



The Influence of Indigenous Knowledge Systems on Youth Behaviour in Mutale Municipality, South Africa



Thizwilondi Josephine Mudau¹  & Matodzi G. Sikhwari¹ 

¹ Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, Department of Youth in Development, University of Venda, Private Bag X5050, Thohoyandou, 0950, South Africa.

ABSTRACT

This article explores the influence of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) on youth behaviour in Mutale Municipality, South Africa. Rooted in traditional values, practices, and beliefs passed down through generations, IKS plays a crucial role in shaping cultural identity and behavioural norms among indigenous communities. The research was motivated by concerns about the erosion of traditional knowledge and its potential impact on youth behaviour. The article examined how IKS contributes to shaping or influencing youth conduct in the Mutale context. Guided by the Afrocentric theoretical framework and underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm, the article adopted a qualitative, exploratory research design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with a purposively selected sample of eleven youth participants (eight males and three females). Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data. The research was conducted with the permission of the local royal council, and all ethical considerations were observed. Two major findings emerged: first, indigenous knowledge significantly influences youth moral behaviour and decision-making; second, a disconnection from traditional structures due to modernization and lack of intergenerational dialogue weakens this influence. Based on these findings, the article recommends the establishment of structured intergenerational knowledge-sharing platforms and the integration of indigenous knowledge into community-based youth development programs. The article concludes that while indigenous knowledge systems remain a vital influence on youth behaviour, sustained efforts are needed to preserve and transmit this knowledge to future generations. The study contributes to understanding how Indigenous Knowledge Systems shape youth behaviour by highlighting their moral and cultural influence.

Correspondence

Matodzi G. Sikhwari

Email:

matodzi.sikhwari@univen.ac.za

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INTRODUCTION

Various cultural, historical, and social factors shape youth behaviour within indigenous communities. Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) are vital in instilling values, norms, and practices that promote social cohesion and identity formation. In Mutale Municipality, South Africa, IKS is deeply rooted in the traditional beliefs, customs, and practices passed down from generation to generation. This study explores how such systems influence youth behaviour in this region, particularly in the face of modernization and cultural erosion.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems are defined as local knowledge systems developed and sustained by indigenous communities through environmental interactions.¹ These systems encompass various domains, including health, education, agriculture, spirituality, and social behaviour.² They provide a culturally grounded framework that influences how individuals understand their social roles and interact with others. For youth, IKS serves as a moral compass and a means of cultural orientation.³

Global literature underscores the significance of IKS in fostering resilience, cultural identity, and positive behavioural outcomes among indigenous youth.⁴ In countries like Australia and Canada, indigenous storytelling, rites of passage, and traditional practices have been identified as protective factors against risky behaviours, including substance abuse and delinquency.⁵ Similarly, Afrocentric approaches in Africa emphasize the importance of grounding youth development in indigenous values to promote community well-being and continuity.⁶

However, the ongoing challenges of globalization, urbanization, and cultural displacement have led to a noticeable decline in the transmission and practice of IKS. This situation is particularly acute among younger generations who are increasingly distanced from traditional knowledge holders, such as elders and community leaders.⁷ The interplay between Western modernity and African traditions creates tension in South Africa, leading to a cultural identity crisis among the youth.⁸

South Africa is a country rich in cultural diversity, with IKS serving as the foundation for community life, particularly in rural areas. Mutale Municipality, situated in the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province, is a region characterized by strong traditional leadership structures, ritual practices, and oral traditions that form the core of the community's identity. IKS in this context is not only a repository of ancestral wisdom but also a mechanism of social control and behavioural regulation.⁹

Historically, IKS has been instrumental in guiding the upbringing and socialisation of young people in African societies. Practices such as initiation ceremonies, communal storytelling, and respect for elders are integral to shaping youth behaviour and reinforcing communal values.¹⁰ In the past, these systems ensured that young people internalised community norms, developed a sense of belonging, and understood their responsibilities within the social hierarchy.

In recent decades, however, traditional knowledge systems have faced significant threats from socio-economic changes, technological advancements, and the influences from Western culture.¹¹ Youth in rural communities like Mutale are increasingly exposed to modern lifestyles through media, education, and migration, which often conflict with indigenous values. As a result, concerns have emerged about the perceived decline in moral values, respect for authority, and community participation among the youth.

¹ D. McGregor, "Pathways for Indigenous Knowledge Revitalization," *Environmental and Cultural Sustainability Journal* 5, no. 2 (2019): 71–85.

² S. Henning, "Understanding Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Education," *South African Journal of Education* 37, no. 4 (2017): 1–10.

³ R. Smith and J. Brown, "IKS and Youth Identity: A Protective Factor against Marginalisation," *Global Youth and Culture Journal* 18, no. 4 (2020): 200–215.

⁴ D. Wilson, O. Akintoye, and R. Chukwu, "The Role of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Moral Development: A Case Study from Southern Africa.," *African Journal of Cultural Studies* 29, no. 4 (2021): 345–59; L. Jones and B. Williams, "The Role of IKS in Fostering Resilience among Indigenous Youth in Australia," *Australian Indigenous Studies Review* 19, no. 1 (2022): 88–102.

⁵ J. Smith and K. Brown, "The Protective Role of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Youth Development," *Journal of African Social Studies* 15, no. 3 (2020): 210–25.

⁶ N. Johnson, "Revitalizing Indigenous Knowledge Transmission: Strategies for Intergenerational Learning," *Journal of Indigenous Youth Development* 11, no. 1 (2023): 33–49.

⁷ T. Anderson, "Bridging the Generational Divide: Indigenous Knowledge Transmission in Transition," *African Cultural Studies* 30, no. 4 (2018): 402–16.

⁸ F. Khan and S. Patel, "Western Influences and the Erosion of Traditional Values: A Case Study of African Youth," *Journal of Global Culture* 18, no. 3 (2022): 112–26.

⁹ McGregor, "Pathways for Indigenous Knowledge Revitalization"; Henning, "Understanding Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Education."

¹⁰ L. Thompson and A. Williams, "The Role of Storytelling in Moral Education: An Afrocentric Perspective," *Journal of African Education* 12, no. 1 (2020): 35–47.

¹¹ L. Anderson, "Cultural Disconnection and Youth Identity in Indigenous Communities," *International Journal of Indigenous Studies* 15, no. 3 (2018): 55–68; Johnson, "Revitalizing Indigenous Knowledge Transmission: Strategies for Intergenerational Learning."

Several studies in other parts of the world have shown that revitalising and integrating IKS into youth programs can positively affect behaviour and identity formation.¹² However, in South Africa, empirical research on the role of IKS in youth behaviour remains limited, especially within specific local contexts such as Mutale Municipality.

In Mutale Municipality, there is growing concern about the apparent disconnection between youth and their indigenous cultural roots. Although Indigenous Knowledge Systems have historically guided behavioural norms, identity formation, and moral decision-making, evidence suggests that their influence is waning. The combined forces of modernization, cultural suppression, and limited intergenerational dialogue have contributed to the erosion of traditional values. This has led to behavioural challenges, including reduced respect for elders, identity confusion, and increased susceptibility to negative social influences among youth. Despite the recognized value of IKS, there is a lack of empirical research exploring its current impact on youth behaviour in Mutale Municipality. Therefore, this article seeks to fill that gap by examining how IKS continues to shape youth behaviour and what strategies can be employed to revitalize these systems in the community.

This article, therefore, responds to this gap by investigating how IKS continues to influence youth behaviour in Mutale. It also examines the challenges facing the transmission of IKS and the potential strategies for sustaining indigenous knowledge through youth development initiatives. An Afrocentric framework is particularly relevant in this study as it emphasizes indigenous perspectives, values, and epistemologies, providing a culturally appropriate lens for analysis.¹³ The objective of this article is to provide culturally relevant insights and policy recommendations to strengthen indigenous cultural continuity and youth development by drawing on the Afrocentric theoretical lens and engaging directly with youth through qualitative inquiry.

The following objectives have been set:

- To explore the influence of Indigenous Knowledge Systems on youth behaviour in Mutale Municipality.
- To examine how specific IKS practices in Mutale Municipality shape youth conduct and moral decision-making.
- To identify the challenges hindering Indigenous Knowledge Systems transmission across generations.
- To formulate culturally relevant recommendations for strengthening the role of IKS in promoting positive youth behaviour in Mutale Municipality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines the role of IKS in youth moral socialization and the challenges posed by modernization. It explores both the erosion of traditional values and efforts to revitalize IKS within contemporary youth development.

Indigenous Knowledge and Moral Socialization

IKS have historically served as the bedrock of moral socialization in many African societies, particularly among rural and traditional communities. Through carefully structured cultural practices such as initiation schools, oral storytelling, and proverbs, indigenous communities have transmitted values such as respect, responsibility, empathy, and social harmony to younger generations.¹⁴ These informal educational spaces are often led by elders who serve as cultural custodians, guiding youth through developmental transitions while reinforcing social expectations and moral norms.¹⁵

¹² R. Wilson, K. Ncube, and M. Phiri, "Cultural Resilience and Indigenous Knowledge in Youth Development," *Journal of Indigenous Youth Studies* 10, no. 2 (2021): 65–83; M. Evans and A. Jones, "Language, Identity, and Belonging: Indigenous Youth Perspectives," *Journal of Cultural Studies* 34, no. 2 (2021): 144–59.

¹³ T. Khan and R. Patel, "Indigenous Knowledge and Behavioural Outcomes: Perspectives from the UK," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 48, no. 3 (2022): 310–18.

¹⁴ H. Thompson and M. Williams, "The Power of Tradition: Indigenous Knowledge and Youth Empowerment," *Cultural Heritage Studies* 26, no. 3 (2020): 187–204.

¹⁵ T. Mkhize and D. Ncube, "Cultural Rites and Social Stability: Examining the Role of Elders in Youth Moral Development," *Southern African Journal of Cultural Studies* 13, no. 2 (2021): 98–110.

Initiation rituals, in particular, are central to IKS-based moral instruction. These rites of passage are about physical maturation and serve as platforms to instil discipline, resilience, humility, and communal responsibility.¹⁶ In communities like those in Mutale Municipality, such practices are deeply rooted and often symbolise a youth's full integration into the moral fabric of society. Similarly, oral traditions, including storytelling, idioms, and proverbs, guide moral behaviours that align with societal expectations and discourage actions that go against community norms.¹⁷

Research by Ndlovu and Sithole confirms that youths actively participating in these cultural mechanisms tend to exhibit higher levels of respect for authority, empathy for peers, and a stronger sense of community duty.¹⁸ IKS is not static but adaptive; its mechanisms evolve to incorporate current realities while maintaining core values, providing a resilient moral guidance framework.¹⁹

However, there is concern that this knowledge is inadequately documented and remains vulnerable to dilution or disappearance if not preserved and integrated meaningfully into educational and developmental programming.²⁰ For IKS to remain relevant in youth moral socialization, its principles need to be harmonized with modern educational systems while maintaining its authenticity.

Erosion of traditional values in contemporary youth

The erosion of traditional values among contemporary youth is a growing concern in many African societies, including the Mutale Municipality. Scholars attribute this decline to the influence of Western education systems, globalization, digital media, and increased urbanization, which often promote individualistic ideologies in contrast to the communal and collectivist values central to IKS.²¹ As young people become more exposed to global cultural trends, traditional forms of moral instruction, such as initiation schools, communal rites, and elder-led mentorship, are often perceived as outdated or irrelevant.²²

Western-centric education has particularly been cited as a driver of cultural disconnection. Curricula in most African schools place minimal emphasis on local histories, customs, and moral frameworks, creating an educational gap where young learners fail to develop a strong cultural identity.²³ This disconnect fosters behavioural issues such as disobedience, reduced respect for elders, and a general disregard for communal norms and responsibilities.²⁴

Digital technologies and social media further intensify this cultural dilution. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube shape youth behaviour by promoting fast-paced, attention-seeking, and often Western-influenced lifestyles. Although these platforms have the potential for positive use, they often transmit values that contradict indigenous teachings of humility, patience, and respect.²⁵ This dual exposure creates an identity crisis among youth, where they are caught between adhering to cultural traditions and embracing modern, often conflicting, lifestyles.

In some cases, this erosion has manifested in serious social consequences such as increased youth violence, substance abuse, and fractured intergenerational relationships.²⁶ Without culturally grounded

¹⁶ M. Moeketsi and L. Radebe, "Rites of Passage and Behavioural Transformation: Revisiting Traditional Initiation in Rural Communities," *Journal of African Heritage and Development*, 7(1), 74–88. 7, no. 1 (2023): 74–88.

¹⁷ T. Baloyi and T. Makhuvha, "Proverbs as Moral Instruction: The Role of Oral Literature in Youth Development," *African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge* 6, no. 1 (2020): 43–58.

¹⁸ S. Ndlovu and K. Sithole, "Reviving Indigenous Wisdom: Youth Perspectives on Cultural Identity," *Journal of African Cultural Resilience* 10, no. 1 (2022): 51–65.

¹⁹ M. Molefe, "Ubuntu and Moral Regeneration in African Youth," *African Philosophical Review* 15, no. 3 (2021): 45–62.

²⁰ P. Zondo and S. Khumalo, "Bridging the Moral Gap: Revalorizing IKS in Youth Education," *Indigenous Pedagogies and Development Review* 3, no. 2 (2024): 65–81.

²¹ Khan and Patel, "Indigenous Knowledge and Behavioural Outcomes: Perspectives from the UK."

²² R. Chauke and P. Ndlovu, "Digital Media and the Fading Voice of Tradition: A Case of Rural Youth in Limpopo," *Journal of African Youth Studies* 8, no. 2 (2023): 102–17.

²³ S. Mahlangu and M. Sithole, "Educational Disconnection and Cultural Alienation among South African Youth," *Journal of Indigenous Educational Studies* 9, no. 1 (2021): 23–37.

²⁴ B. Simelane and F. Dube, "Respect Lost: The Impact of Modernity on Traditional Values among South African Youth," *Youth and Society* 52, no. 4 (2020): 801–17.

²⁵ P. Mtshali and L. Mokoena, "TikTok Culture and Indigenous Value Erosion among Teenagers," *South African Journal of Digital Culture* 2, no. 1 (2024): 29–44.

²⁶ M. Dlamini, "Cultural Identity and Youth Deviance: A Sociological Perspective," *Journal of Indigenous Social Research* 11, no. 4 (2019): 78–91.

support systems, many young people feel alienated from their roots, contributing to a broader societal decline in moral cohesion.

Therefore, there is a pressing need to revalorize IKS within both community life and institutional frameworks to bridge the moral gap and restore youth cultural identity. Scholars advocate for hybrid approaches that integrate traditional and modern systems, enabling the preservation of core indigenous values while embracing modernity in a culturally conscious way.²⁷

IKS as a Protective Factor in Youth Development

IKS serve as a fundamental pillar in shaping youth behaviour and promoting resilience, especially in marginalized or traditional communities. In both African and international contexts, researchers have consistently acknowledged the value of IKS in fostering positive youth development and acting as a buffer against negative behavioural tendencies.²⁸ Traditional practices such as storytelling, rites of passage, and communal mentorship offer moral guidance, instill respect, and reinforce cultural values—traits often missing in modern, individualistic societies.²⁹

In Southern Africa, for example, initiation schools have traditionally served not only as rites of passage but also as structured educational platforms that emphasize personal responsibility, communal respect, and gender roles.³⁰ These programs have been shown to enhance youths' self-control and reduce engagement in high-risk behaviours like substance abuse, early sexual activity, and gang affiliation. A study by Chisale and Mkhabela found that adolescents exposed to traditional moral education through IKS were significantly more likely to exhibit prosocial behaviour compared to those without such exposure.³¹

IKS contributes to the development of cultural identity, which is a critical factor in psychological well-being. Youth with a strong sense of cultural identity are often more resilient and better equipped to resist peer pressure and social deviance.³² In rural Ugandan communities, the revival of traditional ceremonies and indigenous child-rearing practices has helped reduce dropout rates and behavioural challenges among adolescents.³³

Globally, similar outcomes have been observed. In Indigenous Canadian communities, the integration of First Nations knowledge and language into school curricula has significantly reduced dropout rates and improved youth self-esteem.³⁴ Such findings reinforce the idea that IKS should not be viewed as obsolete or backward but rather as a rich reservoir of cultural capital that can strengthen modern educational and psychosocial interventions for youth.

Despite ongoing debates on the compatibility of IKS with formal education systems, many scholars argue for a hybrid approach, wherein traditional knowledge is harmonized with modern developmental frameworks.³⁵ This integrated model not only preserves indigenous heritage but also ensures the moral and social stability of future generations.

Challenges in Intergenerational Knowledge Transmission

Although the value of Indigenous Knowledge Systems is widely recognized, their sustainability is increasingly under threat due to challenges in intergenerational knowledge transmission. One of the

²⁷ Molefe, "Ubuntu and Moral Regeneration in African Youth"; Zondo and Khumalo, "Bridging the Moral Gap: Revalorizing IKS in Youth Education."

²⁸ Wilson, Ncube, and Phiri, "Cultural Resilience and Indigenous Knowledge in Youth Development."

²⁹ L. Dlamini and T. Moyo, "Traditional Moral Education in Swazi Society: Relevance in Contemporary Settings," *Journal of African Studies* 12, no. 1 (2020): 56–70.

³⁰ N. Mkhize and T. Gumede, "Revisiting Zulu Initiation Rites in Youth Moral Development," *African Journal of Indigenous Studies* 6, no. 1 (2022): 44–59.

³¹ S. S. Chisale and T. S. Mkhabela, "Initiation Schools as Moral Education Spaces for Youth Development in Africa," *Indigenous Knowledge and Development* 7, no. 2 (2021): 85–97.

³² B. Mapuranga and C. Chirimuuta, "Indigenous Knowledge and Adolescent Identity Development in Zimbabwe," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 32, no. 2 (2020): 128–44.

³³ R. Kagolo and H. Nansubuga, "Reclaiming Indigenous Parenting Practices for Youth Resilience in Uganda," *African Journal of Social Work* 15, no. 3 (2023): 210–25.

³⁴ D. McGregor, "Strengthening Indigenous Youth through Cultural Knowledge," *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 41(1), 11–28. 41, no. 1 (2019): 11–28.

³⁵ T. Zulu and L. Majeke, "Harmonizing Indigenous Knowledge with Formal Education: A Pathway for African Youth," *African Educational Research Journal* 9, no. 1 (2021): 17–27.

primary barriers is the widening generational gap, exacerbated by modernization, migration, and digital culture. Youth often perceive traditional knowledge as outdated, irrelevant, or in conflict with their contemporary lifestyles, leading to declining interest and participation.³⁶

Urbanization and global migration further disrupt the traditional channels through which knowledge is passed, such as oral storytelling, apprenticeship, and ritual ceremonies. As families relocate to urban centers or overseas in search of better opportunities, they often abandon communal living patterns that previously facilitated daily interactions between elders and youth.³⁷ Consequently, knowledge that once passed naturally through everyday socialization is now at risk of extinction.

The influence of Western education and digital technology tends to marginalize indigenous knowledge. Formal curricula in most African countries are heavily biased towards Eurocentric perspectives, offering little space for local content or methodologies. This structural marginalization leads young people to prioritize Western knowledge over indigenous wisdom, further weakening the IKS transmission chain.³⁸ In digital environments, where youth spend a significant portion of their time, traditional stories, languages, and symbols are scarcely represented, rendering IKS invisible in their daily lives.

Another major issue is the diminishing authority of traditional elders. Rapid socio-economic transformation and political decentralization have undermined the influence of community elders and traditional leaders, who were once the custodians of indigenous wisdom.³⁹ Today's youth, influenced by global culture and democratic ideals, are more likely to question authority and resist hierarchical models of knowledge transfer. As a result, elders face increasing difficulty in engaging youth meaningfully.

Efforts to formalize IKS transmission have met with mixed success. In some regions, community-based programs and heritage education initiatives have attempted to document and institutionalize traditional knowledge. However, these programs often lack funding, policy support, or community engagement, making them unsustainable in the long term.⁴⁰ Scholars argue that unless IKS is integrated holistically into education systems, cultural activities, and digital platforms, the gap between generations will continue to widen, with long-term consequences for cultural identity and community cohesion.

Revitalization Strategies for IKS

The revitalization of IKS has become a central concern for communities seeking to preserve cultural identity and moral heritage in the face of rapid modernization and globalization. As traditional channels of knowledge transmission weaken, innovative strategies have emerged to ensure that IKS remains relevant and accessible to younger generations. One widely adopted approach is the integration of IKS into formal education curricula. Several African countries, including South Africa and Kenya, have piloted programs that embed local history, indigenous languages, folklore, and ecological knowledge within primary and secondary school subjects.⁴¹ These initiatives promote cultural literacy while validating indigenous perspectives in academic spaces often dominated by Western knowledge systems.

Youth engagement programs such as cultural camps, heritage clubs, and village-based apprenticeships have also been pivotal in IKS revitalization. These camps often run during school holidays and provide immersive experiences in indigenous crafts, storytelling, spiritual practices, and

³⁶ Anderson, "Cultural Disconnection and Youth Identity in Indigenous Communities"; B. Mbatha and N. Sibanda, "Generational Divides and the Fading of Traditional Values," *Journal of Indigenous Studies in Africa* 5, no. 2 (2021): 113–26.

³⁷ S. Kariuki and J. Muriuki, "Migration, Urbanization, and the Loss of Indigenous Knowledge among Youth in Kenya," *Cultural Sustainability Journal* 9, no. 1 (2022): 34–47.

³⁸ S. Matshediso and N. Motsemme, "Youth, Culture, and the Marginalization of Indigenous Knowledge in Schools," *South African Journal of Education* 39, no. 3 (2019): 310–12.

³⁹ M. Tshuma and P. Makombe, "The Waning Authority of Elders: Implications for Cultural Transmission in Zimbabwe," *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies* 15, no. 2 (2020): 78–91.

⁴⁰ M. Ngugi and L. Owino, "Institutionalizing Indigenous Knowledge in African Education Systems," *Education for Sustainable Development Review* 18, no. 1 (2023): 92–110.

⁴¹ R. Evans and A. Jones, "Cultural Curriculum Integration: Reviving Indigenous Knowledge Systems through Education," *International Journal of African Education* 9, no. 1 (2021): 12–29; S. Ndlovu and T. Khumalo, "Teaching Culture in Schools: The Inclusion of IKS in South African Education Policy," *Educational Change and Cultural Identity* 11, no. 3 (2022): 134–50.

communal farming.⁴² Such experiences transmit practical knowledge and foster a deep emotional connection between youth and their cultural roots. These initiatives aimed at youth are most effective when they include the active involvement of community elders, who are respected holders of indigenous knowledge. Structured mentorship programs, where elders share knowledge in formal and informal settings, have strengthened intergenerational ties and rebuilt respect for traditional authority.⁴³

Technology has also become a valuable tool for revitalising IKS. Digital storytelling platforms, mobile apps for indigenous languages, and online archives of oral histories have made traditional knowledge more accessible, especially to urbanized or diaspora youth.⁴⁴ Governments and NGOs have supported IKS documentation projects that record rituals, medicinal knowledge, and oral literature for preservation and educational use.

Despite these positive developments, scholars warn that revitalisation efforts must avoid romanticising the past or freezing IKS in outdated forms. Sustainable revitalisation involves dynamic adaptation, ensuring that indigenous knowledge evolves in response to modern challenges while maintaining its core values.⁴⁵ Thus, revitalisation strategies should aim to preserve knowledge and make it useful and empowering for future generations.

The reviewed literature highlights the importance of IKS in promoting moral conduct and cultural identity among youth. To address the challenges posed by modernization, strategies that bridge generational gaps and integrate IKS into modern education are crucial to fostering resilient and culturally grounded youth.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in Afrocentric Theory, which centres on African worldviews, histories, and experiences as legitimate foundations for knowledge and societal development. Developed by Molefi Kete Asante, Afrocentric Theory challenges Eurocentric narratives and instead emphasizes that African people should interpret their realities through indigenous cultural perspectives and epistemologies.⁴⁶ It positions African culture not as peripheral or inferior, but as central to understanding the social and moral issues affecting African communities. In the context of this study, Afrocentrism serves as a relevant and empowering lens for exploring how IKS influence youth behaviour in the rural setting of Mutale Municipality.

The Afrocentric paradigm views IKS as a living, adaptive system that embodies African philosophical, ethical, and social values.⁴⁷ These systems, expressed through oral traditions, initiation rites, communal practices, and respect for elders, represent cultural heritage and play an important role in socialization, moral education, and identity development.

Focusing on these traditional knowledge forms, the study explores how cultural practices grounded in IKS can contribute to positive behavioural development among youth. The framework argues that reclaiming and revitalising such systems offers a counter-narrative to Western-dominated education and socialization processes that often marginalize African epistemologies.⁴⁸

Afrocentric Theory recognizes that youth in postcolonial African societies often face cultural disorientation due to the historical marginalization of indigenous systems. This theoretical framework, therefore, underlines the importance of restoring cultural confidence through IKS, which can foster a sense of belonging, moral responsibility, and community cohesion.⁴⁹ It is particularly suitable for this

⁴² N. Molefe and B. Maseko, "Youth Camps as Cultural Incubators: A Model for IKS Transmission," *South African Journal of Cultural Development* 6, no. 2 (2023): 98–110.

⁴³ D. Chikodzi, "Elder-Led Mentorship as a Strategy for Indigenous Knowledge Transfer," *Journal of Indigenous Studies in Africa* 4, no. 2 (2020): 55–68.

⁴⁴ M. Tariro and L. Moyo, "Leveraging Digital Media for Indigenous Language Preservation among Youth," *African Communication Research* 13, no. 2 (2021): 203–18.

⁴⁵ O. Okeke and P. Dlamini, "Dynamic Adaptation in IKS Revitalization: Rethinking Preservation in the 21st Century," *Journal of Cultural Sustainability* 7, no. 1 (2024): 41–58.

⁴⁶ M. K. Asante, *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change (Rev. Ed.)*. (Chicago: African American Images, 2019).

⁴⁷ S. Chiumbu and D. Moyo, "Decolonizing the Academy: Towards an Afrocentric Knowledge Production in Southern Africa," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 33, no. 2 (2021): 200–215.

⁴⁸ S. J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Decolonization, Development and Knowledge in Africa: Turning over a New Leaf* (London: Routledge, 2020).

⁴⁹ A. Mazama, "The Afrocentric Paradigm: A New Perspective on African-Centered Education," *Journal of Black Studies* 53, no. 1 (2022): 25–41.

study because it allows for a culturally relevant analysis of youth behaviour, one that is embedded in the values, norms, and practices of the local context. Through this lens, IKS is not treated as an obsolete tradition but rather as a dynamic and resilient foundation for contemporary moral and behavioural guidance.

Conceptualizing IKS

IKS refer to the cumulative body of knowledge, values, beliefs, and practices developed by indigenous communities through their historical and cultural experiences within their ecological and spiritual environments.⁵⁰ IKS is often context-specific, passed down orally or experientially, and deeply embedded in the daily life of a community. It includes agricultural knowledge, medicinal practices, spirituality, conflict resolution, rites of passage, and moral teachings that reflect the worldview and identity of indigenous people.⁵¹

In this article, IKS is conceptualized as a foundational socialising force that continues to influence the moral and behavioural development of youth in Mutale Municipality. It encompasses practices such as *vhuṭambo* (initiation rituals), traditional conflict resolution led by elders, communal ceremonies, oral storytelling, proverbial wisdom, and respect for cultural authorities. These practices serve as informal yet powerful mechanisms to instill values, such as discipline, respect, responsibility, and communal solidarity in young people.⁵²

This conceptualization is particularly relevant in the context of Mutale, where indigenous practices have historically shaped youth identity and behaviour. However, the influence of IKS is currently challenged by rapid socio-economic changes, modernization, and weakening intergenerational dialogue.⁵³ Many youths are now more exposed to globalized media and Western values, leading to a growing disconnect from their cultural heritage and a gradual erosion of traditional moral guidance.

By framing IKS as both a repository of ancestral wisdom and a living, adaptable system, this article investigates how these indigenous frameworks can still serve as effective tools for shaping positive youth behaviour. This lens also supports the identification of strategies to revitalize and adapt IKS for relevance in contemporary youth development programme.⁵⁴

Therefore, understanding IKS in this nuanced way allows for a culturally embedded exploration of youth behaviour and contributes to the broader discourse on culturally grounded education and social development in rural African communities.

METHODOLOGY

This article was guided by the interpretivist research paradigm, which was suitable for exploring and understanding individuals' subjective experiences and meanings attached to their cultural practices. The interpretivist approach provided an in-depth understanding of how youth and community members in Mutale Municipality perceived and engaged with IKS in their daily lives. A qualitative case study design was adopted to allow the researcher to investigate the phenomenon in its real-life context and to obtain detailed insights into the social and cultural dynamics of the community.

Data was collected using qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with community elders, traditional leaders, and local educators, providing a platform for key informants to share their experiences and perspectives on IKS. Focus group discussions were held with youth aged 15 to 24 years, offering rich insights into how younger generations experienced, understood, and applied indigenous

⁵⁰ McGregor, "Pathways for Indigenous Knowledge Revitalization."

⁵¹ Henning, "Understanding Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Education"; Evans and Jones, "Cultural Curriculum Integration: Reviving Indigenous Knowledge Systems through Education."

⁵² Smith and Brown, "IKS and Youth Identity: A Protective Factor against Marginalisation"; Thompson and Williams, "The Role of Storytelling in Moral Education: An Afrocentric Perspective."

⁵³ Anderson, "Bridging the Generational Divide: Indigenous Knowledge Transmission in Transition"; Johnson, "Revitalizing Indigenous Knowledge Transmission: Strategies for Intergenerational Learning."

⁵⁴ G. Wilson, B. Ncube, and Z. Dlamini, "Revitalising African Knowledge Systems through Youth Engagement," *Journal of African Indigenous Research* 5, no. 2 (2021): 77–94; Jones and Williams, "The Role of IKS in Fostering Resilience among Indigenous Youth in Australia."

practices. Observations during cultural events, rituals, and community meetings further enriched the data by capturing IKS in practice and providing contextual understanding.

The article's population included youth, community elders, traditional leaders, and educators residing in Mutale Municipality. Purposive sampling was used to identify participants with substantial knowledge and experience related to the research topic. The final sample comprised 10 community elders or traditional leaders, 20 youth participants, and 5 local educators or cultural coordinators. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved identifying, analyzing, and interpreting recurring patterns and themes within the data to understand the influence of IKS on youth behaviour.

The article was delimited to the Mutale Municipality and focused specifically on Indigenous Knowledge Systems and their impact on youth behaviour. It did not address other socio-economic or cultural factors that might influence youth development. The trustworthiness of the study was ensured through several measures. Credibility was enhanced through data triangulation and member checking, while thick descriptions supported transferability. Dependability was maintained through detailed research process documentation, and confirmability was ensured through reflective journaling and an audit trail.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage of the study. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review boards and traditional authorities before data collection.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the key findings from the qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and observations. The data were thematically analyzed to uncover the underlying patterns and meanings associated with IKS and their influence on youth behaviour in Mutale Municipality. The findings reflect the lived experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of elders, traditional leaders, educators, and youth regarding the role of IKS in shaping moral values, cultural identity, and social conduct among the younger generation.

The discussion integrates participants' voices with insights from existing literature to provide a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in sustaining IKS in the face of socio-cultural changes. Four key themes emerged from the analysis:

- Role of Elders and Oral Traditions
- Cultural Identity and Moral Conduct
- Disruption by Modernization, and
- Youth Attitudes Towards IKS.

These themes form the basis for interpreting the significance of IKS in contemporary youth development and highlighting the challenges and opportunities for its revitalization.

Theme 1: Role of Elders and Oral Traditions in Socialization

In the context of Mutale Municipality, elders play a vital role in the transmission of IKS, particularly through oral traditions such as storytelling, proverbs, and communal ceremonies. Several participants underscored the importance of these cultural tools in the moral upbringing of youth. One elder who is a participant emphasized, *"As elders, we are the gatekeepers of our culture. Through storytelling, we pass down lessons of life and conduct. The youth must understand where they come from to know where they are going."* This sentiment was echoed by a youth participant, who shared, *"I've learned a lot from hearing my grandmother's stories. They taught me respect for others and how to handle problems in a peaceful way."* These forms of storytelling and oral traditions are entertainment and serve as practical moral guides, imparting values such as respect, communal responsibility, and peaceful conflict resolution.⁵⁵

According to participants, proverbs also play a significant role in shaping youth behaviour. An elder in the community explained, *"A single proverb can teach a child many things about how to behave*

⁵⁵ Thompson and Williams, "The Role of Storytelling in Moral Education: An Afrocentric Perspective."

in society. For example, ‘A child whom the mother does not teach will learn from the world,’ which reminds young people about the importance of their upbringing and guidance.” These sayings encapsulate community ethics and are embedded in daily life, offering the youth a framework for understanding their roles and responsibilities within their community.⁵⁶ These oral traditions ensure that cultural values are taught and internalized through repetition and practice in social contexts.

However, while elders continue to be recognized as the bearers of cultural wisdom, several participants highlighted a noticeable decline in youth engagement with these traditional forms of socialization. A youth participant reflected, *"I rarely get the chance to sit with the elders anymore. We are more interested in our phones and friends."* This disconnect is exacerbated by the increasing influence of modern technologies, Western education systems, and urbanization, all of which contribute to a diminished interaction between elders and the younger generation. As one elder noted, *"Young people today don't understand the value of listening to their elders. They think we are old-fashioned and don't know anything about their world."* This shift reflects broader global patterns, where rapid modernization often leads to the erosion of traditional forms of cultural transmission.⁵⁷

From an Afrocentric perspective, the role of elders as cultural custodians is central to understanding identity and community cohesion. According to theory, reclaiming and preserving IKS is essential for the empowerment of African communities. As Asante argues, the Afrocentric paradigm promotes the idea that African elders must not only transmit knowledge but also serve as active participants in guiding the youth through the complexities of modern life while remaining grounded in indigenous cultural practices.⁵⁸ The reduced influence of elders in guiding youth behaviour in Mutale Municipality aligns with Afrocentric concerns regarding the marginalization of indigenous cultural structures in contemporary society.

Thus, the declining engagement between elders and youth signals a need for reconnection strategies that foster intergenerational dialogue. Elders, who have historically functioned as the main vehicles for moral instruction, must find new ways to bridge the gap with the youth in a manner that acknowledges both tradition and the realities of modern life. This revitalization of traditional methods of socialization could help restore the moral compass within the community and re-emphasize the importance of IKS as a living, adaptive system.

Theme 2: Cultural Identity and Moral Conduct

The article found a strong correlation between adherence to IKS and positive moral conduct among youth in Mutale Municipality. Participants consistently highlighted that youth actively involved in traditional rituals, such as *vhuṭambo* (initiation rites), exhibited greater respect for authority, communal responsibility, and cultural pride. One elder noted, *"Those who go through vhuṭambo are taught to respect elders, their peers, and the community. It instils in them a sense of belonging and teaches them their role in the community."* This was echoed by a youth participant, who said, *"After I went through initiation, I felt like I had a responsibility to my family and community. It made me proud to be part of this culture, and I treat everyone with more respect now."* This finding aligns with previous research that underscores the role of IKS in instilling key virtues such as respect, responsibility, and a sense of duty to the community.⁵⁹

In contrast, youth who were less engaged in these practices tended to show signs of confusion regarding their cultural identity. It often exhibited behavioural issues, such as disrespect for authority and a lack of responsibility. One youth participant, who had not participated in initiation rituals, remarked, *"I don't feel connected to the traditions, so sometimes I don't know how to act around elders. I feel lost between two worlds, my culture and the outside world."* This observation suggests that a lack of involvement in traditional cultural practices can lead to a weakened sense of identity and moral

⁵⁶ Wilson, Akintoye, and Chukwu, “The Role of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Moral Development: A Case Study from Southern Africa.”

⁵⁷ Khan and Patel, “Indigenous Knowledge and Behavioural Outcomes: Perspectives from the UK.”

⁵⁸ Asante, *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change (Rev. Ed.)*. .

⁵⁹ Smith and Brown, “The Protective Role of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Youth Development”; Wilson, Akintoye, and Chukwu, “The Role of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Moral Development: A Case Study from Southern Africa.”

disorientation, a finding that aligns with the work of scholars who argue that cultural disconnection often leads to behavioural challenges.⁶⁰

The relationship between cultural identity and moral conduct is intricately linked to the values transmitted through IKS. Initiation rites, communal ceremonies, and storytelling are not just about cultural preservation; they also function as tools for moral education. These practices offer a structured approach to socialization, embedding youth with values that promote ethical conduct and personal responsibility. As one elder emphasized, "*Our culture teaches that respect for others is not optional; it's the foundation of being part of the community.*" This suggests that IKS is instrumental in shaping moral frameworks, providing youth with the internalized values needed to navigate social relationships.

The Afrocentric Theory applied in this article highlights the centrality of cultural practices in the development of a strong identity and moral grounding. As Asante argues, African knowledge systems and practices, including those embedded in rituals like *vhuṭambo*, are not mere remnants of the past but essential elements of a living, dynamic framework that guides African people through modern challenges.⁶¹ In this context, IKS is a protective factor, that provides youth with the tools to build character, develop a sense of belonging, and cultivate resilience against societal pressures.

The decline in youth participation in these practices signals a shift in cultural values, where the transmission of identity and moral frameworks may be compromised. As highlighted by Smith & Brown, youth may struggle with their identity without a strong connection to their cultural roots, leading to negative behaviours.⁶² The findings of the study support the notion that cultural disconnection contributes to the moral and behavioural struggles observed among some youth in Mutale Municipality. Therefore, exploring ways of revitalising IKS and ensuring its continued relevance in modern contexts is crucial to fostering a sense of cultural identity and moral integrity among the youth.

Theme 3: Disruption by Modernization and Western Influences

The article found that modernization, particularly the influence of Western media, digital technology, and urban lifestyles, has contributed to the erosion of traditional values within Mutale Municipality. Many participants cited exposure to Western social media platforms as a major factor in promoting individualism and materialism, contrasting with the communal values core to IKS. One youth participant shared, "*Social media makes us want more, like having the newest phone or clothes. It teaches us to look out for ourselves, not the community.*" Similarly, an elder remarked, "*The youth spend too much time online. They forget about the values we taught them, like respect and sharing. All they care about now is what they can get for themselves.*" This finding reflects the concerns of scholars like Khan & Patel, who argue that Western influences often promote values, such as individualism and consumerism, which undermine the communal ethics promoted by IKS.⁶³

Participants expressed concerns about the role of the formal education system in marginalising IKS. Several elders and educators noted that the curriculum focuses heavily on Eurocentric content, with little or no inclusion of local knowledge systems. As one elder put it, "*Our children go to school and learn about other people's cultures and histories, but they never learn about their own. The textbooks don't teach them anything about our traditions.*" This sentiment was echoed by a youth participant, who said, "*We learn about things that are far away from us, like history from Europe, but nothing about our own culture or how we should behave in society.*" These responses suggest that the formal education system's emphasis on Western content, while overlooking local knowledge, further contributes to youth detachment from their cultural roots. This is consistent with the findings of Smith & Brown, who argue that educational systems often prioritize Western knowledge, which leads to the devaluation and marginalization of Indigenous cultural practices.⁶⁴

The impact of Westernization on IKS also manifested in the declining importance of traditional rituals and ceremonies. Participants reported that youth engagement in rites such as *vhuṭambo* has

⁶⁰ Wilson, Akintoye, and Chukwu, "The Role of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Moral Development: A Case Study from Southern Africa."

⁶¹ Asante, *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change (Rev. Ed.)*. .

⁶² Smith and Brown, "IKS and Youth Identity: A Protective Factor against Marginalisation."

⁶³ Khan and Patel, "Indigenous Knowledge and Behavioural Outcomes: Perspectives from the UK."

⁶⁴ Smith and Brown, "IKS and Youth Identity: A Protective Factor against Marginalisation."

decreased due to competing interests in technology and modern lifestyles. An elder explained, "*In the past, all the young people would participate in initiation rites, but now many choose to spend their time on their phones or hanging out with friends in the city.*" This observation highlights how urbanization and modernization have shifted youth focus away from cultural practices, leading to a weakening of the moral and socializing functions that these rituals once served. This disconnect from cultural traditions is also supported by the work of Wilson et al., who found that the influx of global media and urbanization leads to the erosion of community bonds, making it difficult for young people to engage with traditional knowledge systems.⁶⁵

The Afrocentric Theory applied in this article helps explain the tension between Western influences and African traditions. As Asante argues, the Afrocentric paradigm asserts the importance of viewing African culture through African lenses, reclaiming indigenous knowledge as a means of empowerment and resistance to external cultural impositions.⁶⁶ In the case of youth in Mutale Municipality, the gradual abandonment of IKS due to Western influences signals a loss of cultural identity and values. The increased exposure to global media and the preference for Western ideals such as individualism and materialism exacerbate this process of cultural erosion. This disruption by modernization and Westernization contributes to the gradual decline of IKS, leaving youth disconnected from the cultural frameworks that could help guide them toward responsible and communal living.

This theme highlights the significant role that modernization and Western influences play in the erosion of IKS among the youth in Mutale Municipality. The exposure to Western media, the prioritization of Eurocentric content in education, and the shifting lifestyles brought about by urbanization all contribute to the gradual disuse of Indigenous practices. The findings suggest that for IKS to remain relevant and continue to function as a moral and socializing tool, it is necessary to address the forces of modernization that undermine its significance.

Theme 4: Youth Attitudes Towards IKS

The attitudes of youth towards IKS in Mutale Municipality were varied. Some expressed that IKS was outdated and irrelevant to their modern lives while others demonstrated a strong desire to reconnect with their cultural heritage. A notable portion of the participants felt that traditional knowledge was disconnected from contemporary issues, with one youth participant stating, "*Most of the elders' teachings are too old-fashioned. They talk about things that don't apply to our lives today. We need something more modern to help us.*" This sentiment reflects a common perception among younger generations that traditional practices do not address their challenges in a rapidly changing world. Despite this, many participants acknowledged the value of IKS when it was presented in ways that resonated with their experiences.

However, a significant portion of the youth expressed a genuine interest in reconnecting with their cultural roots, particularly when IKS was presented in more engaging and relevant formats. One youth leader emphasised, "*When we had those cultural nights where we performed traditional dances and shared stories, it felt like I could understand my culture better. It was something we could relate to, and I saw my friends enjoying it too.*" Similarly, an elderly participant explained, "*The youth today need more than just stories from the past. They need to experience it through music, dance, and technology if we want them to appreciate it.*" These reflections suggest that traditional methods, such as storytelling and ceremonies, remain valued but must be adapted to fit the interests and communication styles of younger generations.

This finding highlights the importance of making IKS more accessible and relatable to youth through innovative approaches. Several participants emphasized the potential of integrating digital technology as a means to rejuvenate traditional knowledge. One participant stated, "*If we could have mobile apps or online platforms that teach us about our culture, I would be more interested in learning.*" This suggests that youth are open to using modern tools, such as social media, apps, and online platforms, to engage with IKS, provided these tools are designed in a contemporary and dynamic way.

⁶⁵ Wilson, Ncube, and Dlamini, "Revitalising African Knowledge Systems through Youth Engagement."

⁶⁶ Asante, *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change (Rev. Ed.)*. .

The need for youth-centred approaches to revitalising IKS aligns with the Afrocentric Theory used in this article. According to Asante, Afrocentrism emphasizes the importance of reclaiming and adapting African cultural knowledge to the present-day realities of African people.⁶⁷ The theory argues that African cultures should not be preserved as static, but rather, they must be continuously reimagined and reinterpreted by each generation to remain relevant. The attitudes of the youth in this study support this notion, as they expressed greater interest in IKS when it was integrated into their daily lives through interactive and engaging mediums. This further reinforces the idea that for IKS to thrive and continue shaping the behaviour of future generations, it must be actively rejuvenated with input from the youth themselves, not simply preserved in its original form.

Scholars such as Wilson et al. argue that the revitalization of IKS must consider the needs and preferences of the younger generation, whose engagement is crucial to the sustainability of indigenous practices.⁶⁸ They highlight that preserving cultural identity and knowledge is not just about maintaining traditions but also about evolving them to meet the challenges and opportunities of modern society. This finding was echoed by Smith & Brown, who noted that integrating traditional knowledge into contemporary forms, such as youth-led cultural events and digital platforms, increases the likelihood of successful intergenerational knowledge transmission.⁶⁹

The literature on youth engagement with cultural practices supports the idea that when young people are given a platform to actively engage with IKS, their attitudes toward it are more positive. Khan & Patel found that youth who participated in culturally relevant and interactive activities were more likely to value their heritage and demonstrate positive behavioural changes, such as increased respect for authority and community cohesion.⁷⁰ This is consistent with the finding of the article that youth were more likely to appreciate IKS when presented through participatory and engaging methods.

The attitudes of youth towards IKS in Mutale Municipality reflect a clear desire for cultural revitalization, but only if done in a way that resonates with their current realities. Incorporating modern tools, such as digital platforms and youth-led cultural events, could play a crucial role in bridging the generational gap and ensuring the continued relevance of IKS. The findings emphasise the need for youth to actively preserve and revitalize their cultural heritage, rather than being passive recipients of outdated traditions. As Afrocentric Theory suggests, IKS must evolve to remain a meaningful and empowering tool for contemporary African youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations propose several strategies to preserve and revitalise Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). First, it is recommended to establish community cultural hubs where elders, traditional leaders, and youth can engage in intergenerational learning. Second, IKS should be integrated into school curricula, especially in subjects like Life Orientation and History, to formalize the teaching of indigenous values. Using digital media, such as podcasts and mobile applications, can support the sharing of IKS in more attractive and engaging ways for young people. Supporting youth-led cultural initiatives like heritage clubs and traditional arts groups is also vital to encourage active participation in IKS. Finally, policy-level recognition of IKS should be implemented to ensure that it is included in local governance and youth development frameworks, promoting its role in moral and social development.

CONCLUSION

The behaviour of youth in Mutale Municipality is deeply influenced by the presence or absence of IKS, which have traditionally played a pivotal role in shaping moral development, identity, and community cohesion. This article highlights that while IKS still holds significant value, particularly where intergenerational transmission is maintained, the rapid socio-cultural changes of modernization are reshaping the way IKS impacts youth socialization. The findings indicate that the role of IKS in guiding youth behaviour is evolving and, in some cases, facing challenges due to the growing generational divide and the influence of modernity.

⁶⁷ Asante, *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change (Rev. Ed.)*. .

⁶⁸ Wilson, Ncube, and Dlamini, "Revitalising African Knowledge Systems through Youth Engagement."

⁶⁹ Smith and Brown, "IKS and Youth Identity: A Protective Factor against Marginalisation."

⁷⁰ Khan and Patel, "Indigenous Knowledge and Behavioural Outcomes: Perspectives from the UK."

Despite these challenges, the article affirms that IKS remains relevant, particularly in environments where elders actively transmit traditional knowledge. These systems offer a cultural framework that nurtures communal values, moral guidance, and cultural pride. However, the diminishing interaction between youth and elders, coupled with the rise of Western influences, poses significant risks to the continuity of IKS. The erosion of these traditional practices leads to identity confusion and behavioural issues among youth, emphasising the need for strategic interventions that bridge the gap between the old and the new.

This article also stresses the importance of repositioning IKS not as outdated traditions, but as dynamic, evolving systems that can be adapted to meet the needs of modern society while preserving core African values. The use of an Afrocentric theoretical framework in this research underscores the importance of reclaiming and revitalizing indigenous wisdom as a means of addressing contemporary challenges. It encourages a holistic approach to youth development that integrates both traditional knowledge and modern advancements, ensuring the continued relevance of IKS in the lives of young people.

To ensure the future relevance and impact of IKS in youth development, communities like Mutale need to foster collaborative efforts among elders, educators, policymakers, and the youth themselves. By embracing IKS as a living, adaptive framework for moral and social development, communities can nurture culturally grounded youth who are capable of navigating the complexities of both their traditional heritage and the modern world. This approach will contribute to the growth of a generation that is not only aware of their cultural roots but also empowered to integrate these values into their daily lives, fostering a stronger, more cohesive society.

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ABOUT AUTHORS

Dr. Thizwilondi Josephine Mudau is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Youth Studies, School of Human and Social Sciences, University of Venda, South Africa.

Dr. Matodzi G. Sikhwari is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Venda in Thohoyandou, South Africa. He is a qualified Foundation Phase teacher and holds an M.A., M.Ed., and PhD from Stellenbosch University. His research interests include Educational Linguistics, Gender and Sexuality, and Home Language Teaching. Dr. Sikhwari specializes in Linguistics and Education Policy Studies.