of whom highlighted the existence of obstacles or prejudices that hinder women from advancing into leadership positions, even though they possess the requisite qualifications, expertise, and the potential to make valuable contributions. Having a diverse leadership team, including women in top positions, is crucial for providing role models for aspiring female academics. It can inspire young women to pursue careers in higher education and provide access to mentorship opportunities that are often essential for career advancement. Diverse leadership teams bring a variety of perspectives and experiences to the table, which can enrich the decision-making process. When women are underrepresented in senior roles, it may limit the diversity of thought and potentially hinder the institution's ability to address complex challenges and meet the needs of a diverse work environment (Mama, 2006). Insufficient gender diversity in leadership can foster an environment that feels less embracing and accommodating for women. As outlined in the Social Identity Theory and research conducted by Saqib and Khan in 2023, leadership within HEIs tends to exhibit a bias toward individuals of the same gender (in this case, men) when establishing professional networks or seeking collaborative prospects. This tendency inadvertently results in a lack of opportunities for women. This may affect recruitment and retention of female faculty and staff, leading to a less diverse workforce overall.

Examining the representation of women in leadership should include an analysis of the pipeline. The underrepresentation of women in various roles and the limited encouragement for them to pursue leadership positions in the early stages of their careers can be attributed to cultural norms and values that traditionally associate women with caregiving responsibilities. This association tends to constrain their potential for advancing into senior positions. Guzura's research in 2017 highlights that men consistently benefit from advantages across their academic journeys in comparison to women. This study's findings indicate that men continue to access opportunities and privileges primarily due to their presence in senior positions.

Implicit bias and stereotypes can play a significant role in hindering women's career advancement. Addressing these biases through awareness, training, and unbiased hiring and promotion processes is crucial. Ankita (2014) advises leaders in HEIs to value diversity since each person's uniqueness and leveraging differences for an inclusive and enriched work environment.

The underrepresentation of women in leadership roles within higher education institutions is a multifaceted issue that requires a comprehensive and proactive approach. Addressing these disparities is not only a matter of equality but also contributes to better decision-making, enhanced workplace culture, and the overall success of universities in fulfilling their educational and research missions.

Objective 2: Examine gender-specific challenges and experiences

Figure 1 illustrates that a significant number of the survey respondents faced various challenges related to work-life balance and family expectations, gender biases, and stereotypes. Specifically, 85% encountered issues related to work-life balance and family expectations, 57% experienced gender biases and stereotypes, 29% noted a lack of representation and mentorship, and 14% cited other challenges.

Online interviews revealed that women encountered additional obstacles, such as sexual harassment, career stagnation, and limited opportunities for staff training and development. Furthermore, it was evident from the interviews that women were under-represented in positions of authority, and available opportunities were predominantly extended to men, further hindering their professional advancement and status.

Figure 1: Challenegs faced by women in HEIs
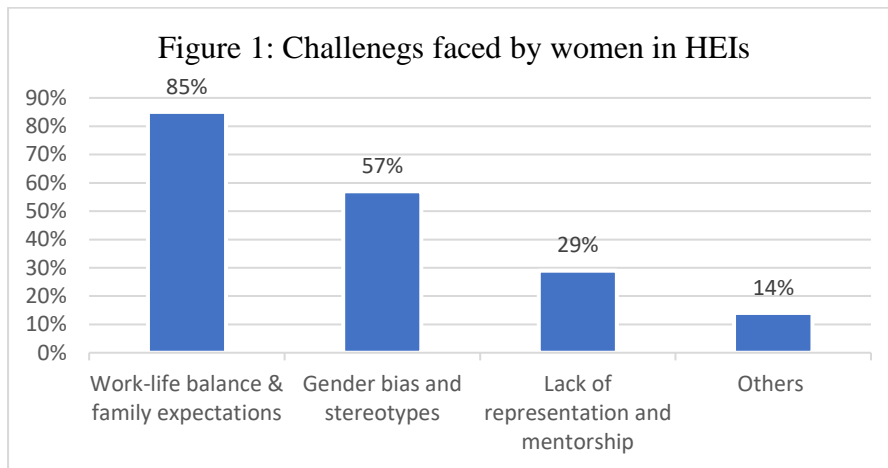
All the respondents concurred that the interplay between work-life balance expectations and caregiving responsibilities has a pronounced impact on gender disparities in career progression, with female employees being the group most adversely affected. During online interviews, several women disclosed that they experienced exclusion from institutional activities due to their caregiving responsibilities, and this exclusion had far-reaching consequences on various aspects of their lives. P2 indicated that:

> *Caregiving has been the responsibility of women since time immemorial. I feel that men take it as a shared responsibility. Cultural norms and values continue to play a big role in maintaining the traditional roles of men extending this to workplaces. There is inadequate support for achieving work-life balance and family expectations at the workplace and home.*

P10 had this to say*:*

> *There is implicit bias in the hiring and promotion processes and this has affected the number of female guest speakers and visiting scholars, hindering mentorship*

> *opportunities. There are also limited networking opportunities due to a lack of participation in international conferences and seminars.*

P4 observed that gender discrimination issues were deeply rooted in culture. The participant further highlighted the absence of paternity leave for her spouse to provide assistance during and after childbirth. She also mentioned that even when her spouse was at home, he was unwilling to share household chores, exacerbating her workload. P2 added: *"Men should be educated about the evolving nature of culture and advocate to be granted paternity leave to support us after giving birth."* Additionally, P9 emphasised the need to revise labour laws to accommodate paternity leave and provide proper facilities for breastfeeding mothers at the workplace. P3 challenged the assumption that men neither desire nor need paternal leave, stressing that this notion perpetuates traditional gender roles. P3 pointed out that:

> *These expectations place women in the role of primary caregivers and men as the primary breadwinners, resulting in an unequal distribution of domestic labour. Interestingly, I am also contributing to the welfare of our family and I feel that we should be equal partners in everything.*

Regarding representation and mentorship, participants expressed concerns about the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles and gender disparities within STEM fields. One participant (P8) highlighted that their university had a stark gender imbalance among professors, with only 10% being women. Responses from online interviews corroborated the findings of online questionnaires. Furthermore, responses from both online questionnaires and online interviews expressed frustration over the shortage of female advisors/mentors available for research and thesis supervision, limiting opportunities for women wishing to pursue Ph.D. studies (Chabaya, Rembe and Wadesango, 2009). There was a consensus among all respondents that HIEs in Zimbabwe lacked diversity initiatives to address these challenges. Regarding gender biases and stereotypes, there was a unanimous agreement that women encountered occupational stereotypes, wage disparities, leadership biases, occupational prejudices, instances of sexual violence, and a dearth of parental leave (Brower and James, 2020; LNVH, 2016).

Striking a balance between work and personal life can be more challenging for individuals who have caregiving responsibilities. The findings of this study corroborate Mama (2006) and Zvavaehra et al. (2021) who note that persistent gender inequality is commonly attributed to external social and familial factors thus; traditional gender roles and expectations continue to exacerbate this challenge for women since they bear the burden of being caregivers. Thus, workplace discrimination, biases, and imbalanced power dynamics mirror prevailing societal beliefs and values, thus acting as hindrances to achieving workplace parity, diversity, and inclusivity, unless comprehensive leadership and accountability are established across all echelons (European Commission, 2019; Hearn et al., 2020; Husu, 2020; Kachchaf et al., 2015; Schiebinger, 1999). Subtle but harmful behaviours and comments, known as micro-aggressions, can create an unwelcoming environment for individuals of certain genders. These micro-aggressions perpetuate stereotypes and contribute to a lack of inclusivity (Mama, 2006).

These findings corroborate the social identity of women (out-group) and men (in-group) who control everything and are favoured by the workplace systems. The theory posits that people tend to favour their in-group (the group they belong to, in this case, their gender group) over out-groups, (the opposite gender group) (Saqib and Khan, 2023). Work-life balance expectations and caregiving responsibilities significantly affect gender disparities in career advancement (Zvavahera et al., 2021). Women often face greater caregiving demands and societal expectations related to family responsibilities, which can hinder their career progression. Individuals of varying genders, as men, are typically expected to prioritise their careers over caregiving, while women may experience pressure to prioritise family life and navigate these challenges differently. Women often have to make career sacrifices, such as taking on part-time or less demanding roles, to accommodate caregiving responsibilities, which can result in slower career advancement (Zvavahera and Chirima, 2023). In contrast, men who prioritise their careers may experience fewer interruptions and faster advancement. Gender disparities in career advancement persist when societal norms and workplace policies do not adequately address these imbalances and when individuals are not supported in balancing their caregiving responsibilities with their career aspirations.

In science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines, women are frequently underrepresented among faculty members and researchers. This lack of representation can result in fewer female role models and mentors for female students pursuing STEM careers. There is often a shortage of female professors and mentors in many academic departments. This lack of representation can impact female students' access to guidance and support in their academic and career pursuits.
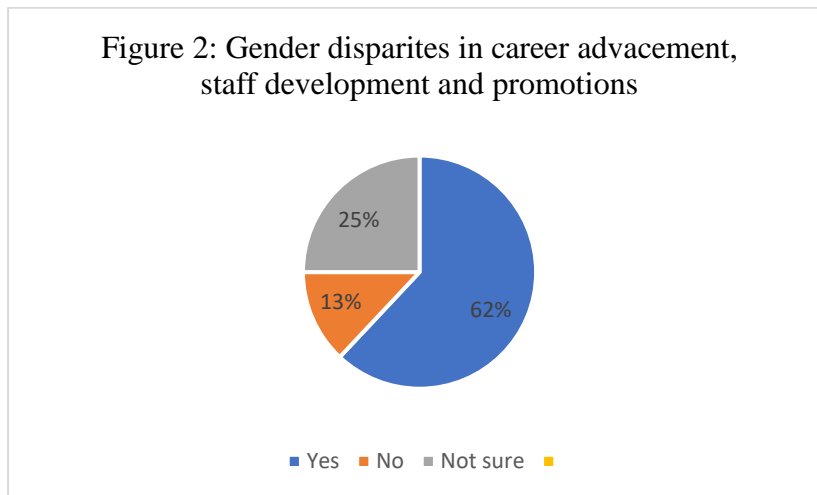
Implicit biases in hiring and promotion processes can disadvantage women in HEIs. These biases can result in women being passed over for job opportunities and promotions, even when they are equally or more qualified than male candidates. HEIs may invite a disproportionately low number of female guest speakers and visiting scholars to campus. This lack of representation can limit exposure to diverse perspectives and expertise for both students and faculty. HEIs may not provide sufficient support and accommodations for female faculty and staff members who have caregiving responsibilities, making it challenging for them to balance their professional and personal lives effectively.

Female students pursuing graduate studies may face challenges in finding female advisors and mentors for their research projects and thesis supervision. HEIs may lack comprehensive diversity and inclusion initiatives aimed at addressing these issues, which can perpetuate the underrepresentation of women in academia.

In the online survey, a majority of the responses (62%) pointed to notable gender discrepancies concerning career progression, staff growth, and promotions within their institutions. Meanwhile, 25% expressed uncertainty, and 13% acknowledged non-existent gender disparities (Refer to Figure 2).

The survey findings suggest that a significant portion of the respondents (62%) indicated the presence of noticeable gender disparities in terms of career progression, staff growth, and promotions within their respective institutions. This finding implies

that a majority of the participants perceive gender-based inequities in these aspects of their workplace. This corroborates the findings by Thomas, Plaut, and Zumbo (2018) who note that women find it difficult to progress in their careers across the globe. This implies that most women feel these disparities across the globe. This also supports the Social Identity Theory where women are always at the receiving end.

Figure 2: Gender disparites in career advacement, staff development and promotions

25%

13%

62%

■ Yes ■ No ■ Not sure ■

Additionally, a smaller but still notable percentage (25%) expressed uncertainty about the existence of gender disparities, indicating some level of ambiguity or lack of clarity among this group regarding the issue. This might encompass individuals who have limited experience and exposure in higher education institutions or a select few who may be reaping the rewards of the existing system.

Surprisingly, 13% of the respondents acknowledged the non-existence of gender disparities in these areas. This suggests that a minority of participants in the study did not perceive or believe that gender-based inequities were present within their institutions regarding career advancement and related matters.

Objective 3: Evaluate the effectiveness of gender-inclusive policies and initiatives

6.3   Strategies to cope with gender-specific challenges

The majority of the respondents (63%) indicated that they had turned to mentorship relationships as a strategy for addressing these difficulties. Correspondingly, an equal percentage of female employees, 63%, had also assumed the role of mentors, setting an example for both female colleagues and students. Additionally, 14% of survey participants disclosed their involvement in communities of practice, while another 14% disclosed their participation in informal peer support groups or online forums aimed at navigating the particular challenges linked to gender bias (Refer to Figure 3).

A significant number (63%) of the female employees in HEIs had sought mentorship relationships as a way to cope with the challenges of gender discrimination. This suggests that mentorship is a prevalent strategy among women to navigate their career paths and address workplace gender disparities as suggested by Tajfel et al. (1979). Saqib and Khan (2023) note that when individuals are segregated, they end up forming groups with colleagues of the same gender as a survival mechanism supporting the existence of all these formations.

Interestingly, an equal percentage (63%) of female employees had also taken on the role of mentors themselves. This means that many women were not only seeking guidance but were also actively contributing to the development and support of other women within their institutions, which could have a positive impact on gender diversity and inclusion. (Zvavavhera and Chirima, (2023) and the Social Identity Theory by Tajfel, et al. (1971) concur with this finding because when the out-group (women) is under pressure from the in-group (men) they intend to fight for their space and protect themselves from further physical and psychological harm.

Fugure 3: Strategies to cope with gender-specific challenges
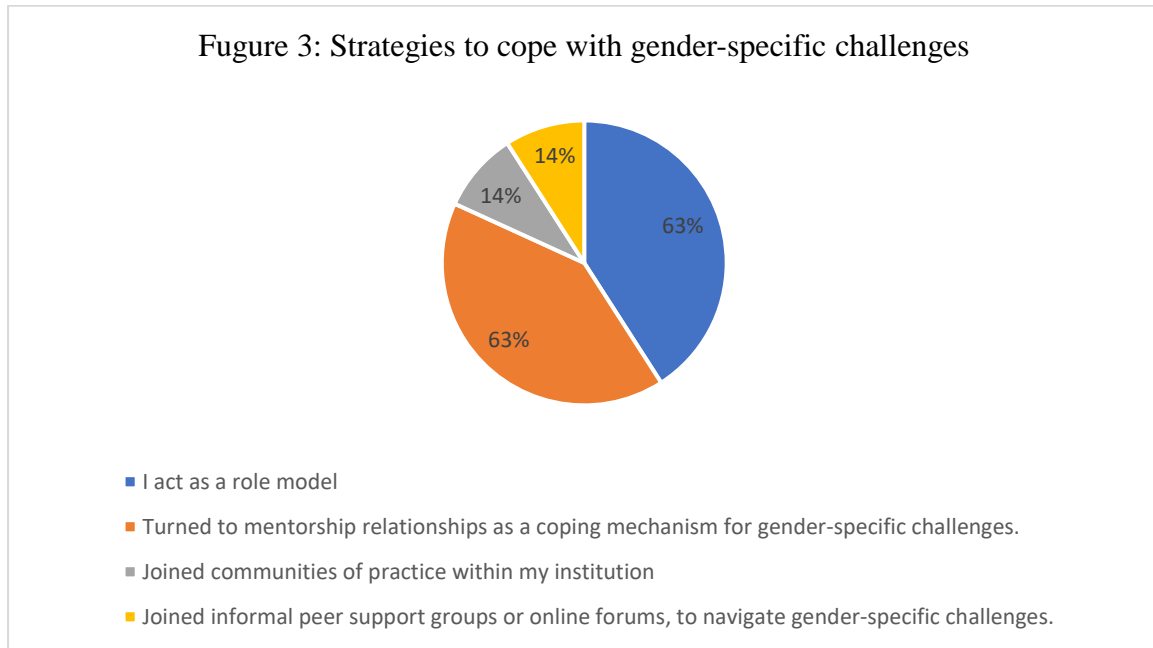
Another 14% of the participants had chosen to join informal peer support groups or online forums. This suggests that some women were seeking support and advice outside of formal institutional structures, possibly to find practical solutions and strategies to deal with gender-related challenges. When discriminatory practices persist this may affect, talent utilisation, and cohesiveness, thus, undercutting competitiveness and growth (Zvavahera and Chirima, 2023; Rodrigo and Clavero, 2022).

6.4   Gender-inclusive policies, programmes, and initiatives that institutions have implemented to promote diversity and inclusion

Fugure 4: Successful gender-related polices and intiatives to promote diversity and inclusiion
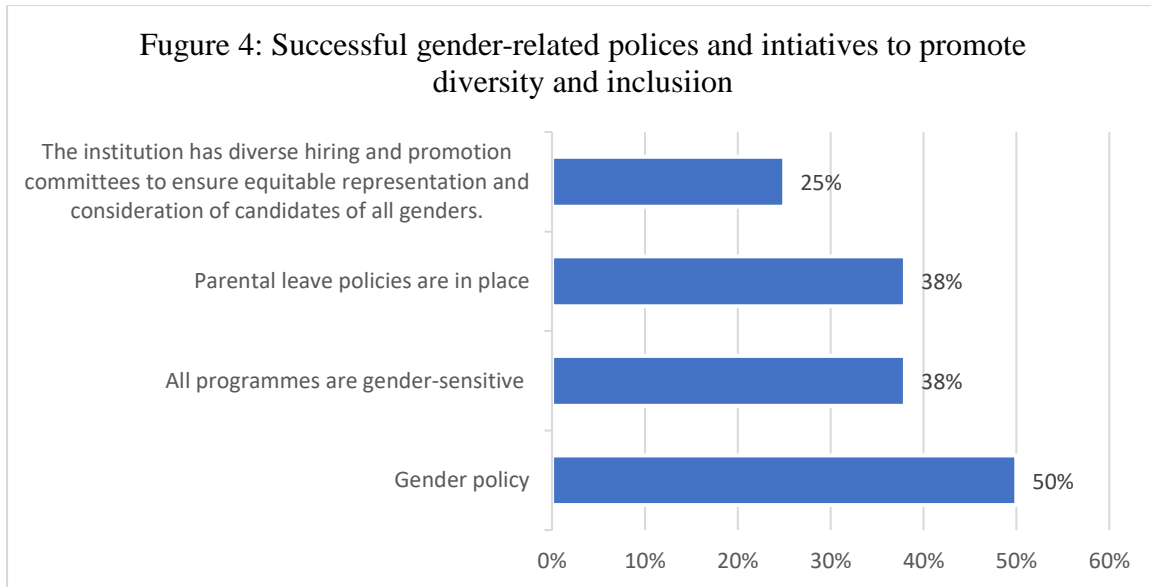
Figure 4 illustrates that, within their institutions, 50% of the respondents acknowledged the presence of gender policies, while 38% affirmed the existence of parental leave policies. Additionally, 38% indicated that all programmes within their institutions were intentionally designed to incorporate gender sensitivity. Furthermore, a quarter of the respondents (25%) mentioned the availability of inclusive hiring and promotion committees with the goal of guaranteeing equitable representation and evaluation of candidates from diverse gender backgrounds.

P9 indicated:

> Our existing policy for leaves does not incorporate any arrangements for parental leave. Some members are currently mistakenly referring to the vacation and maternity leave, which are applicable to all University employees, as parental leave. This indicates a need for Human Resources to enhance its efforts in informing staff about their terms and conditions of employment. We are pushing for the implementation of a formal parental leave policy. It is worth noting that

under the Labour Act [Chapter 28:01]; there is a provision for maternity leave for women only.

P8 indicated*:*

Despite the existence of policies, there is a notable absence of quantifiable outcomes. This deficiency is primarily attributed to inadequate financial backing and leadership commitment. If these policies were functioning as intended, there would likely be fewer instances of gender-related discrimination within our institutions.

Figure 4 provides and demonstrates that among the survey respondents from higher education institutions, a significant number acknowledged certain aspects of workplace policies and practices related to gender diversity and inclusion. Specifically, 50% of the participants indicated that their institutions had established gender policies, which could be indicative of a commitment to addressing gender-related issues in the workplace. Additionally, 38% of respondents reported the presence of parental leave policies, suggesting efforts to support work-life balance for employees with caregiving responsibilities. The findings of this study support Guzura's (2017) position that national gender machineries in Zimbabwe and beyond encounter financial difficulties because they are frequently provided with insufficient resources, hindering their ability to function effectively. Nonetheless, the situation in Zimbabwean universities contrasts with the circumstances at Makerere University, where such initiatives receive financial backing through budget allocations. This support has visibly influenced the statistics, as noted by Kigotho (2021).

Furthermore, the data revealed that 38% of those surveyed believed that all programmes within their institutions were intentionally designed to incorporate gender sensitivity. This could imply that a substantial portion of institutions is striving to create an inclusive and gender-aware environment across various programmes and initiatives. However, online interviews revealed that there were very few programmes that were deliberately designed with a gender component.

Lastly, the study found that 25% of respondents mentioned the availability of inclusive hiring and promotion committees. This statistic implies that a quarter of the institutions had established specialised committees focused on promoting diversity and ensuring fair representation and evaluation of candidates from diverse gender backgrounds in recruitment and advancement processes.

7.0   Conclusion

The study uncovered clear indications of gender imbalances, a lack of diversity and inclusion within the 10 HEIs in Zimbabwe, notably in areas such as work-life balance, familial expectations, the absence of paternity leave, a shortage of women in leadership roles, and instances of sexual harassment. Some of the challenges faced by women in their professional environments encompassed biases, stereotypes, insufficient support, and obstacles hindering career progression. The situation could be the same in some parts of the world.

The conclusion underscores the significance of fostering gender equality, diversity, and inclusion within higher education institutions. This encompasses a discussion of the advantages arising from diverse perspectives, enhanced decision-making processes, and the creation of a fairer and supportive work environment for everyone.

8.0   Recommendations

Higher education institutions should review and enforce policies that promote gender equity, diversity, and inclusivity. This includes policies related to hiring, promotions, pay equity, paternal leave, and flexible work arrangements. Transparent and equitable policies send a strong message about the institution's commitment to diversity and create a foundation for an inclusive workplace.

Leadership plays a pivotal role in setting the tone for gender diversity and inclusion. Leadership in HEIs should champion gender equality by actively advocating for diverse talent, fostering mentorship opportunities, and serving as role models for aspiring academics and administrative staff. Implementing mentorship programmes

that pair individuals with experienced mentors who could provide guidance, support, and insights into overcoming gender-related challenges.

Leadership in HEIs should conduct workshops, training sessions, and awareness campaigns to educate the entire universities communities about the importance of gender, diversity, and inclusion. These initiatives can help combat unconscious biases, challenge stereotypes, and promote respectful communication. It is also important for HEIs to offer financial resources that emphasise the value of diverse perspectives and experiences in enriching the learning and working environment. It is also critical to conduct regular diversity and inclusion assessments to assess progress and identify areas for improvement.

9.0   Limitations and areas for further research

This study was limited to women in 10 universities operating in Zimbabwe. Subsequent studies may find it essential to incorporate senior management from all higher education institutions operating in Zimbabwe to gather their insights on the same topic. Additionally, it is imperative to involve female students, as they may be experiencing related challenges.

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Interrogating feminisms, victimhood and patriarchy: A stiwanist reading of *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (Andreas, 2001)

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Abstract:

The main purpose of this article is to apply a feminist literary theory (stiwanism) to a text (The Purple Violet of Oshaantu) in order to understand the meaning of this text, and in the process advance feminist criticism. The article argues that while feminism's primary objective is for women and girls to have the same rights and opportunities as men and boys, some feminisms, for example lesbianism and raunchism, are so radical that they obscure the fight against patriarchy. However, stiwanism, a moderate brand of African feminism, has tenets that forcefully challenge patriarchy. The study shows that lesbians reject men altogether, and raunchists, whose modus operandi is demonstrating in skimpy and erotic clothing, bare breasts, and exposed buttocks, alienate themselves from broader society. Stiwanists, on the other hand are not anti-male, and their agenda is social transformation including women in Africa. The article concludes by demonstrating that "feminism" in not a dirty word, and recommends the propagation of literature that foregrounds gender issues.

Keywords: feminisms, gender, Ogundipe-Leslie, patriarchy, stiwanism

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Introduction

Anecdote: Girls are made of sugar and spice
            And everything nice
            But boys are made out of snakes and snails
            And puppy dog tails   (Dobson, 2010, p. 26)

As already indicated in the abstract, the main purpose of this article is to apply a feminist literary theory (stiwanism) to a text (*The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*) in order to advance feminist literary criticism (APA, 2020), and to understand the meaning of the text (Mouton, 2001, p. 167).

To begin with, it should be recognised that "femina", the Latin word for "woman", is the root for words such as "feminism", "feminine" and "femininity". It should further be observed, right from the on-set, that it is better to talk of feminisms, because feminism is neither monolithic nor homogenous; multiple feminisms exist and co-exist. There are some which specifically articulate the complex multi-tiered realities of Third World women, and here one can think of African women (Mangwanda, 1999, p. 26). One way to understand the varieties of feminism is to use an example somebody gave about Islam: "There are as many flavours of Islamic politics as there are (flavours) of ice cream. Some are retrograde and hostile to all opinions other than their own; others are as open and reasonable as the 'Christian Democratic' parties of Europe ... " (Dyer, 2011, p.7). Among the well known Islamist sects are al Qaeda, al Shabaab, Ansar Dine, Ansaru, Boko Haram, Hisbola, Sunni, Shi'ite, Salafists, kurds, Hamas, Fatah ... and so on and so forth. Some of these Islamic sects are so radical that they believe in the application of Shari'ah, (Islamic law), for example amputation of a thief's hands and stoning to death of anyone found guilty of committing adultery. In the same way, there are different strands of feminism, ranging from the most liberal to the most radical. This view is indeed confirmed by Molara Ogundipe-Leslie (2007, p. 547).

Feminism, which can also be fully explained as an aggregation of ideologies, beliefs, movements and strategies whose primary aim is to detect, define, defend and expand all various aspects of women's lives, has a very long history that goes back to the late 18th century. Authorities on feminism have found it convenient to divide the history of

feminism into three "waves", each phase dealing with feminist issues considered pertinent to that period. Although first wave feminism is generally regarded as spanning the years when women campaigned mainly for political rights (the women's suffrage movements), feminism can be traced back to the late 18th century. For example, in France, Marie Gouze, was one of the first women activists to demand equality between men and women. However, she did not receive sympathy or support from the male revolutionary leaders, and Marie Gouze was actually executed in 1793.

Early literature on feminism by female writers includes works from Virginia Woolf, often referred to as the "founding mother of the contemporary debate" (Selden, Widdowson & Brooker, 2005, p. 118). Woolf published texts such as *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938). Simone de Beauvoir, a French feminist and pro-abortionist, also started a women's newspaper *Nouvelles Feministes*, as well as a journal of feminist theory, *Questions Feministes*. marking the end of first phase of feminism. By the end of the 1940s,the suffragettes and suffragists in Euro-America had achieved their objectives, and so there was a lull in feminist activism in years to come.

The next phase of women's liberation activism roughly covers the years 1960 to 1980. Whilst still striving to consolidate the gains of the earlier phase's fight on the political front, this next phase targets "the politics of reproduction, to women's 'experience' to sexual 'difference' and to 'sexuality', as at once a form of oppression and something to celebrate" (Selden, Widdowson & Brooker, 2005, p. 120). Betty Friedan is often regarded as voice of second wave feminism. In her book, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) she reveals the frustrations of white, heterosexual middle-class American women – careerless and trapped in domesticity.

Since the early 1990s, there has been a concerted effort by some feminists who, quite rightly, feel marginalised by Euro-American feminism, as described above. Third wave (also known as Third World) feminism is therefore largely a reaction by Third World activists to make feminism more relevant to the Third World. In this context, Third wave feminism should be seen to be closely related to post-colonial feminism.

As stated earlier, feminism is neither a homogenous nor monolithic entity. For purposes of this paper, we have to distinguish between three types of feminism, two

radical, far left, lesbianism and raunchism, and one moderate, centrist or even liberal, in the mould of stiwanism.

Radical Feminisms: Under this heading can be found **lesbianism**. "Lesbian" is a 20th century construct, and the common understanding is that lesbianism is about same-sex sexual activity among women. In simple terms, lesbianism is female homosexuality. The reasoning among lesbian feminists is that lesbianism is the only and most effective way to overcome patriarchy.

Another radical version of feminism is **raunchism,** derived from **raunch culture**. The trade mark of raunch culture is raunchiness, craving to be the "most-wanted" woman on sight. The raunchists are identified by their exhibitionist tendencies; "they dress provocatively in order to attract guys, revealing more than they conceal" (Dobson, 2010, p. 9). In many cases, adherents of raunch culture dress in miniskirts or hotpants; sometimes these same women like to display their cleavages.

Levy refers to adherents of raunch culture as "lipstick feminists", "bimbo feminists" and "loophole women" who falsely believe that what they are doing is a type of women's emancipation. In extreme cases, some of these women cut and mutilate themselves and pierce their tongues, lips, noses, eyebrows, ears, navels, nipples, and private parts with spikes and rings (Levy, 2002, p. 7).

Both lesbian and raunch culture feminisms find little favour in mainstream African society. Women who subscribe to these cultures are derided and despised, and even blamed for the rise in incidences of rape. But we know that rapists are sick people who need treatment, first by being put in jail, and then afterwards in hospital. It does not make sense for rapists to blame their victims for provoking them. What excuse do they have for raping infants and toothless old women in their nineties?

Molara Ogundipe-Leslie has coined a new concept called **stiwanism.** (This new word "stiwanism" is derived from **STIWA**, an acronym from **S**ocial **T**ransformation **I**ncluding **W**omen in **A**frica.). "Stiwanism" is an umbrella term for "African feminism" because some people do not feel comfortable with "feminism". The main objective of stiwanism is to include African women and girls in all aspects of present-day life that will make Africa a better continent to live in. Stiwanism has been appropriated by some African women writers because it historicises their circumstances and focalises their politics.

Other feminisms, for example, Euro-American white feminism, French feminism, egofeminism, and so forth are unacceptable to African women writers because they ignore African circumstances.

Most importantly, stiwanism takes into cognisance the fact that both African men and African women must fight together to emancipate Africa from Euro-American domination. It is not synonymous with female aggression, woman's struggle to be like a man, and the rejection of female roles assigned to her by biology (Aina, in Nnaemeka, 1998, p. 85). Stiwanism is not anti-male. Culture should not be exploited to the advantage of men. Those institutions which are of value to women should be maintained, but those that work to the detriment of women must be rejected.

Clearly, then, stiwanism's most important reason for its existence is to rebuild, not to destroy society. There are many examples of women's organisations that are modelled around stiwa tenets, and one good example is Emang Basadi in Botswana. Established in 1986, this organisation's name literally means, "Stand up, women!" – that is to say, "Stand up and speak for your rights!" - political, economic, cultural, and rights an all aspects of life.

Emang Basadi has recorded a number of achievements, most notably lobbying against polygamy in Botswana, as well as lobbying against the Citizenship Act, which initially discriminated against Batswana women married to foreign men – these women could not pass on their citizenship rights to their children. In short, Emang Basadi as organisation is now involved in regional Southern African Development Community (SADC) Observation and Monitoring of Elections.

The purpose of providing this account of Emang Basadi is to demonstrate that stiwanism is not just a theoretical abstraction; it exists in practical terms. Even more important is the need to debunk the myth that feminism is an evil, satanic anti-male women's organisation whose main objective is to cause anarchy by overthrowing the normal order of nature. The truth is that there is nothing wrong or malicious about sensitising women and society at large about domestic and gender-based violence, maintenance laws, divorce, good governance, voter education, leadership skills, and so forth.

Women's organisations in different countries may be called by different names, but essentially, they are all operating under stiwanist principles. Sometimes there may be several women's groups in the same country, but the aims and objectives are similar, and all these organisations are clamouring for the improvement of women's social, cultural, economic and political conditions. For example, in Zimbabwe one of the most prominent women's organisations is WOZA (**W**omen **o**f **Z**imbabwe **A**rise), whose members are often harassed, arrested, beaten and tortured by the Zimbabwean police.

In Namibia, one of the fore-most feminist groups is called Sister Namibia, formed just after independence in June 1990. Sister Namibia's objectives are many and varied, and encompass all spheres of Namibian women's lives, including "to generate short stories, poems and personal to analyse the reality of Namibian women's lives at the time of celebrating 15 years of independence with the intention of stimulating debate on how far we have come, and still have to go, towards the realisation of the protections, rights and entitlements accorded to all Namibian women by national and international laws;

Clearly, then, stiwanism is alive and well in countries such as Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia. This paper attempts to interpret a Namibian text, *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* using an African feminist literary theory, stiwanism.

Textual Analysis of *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*

This is a novel by Neshani Andreas, a Namibian woman writer who unfortunately died on 12th May in 2011 of lung cancer. The plot revolves around two close friends who face contrasting fortunes in their marriages; Mee Ali's marriage to Michael is the ideal thing – full of love and warmth, while Mee Kauna's marriage to Shange is the exact opposite – it is a loveless, abusive relationship in which the husband often mercilessly assaults his wife. Shange even openly parades for the whole world to see his most recent extra-marital affair with another woman from a nearby settlement. In between, there is Mee Fennie, a woman who divorced her abusive husband but has managed to live a very happy life, even educating her children up to university level.

Detailed analysis: "Michael" is a modern name, and so it is significant that this man breaks away from the traditional way of treating a wife. Right from the beginning, even

before his marriage to Mee Ali, Michael ignores all the bad things being said about her: why he should marry her, of all people, her with those hands that look like chicken claws. "That one with the high hips and small legs that make her look like a wild cow" (Andreas, 2001, p. 16). Later Michael protects his wife from the ugly gossip being spread by his mother and relatives about Mee Ali – that she is a whore, and she has given him mountains of *muti* to make him love her so much (Andreas, 2001, p. 17).

Michael works far away in Windhoek and comes home only during long holidays such as Easter and Christmas. In between these times he sends goodies to his family, and keeps in touch by letter. When he is at home, Michael always accompanies his wife to church, his children are all over him, competing with each other for his attention. He is indeed a loving father to his entire family, and is seen distributing presents to each member of the family – a pair of shoes, pants, a dress, material or perfume. Fittingly, the novel ends with preparations for a love-making encounter:

"'Let's go to bed,' he said. 'It is after midnight already. ... He stretched his hand out to me. I held onto it as I stood up. He put his arm around my waist and felt the beads around it, which sent a thrill through my body. 'Yes, let's go to bed,' I answered" (Andreas, 2001, p. 181).

In contrast, Michael's childhood friend, Shange, is the worst husband any woman can ever hope to marry. "Shange" in Oshiwambo means "what is mine", and so throughout the novel, Shange lives up to the meaning of his name – he thinks only about himself. To begin with, he married Kauna not because he loved her but because it suited him: "I was the daughter of a pastor and a teacher, a high school girl and a virgin. I was perfect for him. It was more for his ego than anything else, " (Andreas, 2001, p. 51). Kauna experiences unhappiness right from the early stages of her marriage, firstly because he did not build her her own kitchen, and she had to suffer the burden of having to cook for so many people in her in-laws' family. As if that was not enough, it took Kauna nearly three years to conceive. Shange's relatives said that had apparently ruined her womb and as a result she would never have children. Shange had had children already with his previous girlfriends, so Kauna was automatically blamed for the problem the couple were facing. One time when Shange had not returned to eat at home, Kauna asked where he could be, at which point her sister-in-law rudely answered: "He went to those with fertile wombs" (Andreas, 2001, p. 21).

Shange is such a dishonest husband that he even lies about the true nature of his job. After giving the impression that he works as a diamond miner, it is discovered that in fact he is a chef. This discovery, through a photograph found inside Kauna's Bible, is a blow to his pride, and he vents his frustration by savagely assaulting Kauna. The narrator recounts that Shange strikes Kauna mercilessly all over her tiny body with his mine shoes, so that in the end Kauna has blood mixed with sand all over her face, mouth, nose, eyes, ears, head and clothes. His friend Michael tries to restrain Shange, to no avail, and this episode is watched even by the couple's children who are left crying helplessly.

(Andreas, 2001, pp. 58 -59).

As if the beatings are not enough, Shange also tortures his wife emotionally – by cheating on her publicly. Kauna's unhappiness is so strong that she finds she is unable to shed a tear when her husband unexpectedly dies. When everybody is shocked by Kauna's behaviour, she bravely tells them that she cannot lie to herself and everybody in the village because they all know how she was treated in her marriage. She rhetorically asks, "Why should I cry? For what? For my broken ribs? For my baby, the one he killed inside me while beating me? For cheating on me so publicly? For what?" (Andreas, 2001, p. 49)

Kauna's hardened feelings against her abusive husband, and her failure to shed a tear on his death, is reminiscent of Martha's similar action in Dangarembga's *She No Longer Weeps.* After encountering cruelty and hypocrisy from both men and women around her, especially from her own parents, and also from her former boyfriend, Freddy, Martha says she longer feels pain or pity or sympathy (Dandarembga, 1987, p. 50). Towards the end of the play, her father recalls an incident: "Do you remember the time of Tete Enia's death? Martha stood there, without a tear, only waiting to come back to Harare. That is when I noticed that she no longer weeps," (Dangarembga, 1987, p. 57). It is therefore not surprising in the end that Martha takes drastic measures to avenge the humiliation and suffering that she has endured from Freddy. This man earlier impregnates Martha and abandons her, but after seven years comes back and says he wants to take the child from Martha. Actually he boastfully says that he wants everything from Martha. He reminds her that he had Martha's virginity and her love but she tried to prove that she could manage without him, so now he must

teach her a lesson. Freddy says that Martha is not a good woman. He goes on to say that she does not know her place in this world, which is underneath. He also tells her that she thought she should be on top. To which Martha replies, "No, what I wanted was side by side," (Dangarembga, 1987, p. 53).

Martha's humiliation and suffering lead her to take drastic action against Freddy: "I am going to make you suffer for the suffering you caused me. (*She lunges with the knife*) I shall take this for spoiling me. ... and this because you took my daughter from me ... and this I shall take for all the women you have betrayed," (Dangarembga, 1987, p. 59).

In the end Kauna is ordered to leave the homestead, as she is reminded: "Why do you want to stay here and enjoy Shange's wealth? You didn't even shed one tear for him. ... You will not stay here and bring other men into Shange's bed," (Andreas, 2001, p. 166).

During Kauna's ordeal, several people try to advise her to divorce Shange, most notably her aunt Mee Fennie. Physically strong and tall, this woman is admirable in that she divorced her husband because their marriage was not working. Against all odds, Mee Fennie works very hard as a market vendor and improves her material circumstances. Two of her children are boarders in a secondary school, and the eldest, her daughter, is at university. She builds her children their own huts, and for herself she builds a concrete bedroom. Her livestock is increasing as well – five cows and seven goats! Mee Fennie's action demonstrates that a woman does not need to stick to an abusive husband just because she wants people to say that she is married. If a marriage does not work for you, leave it. Mee Fennie is a happy single mother.

Conclusion: Literary texts such as *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* and *She No Longer Weeps,* to mention only two, sensitise us to life-giving values and concerns of universal appeal. African feminist literature of this calibre should be part of the educational agenda in Zimbabwe, in the SADC region, and indeed in the wider world. Theories of literary criticism such as STIWANISM must be embraced because they deepen and broaden the debate on feminism.   This is important because there is so much mysticism about "feminism", but everyone ought to know that this word,

"feminism", is not a dirty word that some people think is synonymous with radical forms of women's politics such as lesbianism or raunchism. In simple terms, a feminist is someone who believes in gender equality.

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Violence Against Holy Objects in Zimbabwe's War of Liberation: Selected Experiences from the Catholic Church

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Abstract

Zimbabwe went through an armed liberation struggle from 1966 that culminated in the attainment of African majority rule in 1980. Part of the violence of that liberation struggle was directed at remote mission stations scattered throughout rural areas. While many studies have focused on the murder and brutalization of missionaries and other mission workers, there remains a knowledge gap on the damage and destruction of church buildings, images and other objects considered holy. The purpose of this paper is to discuss material cultures which were destroyed and the effects with special reference to the Catholic Church in wartime Zimbabwe generally, and Mapiravana (St Theresa) Church of Chirumhanzu and Berejena mission of Chivi in particular. The paper is within the broader context of closure to some horrific aspects of the armed struggle since Zimbabwe has not established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to deliberate on wartime violence. Furthermore, the paper widens our understanding of the forces behind the tearing of shrines and Christian Churches historically and to date. Although secondary sources were used, the research benefited primarily from oral interviews with parishioners of the time, relics of destruction which could be observed and press coverage of the same incidences. It is important to bear in mind that church buildings constitute sacred spaces which are set aside from the secular world and its laws. This constitutes enduring legacies of Catholicism in the present day.

Key words: images, iconoclasm, material culture, sacred spaces, idolatry.

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1.0 Introduction

This paper is a study of violence against church landscapes during Zimbabwe's war of liberation, commonly known as the Second Chimurenga, which was fought for 14 years leading to independence of 1980. Throughout the war, guerrilla liberation movements of the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) were defined by the Rhodesian white minority regime as anti-Christ. Therefore, acts of violence directed at churches were often alleged to have been committed by any of the two. The intention of the research is to extend knowledge on the significance of religious objects in Catholicism and how their attacks impacted on the belief system of those who venerated them. We drew our literature from medieval Europe and Rwanda, before focusing on Zimbabwe. The paper uses iconoclasm as a lens through which we could understand wartime violence against the Church. The historical background given in this paper situates violence against the Church within a global context and also explains driving factors behind this form of violence perpetrated by armed assailants. After discussing iconoclasm in Zimbabwe's war of liberation generally, we provide detailed explanations of the same acts using Berejena and Mapiravana missions. The article concludes that driving motivations for these two attacks appear to have been attempts to smear ZANLA guerrillas and discredit the Zimbabwe African National Union, a nationalist political party that was led by Robert Mugabe and fighting for majority rule.

2.0 Methodology and data collection methods

The study is exclusively qualitative in nature. Interviews were undertaken between 2021 and 2022. In October 2021, we visited Berejena Mission and carried out interviews with people who lived either on or around the mission. Our respondents still had memories of the war and how it impacted on the church. All of them were interviewed either in their homes except for 2 who were interviewed at work. The attack at Berejena mission took place in February 1980 as Zimbabwe was preparing for elections. We also conducted some telephone conversations on attacks at Mapiravana (St Theresa) in the Chirumhanzu area which was stripped and ultimately occupied in 1978. Battles at St Theresa and the eventual occupation of the church building and priest's house by armed men were critical to our understanding of iconoclasm. In addition, we were also able to use information from interviews which had been carried

out earlier by one of the researchers. We also benefited from knowledgeable people whom we came across from many parts of Zimbabwe.

3.0 Conceptual Framework

We use the concept of iconoclasm to explore damage to buildings and attacks on what was considered holy during Zimbabwe's war of liberation. Mary Vincent (2020, 147) forwards that in its strictest sense, iconoclasm means image breaking. According to Spicer (2017, 1012), the term iconoclasm is derived from a Greek word *eikon* (image) and *klastes* (breaker). Owing to the multiplicity of items that are destroyed in violence against religion, there is a wider definition to iconoclasm. It is a broader assault on the church and included ripping off crucifixes from nuns. There is no universally agreed definition of what these objects maybe. During the Spanish Civil War, things which were targeted included but were not limited to furnishings, altars and statues. Combustibles, retables, confessionals, benches and doors were sometimes targeted for burning. Sacristy cloths and vestments were shared between women who repurposed these by making cushions and curtains from chalice cloths and vestments, 'espadrilles, trousers and shirts from other church fabrics and underwear and heavy woolen petticoats from white religious habits (Vincent, 152). All these which were destroyed had religious significance to those who made or used them. Elsener (2012, 368) has highlighted that studying iconoclasm has the challenge that it is largely couched in theological or hagiographical language. We define iconoclasm as a form of activity involving damage to images and buildings at any time and place in human history. In other words, it is a physical attack on images and holy objects. Since we are focusing on the Church, attack on holy objects take a center stage in our discussion of iconoclasm. What must be borne in mind is that historically and to date, humanity's search for the sacred was often connected to physical sites such as a temple, shrine or any physical feature. A sacred space has been defined 'as an essential category of human experience which emerges and persists as both an experienced and physical location and an imagined set of cognitive associations' (Nelson, 2010, 320). During the Reformation, the bulk of Protestants rejected sacred materiality and thus turned towards iconoclasm and asceticism as attempts to foreground the importance of immateriality and spirituality (Miller, 2010, 71). This is in contrast with Catholics who have retained the belief that grace could work in special

locations and through physical objects and also in saints and holy places as affirmed in the Council of Trent in 1563 (Tingle, 2018, 90-91). Therefore, it is important to understand the relationship between Catholicism and sacred landscapes. When these landscapes are polluted through acts of violence (shedding of blood, homicide or other public acts of filthiness such as Becket's murder), rite of reconciliation was followed from around 1000CE (Hamilton, 2021, 23). The Church building which had been violated through violence had to be reconsecrated in a ceremony which was presided over by a bishop. For this study, sacred landscapes go beyond the building to include the priest's house, convents, and the Church grounds and so on. These are places of refuge from secular law (Shoemaker, 2010). Naturally, these landscapes contain holy objects which can be violated during times of instability as demonstrated in this study. The religious are close to these objects and therefore, they are usually violated together with them.

4.0 Historical Background

Although iconoclasm has taken place in different phases within the history of the Church, 10 August 1566 is taken as groundbreaking to the study of the subject. On that day, the Reformed preacher, Sebastien Matte delivered a sermon at the village church in Steenvoorde in the Westkwatier (west quarter) of Flanders, in Belgium. Following the sermon, some congregants attacked religious images, paintings and other items at a nearby religious house of Saint Laurent (Spicer, 2017, 1007). The attack heralded the beginning of *beeldenstorm* (image storm) or iconoclastic fury which spread through the Flanders, Habsburgs and Netherlands. At first, iconoclasts targeted objects associated with the celebration of Mass. They damaged paintings, attacked sacrament houses and overturned altars (Spicer, 2021, 1008). With time, they went beyond images and items associated with mass to include relics, books, manuscripts, vestments and sometimes altar pieces. Spicer (2017, 1008) has added that measures were taken by the Church as well as local authorities to protect these objects. Some important paintings were removed to safety; altar pieces were dismantled and hidden.

Historically, iconoclasm had widespread repercussions on the church community. For example, on 29 December 1170, Archbishop Thomas Becket was assassinated in the Canterbury Cathedral by four knights with close ties to the then King (Graffiths and

Magill, 2021, 5). His murder led to the closure of the church and the suspension of liturgical services there for almost a year. Services resumed 357 days later on 21 December 1171 as the building needed to be ritually cleansed and restored from the violence which had taken place inside (Hamilton, 2022, 23). Becket became a martyr of both the Catholic and Anglican Church. He had died defending papal supremacy over English Royal authority and thus in the 16th century, King Henry VIII ordered that the Archbishop's memory be wiped out. As such, laws were passed prohibiting the mentioning of his name and banning his image. Libraries were searched and royal officials scrapped or inked over all mentions of Becket in books and manuscripts (Hamilton, 20222, 23). Also destroyed or whitewashed were his paintings, frescoes, statues and vestments. Finally, his shrine in Canterbury Cathedral was also destroyed (Hamilton, 2022, 23). This shows that iconoclasm is also a political move bent on disgracing alleged enemies. Dismantling the shrine of St Thomas Becket under King Henry VIII was part of dis-martyring of the former Archbishop identifying him as a disobedient, rebel and traitor to the King's ancestor (Spicer, 2017, 1010-1011). It was part of an attempt to throw Becket to historical and religious dustbins.

Iconoclasm is not a dead subject. Destruction of things considered holy continued thereafter. During the French Revolution, the images of Louis XI and Francis II were destroyed. In 2001, the 16th century mausoleum Buddhas of Bamiyan were dynamited by the Taliban. Mausoleums and shrines at Timbkutu were torn down or damaged by Malian forces linked to al Qaeda in July 2012 while ISIS has targeted Christian Churches as from 2014 (Spicer, 2017, 1012). Saddam Hussein's statue in Bhagdad was destroyed during the 2003 invasion of Iraq. On 5 March 2023, the Uganda Martyrs Church of Zimbabwe's Gokwe Diocese had to be reconsecrated following its desecration by a woman alleged to be suffering from mental health disorders (Atemanke, 2023). The woman is said to have gone in and destroyed sacred vessels including the tabernacle and two ciboria which contained Holy Communion. According to the report, "the woman also attacked and pulled down Stations of the Cross and everything that bore the image of Jesus while she profaned the altar by scattering altar clothes (Atamanke, 2023). As a result of these activities, the Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese, Bishop Rudolf Nyandoro presided over the reconsecration of the Catholic Parish making it open for public worship. It is against this world-wide rich background that we sought to trace the dimensions of iconoclasm during Zimbabwe's

war of liberation. We intend to identify the people behind, their motivation and how those who venerated these objects were affected. We also seek to explain how the church as a community reacted.

Iconoclasm has not been a preserve of the Catholic Church only. The Anglican Church too was a victim. During the English Civil War, the cathedral at Lichfield was severally attacked and destroyed (Ellis and Atherton, 2009, 233-245). In March 1643, the attackers were parliamentary troops which was a clear indication that iconoclasm was centrally organized. This is contrary to the situation finding in Zimbabwe's war of liberation were either guerrillas or government forces denied that they were responsible for attacking churches and destroying property. The pattern however is consistent. With regards to the 1643 attacks, several church items such as monuments, carved work, windows, church records and so forth were destroyed. The troops also defiled the church with their excrement (Ellis and Etherton, 2009). Reasons for iconoclasm in Western Europe have generally been researched on while the same are difficult to establish in Zimbabwe because alleged perpetrators usually deny responsibility.

The African continent has had its fair share of iconoclasm particularly in times of violent conflict. The most striking aspects come from the Rwandan genocide against Tutsis and moderate Hutus of 1994 where the attack on objects was peculiar. The most vulnerable were religious objects, and in particular statues which in the minds of the attackers bore 'the marks of a Tutsi body' (Korman, 2014, 232). Militias broke the nose off the statue of the Virgin Mary at Kibeho which was an important site of the Catholic Church in Rwanda. Others decapitated the statue of Christ on the cross inside the church at Nyaruuye (Korman, 232-232). Another feature of iconoclasm was the attack and killing of Tutsis and moderate Hutus who had taken refuge in church buildings. For many, these are regarded as holy places and therefore not spaces for violence. During the mass killings of Tutsis following the 1959 revolution, those who had taken refuge in churches had their lives spared (Nwebury and Newbury, 1999, 297). According to one survivor from the Rwandan genocide at a massacre at Ntarama on 14 Aril 1994, soldiers made holes in the back of the church and threw grenades through the hole and then Interahamwe militias entered with machetes to finish off the surviving. When African Rights arrived at the scene after two months, the church was

still full of decomposing bodies (Meredith, 2011, 514). Therefore, instead of being places of worship, in 1994, churches became slaughter houses. We are not insinuating that this level of violence in and to what is considered holy took place during armed conflict in Zimbabwe, but only to highlight that the level of violence against holy objects can extend to human beings.

During the Rwandan genocide, members of the clergy were killed mostly in church buildings and church premises. The Catholic Church lost a third of its clergy. In the process, places of sanctuary were violated. According to Hoyweghen (1996, 394), more Rwandese died in churches and parishes than elsewhere. By the summer of 1995, 200 priests were in Rwanda, 60 in Goma- all that was left of the initial 400 (Hoyweghen, 395). The church was accused in the aftermath of being an accomplice to the genocide despite having been a loser itself given that the bulk of Rwandese belonged to the Catholic Church. It comes therefore as no surprise that in defence, the church saw these attacks as unwarranted, an international plot against the church as a community and accusations as a world-wide project of defamation to discredit it (ibid, 295-296). In a letter addressed to Pope John Paul II by 29 priests on 29 August 1995, there is an impression that the problem was not the genocide but a vast anti-Catholic movement (Dennis, 2018, 300).

5.0 Iconoclasm in Zimbabwe's Armed Struggle

The Church was not spared by wartime violence in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia). In particular, missions and their personnel located in rural areas were among the worst recipients of that violence and murders were not uncommon. Foreign white missionaries were the main targets. In this section, we discuss violence which was meted out on the church and then we move on to examine attacks and destruction of Church property including things considered holy. The intention is to document dimensions of violence in relation to iconoclasm. As such, by the time Zimbabwe became independent in 1980, some Church buildings lay in ruins, expatriate missionaries opposed to white minority rule had been deported by the Rhodesian regime, while the surviving had retreated to urban enclaves or were imprisoned. Attacks on mission stations as well as deportations were not uncommon. For example, on 23 March 1977, Bishop Donald Lamont, then 65 years old Bishop of Umtali Diocese was stripped of his Rhodesian citizenship and deported (Lamont, 1977, 5). On 6

February 1977, Musami mission lost 7 missionaries who were shot dead by armed assailants. These were Fr Martin Thomas (45), Fr Christopher Shepherd Smith (34), Brother Conway (56), Sisters Magdala Lewandouski, Epiphany Scheider (78) Ceslaus Stiegler (59) and Pauline Wilkinson (MacLaughlin, 1996, 149). Elsewhere in Gwelo Diocese, Fr Desmond Donovan was also killed in on 15 January 1978 and his body was not found. The main reason for these onslaughts was that the Catholic Church was accused by the Rhodesian government of being riddled with communism yet at the same time missionaries were brutalized by armed *guerrilla* assailants (Chakawa, 2011, 1). In the Sinoia Prefecture (now Chinhoyi Diocese), missions that were attacked included St Albert, St Rupert, St Boniface and Kangaire. The escalation of the war saw St Rupert, Kangaire, St Albert and St Boniface closing between 1978 and 1979. At St Rupert, the two German missionaries present were killed and a German priest was murdered at Kangaire. St Boniface mission lost its African catechist and closed as well (ibid).

Experiences from St Ruperts and a few other missions demonstrate that there was no widespread conspiracy or motivating ideology in church attacks. St Rupert and Kangaire were ransacked by local people while the closure of St Albert led to its plunder by local commercial white farmers. St Alberts had no Jesuit missionary killed though the mission closed. Following the deaths of the two Jesuits at St Rupert in Magonde, locals looted the mission. According to Mr and Mrs Shumba (interview, 30 November 2010), 'people thought that whites were departing forever so it was time for " chaos. Locals, some of them members of the Church, grabbed whatever they could lay hands on'. Through the same mentality, it was deemed that Church properties had lost ownership since the white missionaries had been killed. The desire to loot by African members of the community changed white catholic missionaries into aliens and this new thinking justified ransacking the mission. Historically, church attacks have been linked to wider violence against religion (Marcon, 2016, 169-196). The destruction of the church building at St Ruperts defies ideological motivations and demonstrates that these were community ad hoc decisions driven by poverty and not directed by the so-called communist guerrillas.

There were however widespread and enduring consequences against some church attackers in the aftermath of the war. Accordingly, 'one lay mission worker was heavily

involved in the looting of the church property at St Rupert's. Ashamed of his activities, he had no choice but to migrate from the area when the war came to an end and the mission was supposed to reopen. He could not return to Makonde because members who had not participated in stripping the Church were demanding that he returns all he had taken purportedly for *safekeeping*.' This shows that looting from abandoned properties, including the Church was part and parcel of what could be defined as primitive accumulation. The poor took this as an opportunity to at least pilfer something that could probably improve their livelihood. According to Mr Dhakwa, 'people collected all they could lay their hands on in wake of missionaries' deaths. These included pupils' trunks, window frames, doors, roofing sheets, fences, blankets, beds, and mattresses. They also went into the Church building and took everything inclusive of objects considered holy leaving it a shell (interview with Mr Dhakwa, 4 June 2022). After the war, locals were encouraged to return what they had taken. Not sure about what would happen to them, Mr Zvidza (Interview, 5 June 2022) added that the majority of community members chose to throw mission property into the nearby Mupfure River rather than risk being arrested. Such therefore was the end of the Jesuit investment. As was usual with most missions, the school re-opened at independence and so did the hospital.

The attack of Kangaire mission in part was driven by opposition to religion and also local hatreds. Fr Gerhard Pieper was shot on St Stephen Day (26 December 1978) at Kangaire Mission. His body was riddled with bullets (Bary, 2015). One attacker is said to have tried to unveil one local nun and implored upon her to go and get married. In the same incident, another assailant also tried to take off a cross she was wearing. Attempting to unveil a nun and insulting her can be interpreted as having been motivated by open indifference to Catholicism. Following the death of missionaries, like St Rupert's, the next to be looted by people from the surrounding area were church properties including the church and its holy objects. Mr Gasva (interview, 27 April 2014) recalled that following the murder of Fr Pieper, the mission was looted by members of the surrounding rural Kangaire community. In a great way, the death of Fr Pieper discredited the image of the ZANLA group operating in the area. For that misdeed, the whole group was withdrawn by its leadership. However, before leaving, they were involved in a running battle with Security Force Auxiliaries [SFAs] an irregular military unit belonging to Bishop Muzorewa. The battle took place at the

alleged sellout's home. ZANLA guerrillas were attempting to take the man who had lied to them about Fr Pieper for ' execution, while SFAs quickly decided to protect him against what they called guerrilla violence.

Another phenomenon almost found everywhere where missions were destroyed is that of those who tried to strip the church off its roof getting injured in the process. That analogy is difficult to separate from those who advance it. There is no doubt that dire consequences of church stripping are comfledged in strong religious beliefs. Statements of negative consequences of iconoclasts were generally coming from Christians. According to Mr Gasva (a catechist in the Catholic Church in Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe), falling and injuries served the Church in Kangaire from total destruction. Strangely, almost the same story crops up in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Chegato where one man attempting to strip it off the church roof fell and well badly wounded (Bhebe, 1999, 210). These statements emanated from respondents with strong religious convictions and therefore an extension of the belief in the objects which they venerate. Events at St Rupert's and Kangaire demonstrate active involvement of locals in destroying the church which had been set courtesy of German Jesuits, but do not point to any ideological influence as drivers. St Martin Church and primary school under in Chundu under St Paul's parish in Karoi was similarly vandalized. According to Lina Simakani (interview, 13 April 2011), the community was ordered to destroy the school by ZIPRA combatants because going to school was not compatible with the war effort. Within a day all the asbestos sheets had been removed. The church building was then converted by Rhodesian soldiers into some sort of mortuary to keep dead bodies waiting to be transported to the small town of Karoi for further evidence taking by members of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and Special Branch (SB). The altar was similarly destroyed through acts linked to security forces and only had to be rebuilt after the war. Such activities as advanced by Strother (2020, 929) targets emotions. The lock to the tabernacle was lost hence it remained locked two decades after the end of the liberation war. At St Boniface Mission in Hurungwe district, ZIPRA guerrillas are remembered for refusing parishioners permission to attend mass. According to a wartime resident of the mission area during the war, Mubazangi, ZIPRA compelled Fr Zinkann to abandon the mission station. The catechist Mr Berebvende tried to keep the church running and he was shot dead allegedly by ZIPRA guerrillas. The body of the catechist, Mr Martin

Bverebvende was found near St Boniface Mission murdered on 2 February 1979 (Padbury, 2022, 376). This act was blamed on ZIPRA guerrillas because the mission continually remained open under the protection of SFAs (Padbury, 2022, 360). Unlike other missions, St Boniface was therefore not looted in part because ZIPRA guerrillas did not have strong support hence the closure of the mission did not draw support of the local people.

Contrary to the above destructions by African communities, St Albert's in Mashonaland Central province of Zimbabwe was ransacked and destroyed by white commercial farms who saw the school as a breeding ground for future guerrillas. When we talked to Fr Walter, he thought that relations with guerrillas deteriorated from the time the school had accepted Rhodesians military protection. That protection was also at the instigation of the local white farming community who held the missionaries suspect. To guerrillas, the mission was a military target. In June 1979 and October, the same year, it was attacked and forced to close. Neighbouring white farmers who harboured their own differences with the Jesuit community ransacked the mission and robbed it of its building material. They auctioned some of the material in Harare. The mission was only re-opened in 1984 by the then Zimbabwean Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe.

6.0 Attack at Mapiravana and Berejena Missions

When it comes to desecration of the church building and things in it considered holy, two missions from Gweru Diocese, Mapiravana and Berejena Missions provide good examples. Mapiravana mission suffered violent setbacks during the closing years of the protracted war. The mission was relatively big with a primary and secondary school during the 1970s. The school head was killed allegedly by ZANLA guerrillas under unclear circumstances. Following his murder, there were several exchanges of firepower between guerrillas and Security Force Auxiliaries (SFAs). With a view of displaying military superiority and to prove that they were defenders of the church, SFAs occupied the mission and chased away the resident white priest. SFAs decided not only to stay at the priest's house, but converted the church building itself into their base. They also dug trenches in the church yard and around the mission. As part of disrespect for items considered holy, they stripped the church of its objects including the cross. Sometime in 1979, there was a heavy exchange of fire between SFAs and ZANLA guerrillas and the church building itself was riddled with bullets (interview with

Dr Ephraim, 22 January 2022). There was even a mortar attack intended to bring down the building but this was not successful. It was only after the war that the church was repaired and the trenches around it were covered.

As a result of wartime violence, the term *ecclesia* could no longer be applied be applied to the church building as a place set apart from the secular world. It should not be forgotten that the church building had been made holy through the rite of church dedication and that rite was contaminated by this violent act where men under arms decided to occupy and defile the church building and the priest's house. Materials such as used cartridges can still be picked from the mission premises. What we could not establish was whether the rite of reconciliation was undertaken when the war came to an end. However, what we were able to ascertain at Mapiravana was that Catholics generally hid their religious objects as the war peaked roughly from around 1976. Rosaries, crucifixes, scapulars, bibles, church uniforms and other holy books were hidden. Some of them were put in odd locations such as granaries and under beds as others were dug into the ground because some guerrilla groups openly denigrated Christianity and harassed those who carried religious objects. It was abundantly clear that none of our respondents decided to burn or destroy any of these objects or books suggesting a deep religious conviction.

During the run-up to the elections, there was every effort to tarnish the image of guerrillas in the eyes of the church and the public in general. These are the circumstances which should guide us to understand the desecration of the church at Berejena in February 1980. Peter Baxter (2020, 231-232) talks of a series of explosions which occurred in and round Salisbury (now Harare) that appeared to target churches. These incidents that were not immediately linked to a Renault 12 sedan that erupted in a huge explosion near St Mary's Anglican Church in the then Harare Township, killing the occupants and destroying the vehicle. It later came out that one of the two blasted victims was Selous Scout Lieutenant Edward Piringondo, a recipient of the Silver Cross of Rhodesia and nominee for the Grand Cross of Valour, the highest Rhodesian award for bravery. The other one was Corporal Morgan Moyo on attachment to the Selous Scouts (Ellert and Anderson, 2020, 232). It was later proved that Piringondo was one of 8 Selous Scout members carrying out the attacks. On 24 February 1980, Selous Scouts and South

African Recces broke into the Gwelo premises of the Catholic publication, Mambo Press. They detonated a large explosive device which destroyed the printing press and *killed a white male* discovered to have had loose South African change in his trouser pocket. As a disguise, this dead body was a planted in order to prove that the attack had been carried by communist guerrillas (Ellert and Anderson, 2020, 232). Such guerrillas were supposed to be portrayed to the world as anti-Christ. Robert Mugabe was severally presented as a communist and anti-Christian, despite him being a devout Catholic. One of the reasons for church attacks was therefore to tarnish his image ahead of elections so that he would lose the vote from Christians. Whilst religious symbols are on the physical realm, in reality, they symbolize and represent the metaphysical and transcendental realities (Mudyiwa and Mokgoatšana, 2021, 1). As a result, the desecration of these symbols carried lasting memories because of the meaning which they convey. Killing and abuse of missionaries was closely assumed to be connected to religious objects. Naturally, the objects were targeted after the killing of missionaries.

Fr Killian Huesser, a Swedish Catholic priest was shot at Berejena mission on 19 February 1980 while Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) was gearing up for elections (Frederikise, 1982, 316). On the other extreme and as part of propaganda, it was claimed that at 2am on 19 February 1980, Fr Killian Huesser was shot dead in front of terrified students and stabbed 10 times. It was further asserted that he died as a result of these wounds. (The Herald, 21 February 1980) Assailants were dressed like guerrillas but all respondents interviewed more than 4 decades after the war thought that the killers were Rhodesian operatives who disguised themselves as guerrillas. Selous Scouts were known for personating guerrillas. Chipo Vhezha (interview, 19 October 2021) who worked at the mission hospital when the events unfolded thought that Selous Scouts carried out the attack. The students at the mission school confided in their teachers and nuns that one of the attackers had addressed them a week earlier against supporting guerrillas (Frederikise, 1982, 316). He was however identified by students as a *tamed or turned* guerrilla now working for Rhodesians. Mr Charumbira (interview, 19 October 2021) whose home is about twelve kilometers from the mission which is located in Chivi District recalled that the church itself was ransacked and only repaired after the attainment of independence. Mrs Mariose lived close to the mission during the war years. One night, her sister reported to her that Mr Madusise who

worked at the mission had been taken away by armed men. It came out that he had successfully escaped from the armed men and informed Brother Rudolf and Fr Killian who were at the mission to escape (interview with Mrs Mariose, 19 October 2021). Fr Killian refused to leave the mission and was subsequently killed that night. The incident at the mission represented iconoclasm in many respects. According to Mrs. Mariose, the armed men broke church windows, scattered holy objects for the sacristy, shot at the cross in the church building. Prior to these shootings, all pupils, teachers and other mission staff including nuns and priests were called to the assembly point better known as Gato (interview with Mrs. Chifamba, 19 October, 2021). They were harangued with slogans and verbally insulted. Prefects were then ordered to collect bibles from hostels and the church as well as other books used by priests in the church. The armed men forced pupils to start a big fire where the holy books were burnt to ashes. The men also tried to shoot at the cross on top of the church building but they missed it. By these acts, the attackers were passing on ZANU-PF as an organization opposed to Christianity. Given that a reasonable majority of African people in Zimbabwe were Christians, the act was supposed to tarnish the image of the party and contribute to electoral loss. That failed because ZANU-PF dissociated itself from the murder.

The attack at Berejena Mission should be understood within the whole context of the war as it was fought in the district of Chivi. Church paraphernalia had generally become dangerous to carry or to be found with during the last years of the armed struggle. Although guerrillas relied on the mission for drugs and food items, they were also somehow indifferent to Christianity at times. One priest from Switzerland stationed at the mission remembered only as Father Paul Egli was known for regularly supplying guerrillas with clothes through an agent/*mujibha* known as Paradza (interview with Mr Vengesai, 19 October 2021). For doing this, the priest was sentenced to 5 years in prison which was wholly suspended and he was subsequently deported (The Chronicle, 13 February, 1977). This did not stop guerrillas from barring people to go to church. According to Mr Mugombi (interview, 19 October 2021), it was dangerous to be found carrying a bible, rosary or scapular. Practicing Catholics had to hide these at home. This is similar to iconoclasm during the Spanish Civil War when Catholics were forced to hide religious objects which they greatly valued and treasured. Iconoclasm is always driven by clear reason. As indicated in the historical

background, the need to tarnish the church has been one of the motives. Pseudo guerrillas were therefore tagging on the state of the war in Chivi. The attack happened at a critical moment during Zimbabwe's transition from war to peace.

7.0 Conclusion

The study discussed attacks on the church and its holy objects during Zimbabwe's war of liberation and demonstrated that such studies remain a grey area that requires further academic enquiry. This paper has provided a general dimension of iconoclasm in as far as it impacted on the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe. Iconoclasm during the liberation war was linked to the actions of armed men. This study has found that it was local communities both Catholic and non-Catholic who following the murder or expulsion of missionaries, descended and looted church properties. At the same time, Catholics themselves hid their religious objects to insulate themselves against armed assailants. The research has shown that iconoclasm was one of the worst consequences of Zimbabwe's war of liberation and greatly compromised the open and uninterrupted practice of Christianity. There was no evidence that the religious took efforts to secure objects considered holy. We also established that that attacks on churches, their personnel and objects was not something centrally organized by backers of liberation movements but was rather shaped by the behavior of each armed group. Iconoclasm did not extensively destroy the belief system and as such, churches re-opened and believers were able to resume their religious practices openly.

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The African Ecological Spirituality in the Light of Henrik Gregersen's Christology of Deep Incarnation

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Abstract

The world is witnessing the growing destruction of the world's ecosystems prompting nations of the world and religious leaders to embark on the search for extensive scientific, cultural, and religious frameworks for analysing and mitigating this cosmological disaster. At the centre of this crisis is modern man's failure to manage the environment in the manner that our pre-colonial forefathers used to do thereby posing a threat to the subsistence of human life. Using a framework of inculturation, this article reviews Gregersen's theology of deep incarnation that focuses on understanding Jesus' incarnation as implying a complete union of the divine with biological existence. Through the incarnation, Jesus became matter and hence matter was divinized. The article argues that traditional African cosmological spirituality manifests elements of deep incarnation. Hence, the environment through the incarnation of Jesus has received the dignity often thought to be the preserve of human beings.

Key Terms: Deep incarnation, African Ecological Spirituality, Inculturation, Deep Resurrection, environmental protection.

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Introduction

The past two centuries have witnessed the growing destruction of ecosystems prompting nations of the world and religious leaders to embark on the search for extensive scientific, cultural, and religious frameworks for analysing and mitigating this cosmological pandemic. At the centre of this crisis is modern man's failure to manage the environment in the manner that our pre-colonial forefathers used to do thereby posing a threat to the subsistence of human life. St Paul speaking to the Romans lamented that 'creation is groaning' (Romans 8:22) signifying intense suffering as a consequence of human beings' transgressions. For Paul, this suffering can only find its meaning in the coming of Christ, the Word made flesh. The salvation of the cosmos through the incarnation of Christ is what Henrik Gregersen (2015) calls deep incarnation. This study aims to determine the relationship between the African ecological spirituality and Gregersen's Christology of deep incarnation. Using the framework of inculturation, it argues that traditional African cosmological spirituality manifests elements of deep incarnation.

Brief Insight into the Continent of Africa

There is growing consciousness of the need to revisit the cultural elements that were lost due to missionary ignorance of the traditions existent among the African people. A lot of literature exists among Afrocentric writers in defence of the return to traditional African spirituality as the panacea to the several problems bedevilling the continent (Mwawusi 2009). To the wider world, the name Africa is associated with hunger, coups, diseases, poverty, and refugees among other things. The negative Western media gives the impression that Africa has nothing to contribute to the world. This is despite the fact that the future of Christianity is currently located in Africa where there is a noticeable rise in Christian movements especially among the Pentecostal and African independent churches. Christianity and Islam, the predominant organized religions within the African continent are preoccupied with personal salvation to the detriment of ecological preservation (Tucker, 2005).

The increase in Christian membership has not translated into a positive developmental trajectory for the continent. Africa is beset with conflicts, violence, turmoil, poverty, and ethnic hatred among other things prompting the debate on whether Christianity has secular benefits for the continent. To some writers, Christianity is a civilization, a

Western civilization, just like Islam, Orthodox, and Shintoism (Hintington, 2011). The missionary preoccupation with winning souls for heaven has undermined the need to promote sustainable utilization of natural resources (Dube, 2022). Contrary to the letter and spirit of the Book of Genesis story of creation, the missionaries gave a blind eye to the colonial pillaging of Africa's natural resources (Viera, 2007). Traditional Africa placed a high regard for the environment as the source of life and livelihood. However, the African eco-spirituality with its rich traditions of sacred reverence for the environment has not received the attention it deserves.

At the international level, Africa has been at the receiving end of the negative impacts of climate change. While climate change affects everyone, Africa and other third-world countries who have contributed the least to it are the least well placed to respond due to lack of resources while those who contributed more to the problem are the most insulated from it due to their vast resource endowments (International Bar Association, 2014). While several legal instruments have been proffered to ameliorate the impacts of climate justice, there is a gap and a loud call for the African Traditional religions to take an active role in saving the ecosystem (Donald, 2004) Africa has a rich tradition of respect for the environment which has not been explored to its maximum. The goal of this article is to validate that African ecological tradition fits well with the Christian doctrine of incarnation.

This article agrees with Antony Raphael Etuk's observation that, "Africans now relate with nature and their environment from the capitalistic, manipulative and exploitative point of view in their attempt to accumulate wealth in terms of money" (Schlosberg, 2004). Consequently, the sacred character of the ecosystem that used to symbolise the African World View is lost leading to the current ecological crisis. The article concurs with Pope Francis' observation that "The ecological crisis is essentially a spiritual crisis" (Donald, 2004 p. 13). Through the lens of inculturation, the article tries to rediscover and experience 'the holy' in the ecosystem as a manifestation of the theology of incarnation.

Theoretical Framework

This article adopts the method of inculturation. Laurent Mangesa defines inculturation as, "the process of rooting Christianity into a culture; celebrating liturgies in an African way; integrating cultural elements into Christian worship; evangelizing Africa in an

African way; immersing the Christian faith in the local culture" (Mangesa 2004, p. 62). Inculturation aims to ensure that the Good News of Christ is understood according to people's cultures and thought patterns. It acknowledges that the Gospel of Christ is dynamic and capable of being inserted into every culture thereby creating an interaction with that particular culture of the people. This was the mandate given by the Catholic Church during the Vatican Council in *Lumen Gentium* that the Church is directed to infuse the Gospel of Christ into the culture of the people (Bosco, 2005). In this mandate, the Church is tasked with the responsibility to preserve and purify those cultural elements that are deemed good according to the customs of the people. This article uses the framework of inculturation to demonstrate how the African ecological spirituality fits well with the Christian doctrine of the deep incarnation as espoused by Henrik Gregersen.

The need for ecological spirituality is more urgent today than ever. Both human beings and the environment are under serious threats due to the continuous exploitation of the ecosystem. Africa is at risk from desertification that is fast expanding into its interior (Magesa, 2015). Global warming is increasing as a result of the depletion of the ozone layer posing a serious health challenge to the ecosystem. This calls for collective efforts from all stakeholders within and outside the continent of Africa. Among the various possible strategy for mitigating this crisis is the need to revisit the African ecological spirituality whose potential for a new humanism has not been fully exploited (Pope Francis, 2015). Bringing world religions into dialogue with African ecological spirituality is one avenue that the study attempts to proffer.

Henrik Gregersen's Christology of Deep Incarnation

Gregersen's idea of deep incarnation is grounded in the Gospel of John's theology that the 'Word became Flesh.' The Mystery of Christ is understood as a message for all creation. By becoming matter, God chose to enter the biological web of life (Gregersen, 2015). Instead of remaining a mysterious God who resides in heaven, divorced from the realities of this world, He chose through Christ to enter into a living presence, immersed in the burden of the material world. In the Gospel of St John, we hear that, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). John alerts the reader to the existence of the Word in the Genesis creation narrative before the

world was made. The creative Word that brought the earth into existence has itself become the earth, the clay, the flesh. By deep incarnation, Gregersen implied that the divine Word has become material. He says,

> Jesus breathes the same air as all the living creatures on Earth, eats food grown from the same ground and drinks water from the same raindrops. The natural biological processes of human flesh are true of the man Jesus. Jesus smells, tastes and feels in the same way that all humans do. In Jesus, God joins the web of life, and becomes part of Earth's biology (Gregersen, 2015 p. 142).

The Gospel of John does not refer to Word as becoming human or man in Jesus, rather, he uses the term flesh (Greek *sarx*) to denote a broader mortal reality encompassing fragility, vulnerability, perishability, and transitory (Johnson 2014). St John's words contrast the Hellenists' dualistic understanding of a Holy heaven situated up there with the secular earth down here which is sinful. By Word becoming flesh, John underscores the reality that the Word has entered the sphere of the material world. Deep incarnation, means that God through Christ is incarnated in everything that exists on the planet Earth (Multman 2015). According to Gregersen, John places the person Jesus in the cosmic perspective as the creative and formative principle of the universe. It is this creative and formative principle that became flesh (*sarx)* in the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth. He further defines the term 'beginning' as implying not just a temporal-spatial period but an ontological beginning. Within this perspective, it is then correct to say, in the beginning, biological life came through the expressive and transformative logos.

Gregersen's concept of deep incarnation seeks to demonstrate that God in Christ is incarnate in all that is (Gregersen, 2015). The name Jesus-Emmanuel 'God with us' should not be taken to refer to the biological human beings only, but Emmanuel as *God with all living things*. This presupposes that God is present even in natural evils like earthquakes, floods, volcanos, and in human suffering. While on face value, this might sound contradictory to the concept of an omnibenevolent God, rather, it demonstrates the universality of Christ's saving grace in the midst of evil. God in Christ is present in natural evil not as the principle originating that evil, but, as the ontological salvific energy mitigating life. This was demonstrated in the Book of Job where he

maintained that, "I know that my redeemer lives, and that at the last, he will stand upon the earth" (Job 19: 25 RSV).

Gregersen's theology of deep incarnation has strong links with the Franciscan cosmic doctrine of Christ. St Francis the founder of the Franciscan Order marvelled at the splendour of creation in the context of the 'gifts' of God. Followers of St Francis adopting their founder's spirituality, advanced a cosmic doctrine of Christ from the perspective of creation. In trying to grapple with the Trinitarian question of why God became human, Franciscan theology emphasized the relationship between incarnation and creation. It posits that both creation and incarnation are not a necessity in the ontology of God, but part of divine nature understood as God's principle of action (Delio, 2003). Simply put, according to the Franciscan theology, creation presupposes incarnation and the two cannot be separated as they reflect the principle of God's action.

If we accept the proposition that creation presupposes incarnation, the question then is; what would the incarnation look like had Adam not sinned? This is the question that Don Scotus, a Franciscan theologian tried to answer where he argued that, "the predestination of anyone to glory is prior by nature to the prevision of the sin or damnation of anyone…" (Walter, 1988). This means the incarnation was imminent irrespective of sin since it leads to God's ultimate and final end. In this regard, Jesus or the incarnation is not a consequence of Adam's sin but a product of God's free will. In other words, incarnation is not God's answer to the human beings' desire for salvation. For Scotus, God from eternity willed to unite Himself with the cosmos through the unification of the divine and human natures in Christ.

It surmises to say that the theology of deep incarnation is the idea that the whole of creation is to a greater extent incarnational. Consequently, the matter is spiritualized. If incarnation is the process of God's self-communication, deep incarnation then is the His self-revelation to the whole of creation that is groaning awaiting the final restoration where God will be all-in-all. In this regard, human beings are intrinsically connected to nature to such an extent that one cannon talk of human identity outside cosmic development. The salvation of human beings through Christ cannot be achieved outside the wider context of the community of creation.

Deep incarnation is an invitation to move away from the traditional conception of salvation as dictated by moral behaviour. It encompasses other aspects of life like the composition of Jesus' earthly body which was made up of water, oxygen, and nutrients from plants, fruits, and vegetables all of which constitute the environment. If the incarnate body of Christ comprising of such cosmic elements entered heaven (Deep Resurrection), and as St Gregory Nazianzen claimed, *what was not assumed was not saved* (Joshua, 2023), then everything in the environment was assumed in the incarnate body of Christ and shall find salvation in him.

The African Ecological Spirituality

According to Kanu, African eco-spirituality is, "a manifestation of the consciousness and experience of the sacred in the ecology which may serve as a sustained source for African communities' and individuals' practical struggle for the healing of the earth's ecology" (Kanu, 2021, p. 46). It is the connection between ecology and African spirituality. At the heart of the African eco-spirituality is a conscious conviction in the sacredness of the environment and the need for taking personal responsibility towards the ecosystem (Sunganthi, 2021). The term spirituality echoes a life that is entrenched in the interrelation of oneself, others and the cosmos (Manobo, 2021). Eco-spirituality then focuses on the individual's spirituality in relation to the ecosystem. This is further reflected from the perspective of the African traditional worldview.

While spirituality can exist independently of any religion, African spirituality cannot divorce itself from the traditional African World View that forms the foundation of the African Traditional Religion. It has long been affirmed that African Traditional Religion is holistic with no room for dichotomy between the sacred and the secular (Magesa, 2015). This is why John Mbiti (1971, p.2), says, the African carries his religion with him, "to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting new crop, he takes it with him to a beer parlour or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated, he takes religion with him to the examination room at school or in the university; if he is a politician, he takes it to the house of parliament." Hence, African eco-spirituality is a science of religious ecological spirituality and cannot be discussed under the classifications of, 'religion-without-spirituality and spirituality-without-religion' (Mbiti, 1971). All life for the Africans is religious signifying a symbiotic relationship between human life and all other animate beings.

According to Mbiti, in traditional Africa, land with all that it holds did not belong to living human beings but to God and the ancestors. Human beings were only stewards of the ecosystem. Only through fierce battles did the indigenous people invade and took possession of another tribe's ancestral land. Each tribal geographical area belonged to the ancestors who held control over the land's fertility and rainfall (Chavunduka, 2001). This is why the struggle for liberation in most African countries and Zimbabwe in particular was seen not as a mere quest for self-governance but a spiritual struggle for repossessing the ancestral heritage.

During the struggle for liberation, the freedom fighters collaborated with nature in the fight for freedom. Often they used to receive clues from the birds, trees, animals, and vegetation about the presence of an enemy. For example, when a snake crosses your path, it was a message for the individual to change direction. This means, for the Africans, every animate and inanimate being had a spiritual force and could communicate life or death. Big trees, mountains, rivers, and big snakes had spiritual significance and were abodes of special spirits. Tress and vegetation had healing powers not because of the perceived scientific properties in them, but because they possessed spiritual healing powers for the sustenance of the people's health and wellness. Destruction of the ecosystem meant destroying the very source of life in the community.

Traditional African communities believed that the fertility of the land was ensured through traditional rituals than the use of chemical fertilizers that have to a greater extent rendered the land barren. Speaking in the context of the indigenous people of Botswana, food security was highly knotted to the rich agricultural rites. These rites were designed to ensure enough supply of rain and enhance the fertility of the land (Amanze, 1998, p. 27). Seasons like seed preparation, eating of new crops and harvesting were preceded by rites invoking God through the ancestors. These rites which formed part of the African World View demonstrate a symbiotic spiritual connection between humans and the cosmos. In this way, Africans believed that human beings were mere stewards of land entrusted to them by their ancestors. The environment was understood spiritually and not a mere physical endowment that could be abused by humans. As an ancestral inheritance, land and all that grew on it like fruits had no commercial value. The land was sacred because it housed the graves of

the departed and any product from the land was considered a gift from the ancestors for the sustenance of human life.

In traditional Zimbabwean culture, the destruction of the environment invited sanctions from the ancestors. Cutting down trees was punished through droughts, death or mental illness. In sacred forests, fruits were eaten on site and not hoarded for commercial purposes and such attempts were sometimes punishable by getting lost (*Chidzimira*). When an individual profane a sacred place, the chiefs and headmen as custodians of the ancestral stewardship would punish the offender (Unebune and Chinjioke, 2021). Several taboos attached sanctions to actions that violate the environment. While punishment for destroying the environment could be administered by the local traditional leaders, often, the ancestors were responsible and penalties like death, barrenness, madness, sickness or loss of wealth were common. Traditional leaders as representatives of the ancestors could act on behalf of the spirits in administering punishment to offenders.

African eco-spirituality is the understanding that there is a connection between this earth and the African World View. It is premised on the belief that natural phenomena is sustained by the spirits. For the Africans, the earth is humanity's mother who sustains human life through the provision of food, plants for medicines, and the oxygen that people breathe. In traditional Shona culture, a mother occupies a special sacred place in the family. It is taboo to fight, scorn, or swear against your mother. Such malpractices against a mother often attracted punishments like madness (*kutanda botso*). In like manner, the environment and all that constitutes it is sacred because it is the habitat of Supernatural Beings. Consequently, every African had a role to play in conserving the natural environment. This was well noted by Guno et al., where they say, "the killing of sacred animals, felling of sacred trees and destruction of sacred spaces in the forest only meets with spiritual disapproval, which manifests itself in the form of great droughts or disease outbreaks" (Gumo et al., 2012, p. 527).

The Incarnational Eco-Spirituality of Pope Francis

In the history of Christian theology, Pope Francis was the first to lay out a systematic Social Teaching of the Catholic Church on ecological spirituality in his encyclical *Laudato si* (Pope Francis, 2015). This extremely valuable piece of literature has strong implications for the African eco-spirituality of what he terms our 'common home'. For

Pope Francis, humanity is at the edge of becoming a victim of its actions against the environment. Destruction of the environment in the name of economic progress devoid of moral and social progress is a recipe for disaster. The Pope insists that development should of necessity have a moral character as the current misuse of creation suggests that human beings consider themselves to be 'ends' and no longer recognize the existence of a higher Being. He acknowledges the complexity of the ecological crisis and that solutions to the crisis should be sought within the collective interpretation of this reality through the various cultures and religions of the world.

Pope Francis locates the source of the current ecological problems in the biblical sin of Adam that he describes as, "our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations" (p. 56). By distorting and changing the mandate from *dominion* to *domination* over the earth', human beings entered into a conflictual relationship with nature. However, for Pope Francis, "the ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fullness of God, which has already been attained by the incarnation of Jesus", and the glory of the risen Christ, whom he calls the "the measure of the maturity of all things" (p. 83).

The incarnation of the Son of God is testimony to the fact that nature is part of God's salvific plan. According to Pope Francis, the incarnate Son of God toiled the earth with his hands while at the same time maintaining a relationship with, "matter created by God" for the greater part of his life-giving human labour its significance (p. 98). By being incarnated in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, God became matter itself, thereby giving the earth a special significance. St Paul in his letter to the Philippians speaks of Jesus' teaching on the kenosis when he said, Jesus, "Who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage" (Phillipians 2:6). The Gospel of John testifies that the Divine Word (*logos*) became flesh (John 1:14), meaning that the one person of the Trinity entered into the created cosmos, throwing in his lot with it. On the same note, the Pope further asserts that, "since the beginning of the world, but particularly through the incarnation, the mystery of Christ is at work in a hidden manner in the natural world as a whole, without thereby impinging on its autonomy" (Pope Francis, 2015, p. 29).

African Eco-Spirituality in the Light of Deep Incarnation

Having taken a survey of literature that undergirds the understanding of African Ecological spirituality and the theological foundations of the incarnation, this article proceeds to articulate African Eco-spirituality in the light of Gregersen's theology of deep incarnation. The article will argue in favour of the proposition that African eco-spirituality is theologically incarnational, Christologically incarnational, and Pneumatologically incarnational. In an attempt to proffer a theological treatise on African eco-spirituality, this article takes note of Pope Francis' observation that there is no unique solution to the ecological crisis that humanity faces due to the anthropogenic nature of the predicament (Platovnjak, 2019). In this regard, the use of cultural elements in finding solution to the problem is highly encouraged.

African eco-spirituality recognizes that the source of every created reality including mother earth resides in the creator God (*Musikavanhu*). The starting point for ecological contemplation is the belief that God the creator is the originator of all that exists. Nothing operates outside the power and influence of the creator God. It is God who directs the circumstances of both animate and inanimate beings (Magesa, 2004). If by theology, we understand it to mean the study (*logos*) of God (*Theo*), then the African Cosmo-vision is both religious and theological. This takes us far aback to Mbiti's observation that for the African, everything is religious (Mbiti, 1971). The Online Cambridge Dictionary of English defines religion as, "the belief in and worship of God or gods and any such system of belief and worship" (Online Cambridge Dictionary). If the conventional assumption by all major religions of the existence of a Universal God or supreme Divine Authority (Naik, 2020) is anything to go by, then African ecological spirituality fits well into the divine self-revelation of the one God, the creator of all that is.

The God who revealed Himself in History through the people of Israel and His full revelation in the person of Jesus Christ is the same God who through the ages has revealed Himself to the African people through their ancestors. The understanding of African ecological spirituality is historical and revelatory as they are moral precepts passed down from the creator (*Musikavanhu*) through the ancestors and down to the people. Through revelation, God communicates His very being and this

communication is relational. It is a communication of love and life that was extended to the whole universe. In the Biblical story of creation, human beings were given the role of dominion (translated here as stewardship) and not domination (Genesis 1:28). Hence, St Francis of Assisi in his canticle would sing of 'brother sun' and 'brother moon' (Speelman, 2018).

According to Gregersen, the central teaching of the doctrine of incarnation is that God, the Word that created the world, become flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. By becoming human, the Word of God took on the natural biological processes of the human flesh (Gregersen, 2015). To quote the 16t century vegetarian Joachim Beuckelaer, Flemish, 'You are what you eat'. By taking the biological flesh in the form of the human body, the incarnate Word of God became the fruits of the forest, the herbal shrubs of the land, and the waters that he regularly took. In the same manner, African eco-spirituality proffers that fruits, herbs, mountains, forests, and rivers are all gifts from the creator for the purpose of sustaining the ecosystem. To ensure their preservation, taboos with corresponding penalties for offenders were instituted.

Gregersen's Christology of deep incarnation follows Gregory Nazianzen's *Letter to Cledonius* where he said, "For that which He has not assumed He has not healed, but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved" (Joshua, 2021, p. 563). The logic of this teaching was that if Christ did not take the human form, then his death is of no significance to our salvation. Gregersen takes the principle further to mean, Christ took everything that is human including the biological constitution of our bodies. He further argues that in the same way that he took our whole human nature at the incarnation, it follows that at the resurrection, everything biologically existence was assumed into heaven. If the human body was composed of elements found in nature, it follows that nature was assumed into heaven. Following the argument of Gregory, since nature was assumed into heaven, then it suffices to conclude that nature is saved as well. Gregerson calls this 'deep resurrection'.

There is a logical relationship between deep incarnation, deep resurrection and African ecological spirituality. Both, deep incarnation and deep resurrection submit that the incarnation of Jesus and his resurrection confers dignity not just to human beings alone but to everything and everyone. Consequently, there must be some interdependence between corporeality and materiality, between heaven and earth,

and between the human person and the environment (Nash, 1999). In African eco-spirituality, the dignity of creation lies in the provenance of the creator who ensures the security, fertility, and productivity of the land. Since human beings depend on the ecosystem for their survival, it follows that for the Africans, the ecosystem has the same dignity that human beings possess.

Deep incarnation attests to the reality that Paul taught the Ephesians when he talks of Christ as one who fulfils God's plan "to gather all things together in him, things in heaven and things on Earth" (Ephesians 1:10). While African eco-spirituality just like the discipline of African theology struggles to locate the reality of incarnation within the African World View, the role of Christ as the universal saviour who assumed human flesh to save the world remains valid for all religions. Christ is the universal saviour not because he was born out of the Jewish election, but because he came from the Father and is the perfect revelation of Him. His incarnation has universal significance for every race since he did not assume a Jewish nature, but a human nature. In this way, being Jewishness though significant is accidental and not constitutive. He is the saviour because he is the incarnate son of the Father and not because he is Jewish. By analogy, he is the saviour of the cosmos not because he was born human, but because he assumed biological existence.

African eco-spirituality is pneumatological. It manifests a sacred connection between human beings and the cosmos (Uwineze, 2021). Deep incarnation attests to the reality of the presence of God Spirit in the created world as a power that animates and renews the world, the Spirit of God is not heaven-bound but an earthly reality of His presence in the ecosystem. The incarnate Son of God upon his ascendance to heaven promised his disciples that he will send the Paraclete who will reveal to them everything about the Father (John 14:16-17). African eco-spirituality is premised on the belief that the earth is a manifestation of the Great Spirit (Ekechukwu, 2021) and that everything created has a spirit. There are spirits that animate the mountains, the seas, and the trees, including human beings. Abuse of the ecosystem is a travesty against African eco-spirituality.

Conclusion

Environmental protection is not just a question of ecological rights, it has religious connotations. The commercialization of natural endowments that has characterized the modern world has brought negative consequences to human beings and the environment at large. While change is desirable for development, it has become, "a source of anxiety when it causes harm to the world and to the quality of life of much of humanity" (Pope Francis, 2015, p. 6). The African ecological spirituality is a call to understand environmental destruction in the light of the doctrine of the incarnation. This article aimed to justify that there is a relationship between African eco-spirituality and the Christian doctrine of deep incarnation. Deep incarnation gives testimony to the African worldview on the sacredness of the ecosystem as saved by Christ. Consequently, human beings are called upon to view the environment in the same way they view the sacredness of human life.

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'A monster in the convent'. The lived experiences of the Catholic religious sisters who contracted Covid-19 at a convent in Mutare diocese, Zimbabwe.

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Abstract

Covid-19 took a toll worldwide and yet has not yielded all the knowledge necessary of the lived experiences of the diverse survivors. This paper seeks to contribute to the many studies that have been undertaken. It is a phenomenological, qualitative in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of the Catholic religious sisters who contracted and survived Covid-19. The data was collected through semi-structured questions, phone call and face to face interviews, with a total of ten Catholic religious sisters who tested positive for Covid-19, stayed in isolation from others and later recovered, in the Catholic diocese of Mutare. Transcribed data was used to construct themes that portrayed the Sisters' lived experiences through the pandemic. The findings revealed that the selected survivors suffered psychological, social and physical maladjustments during their period of confinement. The study recommends disaster preparedness for religious communities to facilitate proper adjustment in possible future pandemics. The research developed a model as an intervention strategy that includes continuous community empowerment programs for nuns, organizing training in adaptive coping skills for religious leaders, strengthening the support system during the time of illness, constructing specialized care facilities for the sick and abiding by the professional advice of health care officials such as vaccinations and other measures.

Key words: Lived experiences, Catholic religious sisters, Covid-19, Mutare diocese

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1.1 Introduction

Covid-19 left a noticeable imprint as it ravaged the globe claiming and threatening lives. Research has shown some of the lived experiences and the psychosocial impact of Covid-19 worldwide. In South Korea, a study revealed that the Covid-19 survivors experienced social, mental and physical challenges in relation to Covid-19 (Son, Choi, Hwang & Yang, 2021). Similarly, another study conducted in one of the cities of Iran concluded that living with Covid-19 proved to be an emotionally and physically challenging experience (Norouzadeh, Abbasinia, Tayebi, Sharifipour,Koohpaei, Aghaie & Asgarpour, 2021).

Luo, Estill, Wang, Lv, Liu, Liu and Chen (2020) posit that the Covid-19 pandemic did not only cause a global public health crisis but was also a contributor to unprecedented panic in people. In the Kampala district of Uganda, another study indicated that the survivors faced social rejection and community ostracism (Amir, 2021). The Zimbabwean context is not an exception to these mixed sentiments; and while Covid-19 personal lived experiences were shared by some individuals in Zimbabwe at various levels, this study explored the lived experiences of a unique group of Catholic religious sisters in the diocese of Mutare.

Banerjee and Sathyanarayana (2020) claim that in comparison with past epidemics, Covid-19 induced an overabundance of incorrect information which intensified public anxiety and prejudice regarding the adherence to effective treatment measures. The results of a rapid exploratory survey that was carried out among the general public in Uganda, the Covid-19 pandemic was perceived to be mostly associated with people of European origin, while Ugandan men also supposed themselves to be at a greater risk compared to their women (Kasozi, MacLeod, Ssempijja, Mahero, Matama, Musoke, Bardosh, Ssebuufu, Wakoko-Studstil, Echor, Ayikobua, Mujinya, Nambuya, Onohuean, Zirintunda, Ekou & Welburn, 2020). Studies of a more local context also maintained that during the early stages of the Covid-19 outbreak in Zimbabwe, individuals were bombarded with both filtered and unfiltered information which in turn resulted in widespread fear and unanswered questions regarding the pandemic.

Despite the fact that a considerable number of surveys have been conducted to explore Covid-19 survivors' lived experiences, it seems that narrative data concerning

the experiences of unique populations which include the consecrated Catholic religious sisters, nuns, who live a distinctive lifestyle are currently unexplored. According to Schneiders, (2011), consecrated religious life is a lifestyle within the Catholic Church wherein the acquaintances profess vows of chastity, poverty and obedience within a congregation or community that is accepted by the Church. O'Murchu (1991) further postulates that religious life is a communal lifestyle whereby the community exhibits the authenticity of the religious lifestyle. The Catholic religious sisters live a shared communal life where they have common meals, prayers and recreational activities. While this unique and sacred lifestyle of the sisters could not tally with the Covid-19 restrictions, the study aimed to understand the lived experiences of the survivors.

1.2 Research Questions

1.   What does it mean to be confirmed Covid-19 positive?

2.   What are the experience of living with Covid-19 in the closed community of religious sisterhood?

3.   What helped/did not help during the period of illness?

2.0 Methodology

A qualitative empirical research approach was used to embark on an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of the participants focusing on their contextual life experiences (Creswell, 2013). The study design was grounded on a phenomenological perspective in order to understand the meaning of the lived experiences, events, and interactions of the religious sisters. Ten participants took part in this study. All of the participants were Catholic sisters with ages ranging from 35-85 years. All the participants had tested positive for Covid-19 with mild to serious complications; with some who got admitted into the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) due to severe Covid-19 related complications. An in-depth semi-structured narrative interview (Riessman, 2008) was used to collect data. The obtained data was presented and analysed using a thematic analysis which was interfaced with discourse analysis.

3.1 Results and discussion

The research obtained themes containing detailed descriptions of participants' lived experiences as survivors of Covid-19. The sub-research questions focused on the participants' perceptions of the Covid-19 positive result, how living with the virus impacted community life, identification of the available support systems that promoted recovery, finding out the current coping strategy with the ongoing Covid-19 crisis and the suggestions on what can be done to combat future related pandemics. The following themes thus emerged:

3.1.1 Enough Knowledge about the Covid-19 Pandemic

The participants revealed that social media and their daily social interactions largely contributed to the spreading of information about the virus. One of the participants whose source of information was through the daily social connections with others said,

> *"The advent of Covid-19 had become the talk of the century to the extent that even those who stay in the beyond of the beyond must have known about it. I was fully aware that it was a deadly virus and was very much afraid of it."*

The other participant who revealed that she had limited contact with the public due to her current health condition said;

> *"I knew the virus was there and was killing people as broadcasted on the television but I never dreamt of contracting it because I have always been confined to this place where we stay as elderly and sick people who are no longer engaged in any work that exposes us to the risk of contracting Covid-19."*

The majority of the participants were well informed about the Covid-19 virus prior to contracting it. They were conscious of the virus as noted by their compliance with the Covid-19 related health restriction measures. The findings also revealed that the participants were committed to a healthy lifestyle. This mismatches with Mackworth-Young et al, (2020) who asserted that Zimbabwean communities had limited ability to comply with stipulated preventive measures because they posed a threat to their daily source of livelihoods. This disagreement could be a result of the differences on the

time when the study was carried out thus there could have been a change in people's compliance habits. Suggestive of this, there seemed to be a great improvement in the majority's compliance to the Covid-19 restriction measures compared to the time when the virus first emerged. Another factor could be due to the differences in the lifestyles of the study participants. The religious sisters live a more confined lifestyle compared to the general public.

3.1.2 Mixed Feelings about the Covid-19 Positive Result

The respondents had mixed sentiments regarding their Covid-19 positive results. The experience of testing positive for Covid-19 triggered different reactions amongst the participants typically during the first two days after undergoing the rapid test. These varied reactions ranged from being ashamed, feeling guilty, shock, anxiety, fear and the uncertainty of the outcome of the illness.

One of the participants who disclosed that she had recently travelled to her home village for the funeral of a close relative in the midst of the lockdown said; *"I felt guilty of being Covid-19 positive. I could not just face the shame of being the only one who got sick in my community. I became so ashamed of betraying my community members.*

The participant who could not precisely share how she felt also said;

> *"I had mixed feelings which included anxiety, fear and uncertainty of the outcome. At the same time I was glad to have known that I had Covid-19 and could get earlier treatment while protecting others from contracting it from me".*

This participant also shared that she had no symptoms related to Covid-19 but had to be tested when there was an outbreak at her place of work.

The study suggested that the process of undergoing a Covid-19 screening test and being confirmed Covid-19 positive, created emotional turmoil in some individuals. The study participants went through mixed feelings after receiving their Covid-19 positive result even after they had felt unwell, suspected themselves to be positive and willingly opted for the screening test. The psychological survival uncertainty which the participants faced resulted in various emotional responses. Additionally, the

participants' way of life and their awareness of the Covid-19 related high death rates around the world were the other triggers of such mixed sentiments. These findings are in agreement with Gardener and Moallef (2015) who claimed that the fear of contracting, of survival and of infecting others are usually the experience of many people during outbreaks of infectious diseases.

3.1.3 Sad News about Covid-19 Positive Results First Communicated to Close Relatives

The participants had to turn to their significant others for comfort and encouragement when they tested positive for Covid-19. The majority of the respondents shared that they first shared the news with their relatives on the very same day when they were notified of their Covid-19 test results. One of the participants said; *"I shared the news with my elder sister. She was calm and she encouraged me to religiously take my medication alongside other natural remedies".*

On the contrary, another elderly participant who happened to be a resident in one of the retirement homes for the sick and elderly sisters said; *"I shared the news with my sister-in-law. She was hurt. I could hear her crying over the phone although she promised me that I was going to recover by God's grace".* The quoted participant further shared that one of their sisters who was in that same house had recently died due to Covid-19 and that the news had shocked many people who knew her.

The study revealed that the participants could not keep the Covid-19 positive sad news to themselves but had to share with their close counterparts who were mostly family members. This revealed that the family plays a significant role in influencing the patient's psychological adjustment, recovery process and adherence to medication as proposed by Siregar, Nasution, Ariga, Tanjung, & Harahap (2021). The study results also show the great need for psychosocial support in individuals after having tested Covid-19 positive. There is also a notable link between the participants' emotional response after receiving the Covid-19 positive test news and the nature of the emotional support that was rendered to them. While fear and insecurity seemed to push the respondents into seeking assurance and consolation from their loved ones, shame and guilt prompted other participants to seek acceptance and understanding. These findings concur with the ideas of the Social Constructionism theory which says

that all meaning is socially constructed thus knowledge is acquired through social interaction and that reality depends on shared assumptions (Andrews, 2012).

3.1.4 Kept Isolated as with Leprosy

Some participants used the discourse of a leper to describe their experience during the isolation period. Most participants revealed that they were transferred to designated isolation places that were organized for Covid-19 sick people by their respective congregations as presented below,

"*I was transferred to our motherhouse where most of our sisters were confined during the time of illness*".

"*I was staying alone at the visitors' cottage which is just outside the main house*".

"*I was admitted in a private ward at our mission hospital*".

"*I had to be transferred to the designated Isolation Center where all the sisters who tested positive for Covid-19 were taken care of*".

The above excerpts show that the participants were both physically and socially separated from others who were negative. Additionally, none of the participants shared a sick room/ward with another sick colleague though some of these participants were residing under the same isolation block.

The participants felt rejected and avoided during their time of illness with Covid-19. They felt sidelined by their community members as they were avoided and given strict boundaries in the house as a way of controlling the spread of the infection which they equated to an individual with leprosy. This was more noticeable in the participants who had to reside in the same house with the other members who were not infected with the virus as opposed to those who stayed in a quarantine center where there was uniformity of treatment in relation to their health status. Consequently, while Rubin & Wessely (2020) maintain that the inevitable physical isolation of Covid-19 patients stigmatizes people as it made them feel separated and avoided in their vicinities, the study findings also show that the participants felt denounced.

3.1.5 Distressed by being Cut off from the World and Stuck between Walls

The obtained data reflects that the majority of the respondents were deeply distressed by being isolated from others and they described the situation as being similar to imprisonment or staying in a dungeon.

One participant revealed; *"I felt useless. I could not do anything again apart from facing the corners of that lonely and boring room. My biggest challenge was facing the nightfall with the fear of dying alone during my sleep".*

Yet the other respondent further said; *"Life meant nothing in that lonely room with no one visiting yet reaching out to my close friends would only yield me more worries than hope. The biggest challenge was to remain stuck in my uncertainties with the virus".*

In agreement with the above excerpt, another participant also said; *"It was painful to only find solace from my phone... The biggest challenge was to hear the other sisters scream or laugh in the sitting room while they were watching the TV series that we usually follow whilst I struggled alone with nothing to cheer me up".*

The study revealed that the individuals who contracted the Covid-19 virus suffered more from psychosocial problems compared to the physical pain that was characterized by their illness. Staying in isolation from others and being dispensed from the daily missionary duties seem to have had a negative impact on the emotional being of the study participants. This is in agreement with Shi, Tang, Jing, Geng, Liu, Luo, Chen, Liu, Gong, Bo, Yang & Wang (2019) who maintained that Covid-19 confirmed persons present with mental health symptoms which include distress, insomnia, anger and anxiety as they adjusted to the confinement measures. The study has therefore portrayed that the isolation experience can be distressing to individuals who under normal circumstances lead a busy and communal lifestyle like the Catholic religious sisters.

3.1.6 A Distorted Sense of Purpose

The study findings show that most of the participants struggled with adjustment issues during the dull isolation days. They missed their daily commitments, got tired of being confined to the same place and were down spirited such that they ended up losing

their sense of purpose. One participant said; "*My experience with Covid-19 distorted my sense of belonging in the community. I felt detached from the rest and I missed the normal life of staying with others and contributing towards life accordingly*.

The other participant who shared that her concentration was distracted by pain said; "*What else was left for me apart from being concealed in that dark cloud of unknowing. I did not have time to think of anything apart from praying and fighting for my troubled soul*". Her experience concurred with another participant who also said; "*I did not care to think about the community or any of my apostolic duties because I was in too much pain*"

 The obtained data revealed that the process of adjusting to the confinement measurements affected their usual routine which defined their identity thereby negatively impacting their sense of belonging. While various studies reveal that Covid-19 patients sometimes lose hope due to the uncertainty of the disease outcome, the current study shows that the participants were hopeful but had only lost their sense of purpose. This supports the assertion by Schneinders (2011) who claims that the religious sisters are identified by their lifelong commitment to an identical and recognizable community where they are mutually connected by a sacred bond that allows them to achieve a sense of self, mission and belonging. In this regard, the Covid-19 preventive measures imposed a threat to the participants' identity.

3.1.7 The Endless Nightmare

The participants shared about the dispiriting moments during their time of illness. The participants described this state of anguish as similar to living in limbo where one stays entombed between life and death**.** They described their experiences in this regard as follows;"*I felt discouraged by the fact that I had to stay in isolation for the next 21 days even when I had no symptoms, I missed being with others and it was not easy to be told not to reach certain areas in the house*".

 "*Hearing another sister in the next room groaning in pain then after a few minutes the sound of an ambulance gave me fear. I suspected myself for being the next victim and an imagination of this was so discouraging*".

This psychological uncertainty of whether or not they will survive gave the participants the experience similar to that of an endless nightmare. The same study finding agrees with the view that the fear of death due to the unpredictability of the situation, seriousness of the disease and the uncertainty about its control are serious concerns during times of the pandemic (Xiang, Yang, Li, Zhang, Zhang & Cheung, 2020). Additionally, the Covid-19 survivors also revealed that living with the virus was the sole cause of despair and spiritual dryness as individuals battled with their lives alongside meaning searching amidst the impending doom. This challenges the assertion by Bentzen (2019) who asserts that religion is a form of coping that helps individuals to combat immediate challenges, imagine, plan the future and resist a sense of personal insecurity. While the study was carried out among a people of a religious background, the disparities in the findings could be due to the severity of their condition and the existing challenges surrounding the participants' predicaments.

3.1.8 Engaged in Anything to Facilitate Recovery

The study findings show that the respondents strived for their recovery. Various self-care strategies were employed which include the use of supplementary home remedies alongside the tender loving care which they received from the health caregivers. One participant said; *"I managed to do some bit of exercises whenever I could feel a little heaviness in my body. I could also add steaming with the Zumbani herb twice a day. These two remedies contributed a lot to my recovery".*

Another also said; *"Taking hot white onion water and garlic helped a lot in clearing my heavily congested and itchy throat.".* Similarly, the other participant also added; *"The lavender herb miraculously helped me in relieving the discomfort from my congested chest each time I used it for steaming".* Then another participant who experienced severe Covid-19 related complications said; *"Being referred to the ICU at the general hospital saved my life. I nearly died due to breathing complications but availability of the sister nurses who had to quickly attend contributed immensely to my recovery".*

The journey to recovery from Covid-19 was facilitated by different factors. The participants had to remain hopeful and exert more effort in their recovery journey by employing different methods as they fought for their dear lives. From the participants' statements, most of the applied strategies proved to be useful and the family played a

significant role in facilitating this recovery process by recommending some of the strategies, encouraging and supporting the respondents. These findings echo what Moules, Estefan, McCaffrey, Tapp &Strother (2016) maintained, namely that family involvement during a patient's illness aids in achieving the best treatment results.

3.1.9 A Blessing in Disguise

Some of the participants were able to find new meaning from the isolation experience by using the time of illness for personal development and personal growth. One participant said, *"Although I was unwell, I had enough time to rest from the busy schedule, focus on myself, quietly reflecting on the mystery of life and deepen my relationship with God".* According to her, the isolation came as an opportunity for resting and having a deeper reflection on her life.

Another participant managed to cope by reading many books and internet surfing.She said; *"I had to read several books to distract myself from pain and thinking about my end. I ended up writing poems about Life which I intend to publish soon".* This participant shared that much as she could enjoy occasional reading, staying in the quarantine encouraged her to read more and made her realize that she was a gifted poet.

Although Covid-19 was highly agonizing, most participants had something special to cherish. The participants utilized their time of illness for personal development and growth. Instead of wallowing in pain, some of the participants engaged in different activities which brought about new meaning in their lives. The study has therefore shown that although staying in isolation is distressing, individuals can also choose to be constructive and creative for their own good. There is a close correspondance between this finding with the ideas of Jesmi, Mohammadzade-Tabrizi, Rad, HosseinzadehYounesi and Pourhabib (2020) who assert that the patients with Covid-19 used religious mechanisms to reduce their tensions and worries. Contrastingly, the participants in this study employed other means like personal reflection, reading and writing as coping mechanisms which in turn brought about many benefits.

3.1.10 Support from others Facilitated Recovery

The participants were indebted to significant others for consoling and reassuring them. The excerpts below show that the participants obtained emotional, medical and spiritual support from people around them during their time of illness,

"The sister nurse in my community would make it a point to check on me and encourage me to take my medication though the communication was only done over the phone and sometimes through a window".

"Receiving phone calls from friends and family on a daily basis instilled hope in me and gave me the strength that promoted my recovery process".

"After spending the whole night in isolation and pain, the encouraging words from the sister nurses who would attend to me in my room at the isolation centre gave me hope".

"The availability of health related facilities at the designated isolation center promoted my recovery. Specialized care was offered alongside a healthy diet".

Majority of the participants acknowledged the support that they received from their significant others who ranged from friends, family and the health care team. From the findings, the support that was rendered to the respondents was thought to be the source of their consolation, hope and courage to face the future. The researcher realized that the participants who reported to have a larger support system were less distressed and recovered faster than those who chose not to be socially well connected. While the greater portion of the support system was reported to have been emanating from the families of the respondents, the view that finding family involvement during a patient's illness aids in achieving the best treatment results (Moules et al, 2016) cannot be underestimated. Moreover, the family is thought to play a significant role in influencing the patient's psychological adjustment, recovery process and adherence to medication (Siregar et al, 2021).

3.1.11 Motivated to Practice Healthy Behaviors

The participants were afraid of another re-infection and were therefore motivated to improve their health consciousness. The following lifestyle changes were shared, *"I now dread crowded places. I even avoid entering busy shopping areas and I am always careful of the position to sit in the church for I always make sure that I sit where there is more open space". "I am currently cautious of my workplace environment. The fear of another re-infection makes me watchful. I am now too careful". "I did not hesitate to go for a Covid-19 jab. I just needed to be safe so I never cowed in to the people's discouragements".*

The participants' experience with the virus encouraged them to be more committed to the positive health measures as a way of combating the Covid-19 re-infection. Their lived experiences with the virus taught them lessons such that they became more conscious of the recommended preventive measures. While the initial advent of Covid-19 was characterized by different myths which affected the majority's compliance with the prevention measures (Moyo, 2020), the current study has shown a great improvement in people's perception of the virus. Furthermore, the view that Covid-19 induced an overabundance of incorrect information which intensified public anxiety and prejudice regarding the adherence to effective treatment measures (Banerjee & Sathyanarayana, 2020) has been opposed by the results of this current study. However, the other factors which include the nature of the participants, viral mutations, the differences in the time the study was carried out and continual public sensitization which is coupled by practical experience with the virus seem to have contributed largely to some of the disparities in the findings.

3.1.12 The Need for Disaster Preparedness

The respondents shared that their experience of living with covid-19 came as an eye-opener which exposed the need for designing better health structures in religious communities. The respondents made their recommendations towards combating future pandemics as follows,

"Communities need to adjust accordingly during times of pandemics and omit some of the activities that place members at risk for example eating together (in a common refectory setting) and praying in our designated prayer rooms which are a bit too small

to observe physical distancing". "Sisters must stop trusting each other too much when it comes to 'who has' and 'has not' the virus. Preventive measures should be heeded accordingly and this should not mean there is lack of love for each other". "Religious sisters should have a special care center that is meant for those ill with highly infectious diseases like Covid-19 so that they can receive special care without getting stigmatized by the community members who will be struggling with their own fears and uncertainties". "Sisters need to get vaccinated and remain conscious that whether vaccinated or not everyone is prone to the virus".

The findings exposed the need for disaster alertness as a way of minimizing the adverse effects of the pandemic. While governments and other big institutions managed to come up with urgent means of curbing the fast spread of the Covid-19 virus, the Church seems to have lagged behind in the disaster preparedness as an entity as revealed by the findings of this study. Contrastingly, the results may also be ascribable to the study participants whose ideas were gathered during the time when the disinfection system was not yet firmly established in their different religious communities. This could further suggest that the emergence of pandemics has and is still characterized by a poor response system and limited knowledge pertaining to the related risks Iddi, Obiri-Yeboah, Aboh, Quansah, Owusu & Enyan ,2021).

4.1 Conclusion

The findings from this study lead to the conclusion that having the knowledge about the virus does not guarantee that one will be free from the psychological challenges of being confirmed positive and staying in the isolation. Much as the participants had general knowledge about the virus and were living consciously, being confirmed positive triggered adverse reactions that affected them socially, emotionally, physically and spiritually. The emergence of Covid-19 in the convent drastically transformed the shape of the religious community values. The sisters had to adjust many of their usual routines to suit the new norms that were brought about by the pandemic that were at the same time emotionally demanding as this led to the loss of their sense of purpose. In this regard the religious community members of the sisters need to accept the reality of Covid-19, be more creative during times of illness and strive to find meaning amidst their pain and isolation so as to minimize the development of serious psychological issues. The support that is rendered by family and loved ones during the time of illness

with Covid-19 accelerates the recovery process as it lessens distress, uncertainty and the fear of death while encouraging adherence to medication.

4.2 Recommendations

The Covid-19 survivors who participated in this study revealed that they felt ashamed and guilty of being Covid-19 positive in their religious community settings with some facing rejection from others. The study recommends that the Church and various religious congregations arrange for continuous religious community targeted empowerment programs that can help members of religious communities to adjust accordingly and continue to thrive with their values during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The study also advocates for the need for an opportunity for adaptive coping skills training for Catholic religious sisters' leaders as a way of minimizing the adverse impacts of Covid-19 on the sisters' wellbeing.

Counseling services should be rendered to Covid-19 suspected and confirmed cases prior and after testing in order to reduce the likelihood of emotional instability during the isolation period. Optionally, religious communities of sisters can strengthen the support system for their fellow members during the time of illness as this can help in positive coping.

The study further recommends that the Church and the various religious congregations be cautious of the likelihood of limited appropriate health service options for the clergy and religious during Covid-19 like related emergencies. Lastly, while the study findings revealed the discomfort that was faced by some of the sisters during their treatment period in public health facilities, the study recommends that the Catholic religious sisters set up a private and specialized care center in the diocese that is meant for the Covid-19 infected clergy and religious members such that they may feel accepted and more comfortable during times of illness for the acceleration of their recovery journey and maintenance of their sense of purpose.

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