



# A Deep Dive into Knowledge, Unveiling Perspectives of African Teenage Boys Regarding Initiation Schools

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## ABSTRACT

Initiation schools, integral to the fabric of indigenous South African communities, have historically served as vessels for transmitting cultural heritage. This study delved into the evolving perspectives of the youth regarding these schools, acknowledging the contemporary challenges. Utilising a qualitative, exploratory research design, face-to-face interviews were conducted with 15 boys residing in the Vhembe District. The aim was to delve into the nuanced knowledge held by the younger generation within this specific geographical region. This work is underpinned by the philosophical framework of Ubuntu. The findings underscored initiation schools' essential role in imparting cultural norms, values, and standards within indigenous societies. However, a discernible decline in attendance and perceived relevance has been observed, fueled by the increasing preference for hospital circumcisions. This shift in perspective raises critical questions about the sustainability of these cultural practices in the face of modern alternatives. The study advocates for proactive measures in response to these revelations, particularly urging traditional leaders to spearhead awareness campaigns. These campaigns are envisioned as educational initiatives targeting the youth, emphasising the enduring significance of initiation schools in preserving cultural heritage. Traditional leaders can play a pivotal role in narrowing the gap between the younger generation and the profound cultural significance of initiation schools by fostering renewed understanding and appreciation for the cultural value embedded in these rites of passage. The study contributes current and relevant insights to the existing body of knowledge on the subject. The insights not only deepen our understanding of the nuances within the Vhembe District but also provide valuable information for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders seeking to address the needs and concerns of the younger generation in this region.

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## INTRODUCTION

Initiation schools are significant in the rich tapestry of African cultures, particularly in South Africa. Over the years, these institutions have garnered attention for various reasons, prompting academic scrutiny. Scholars have focused on investigating initiation schools' challenges and proposed

recommendations to address these issues. However, a notable gap exists in the literature as no prior study has comprehensively captured young people's knowledge concerning initiation schools.<sup>1</sup>

This research seeks to fill this void by delving into teenagers' perceptions regarding initiation schools. While previous scholarly endeavours have concentrated on challenges and recommendations, this study takes a novel approach by centering on the voices and perspectives of the youth themselves. Understanding the knowledge teenagers acquire during initiation school instilled in them during this crucial period is fundamental to bridging the gap between traditional and contemporary perspectives.

The discourse in this article is anchored in recognising that initiation schools are not only rites of passage but crucial institutions for imparting cultural knowledge. The discussion will unravel the multifaceted aspects of the knowledge transfer that occurs during initiation school, shedding light on the values and norms that shape the worldview of the initiates.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that despite the wealth of academic attention on initiation schools, recent research focusing on teenagers' perspectives is lacking. This study aims to contribute current and relevant insights to the existing body of knowledge. To ensure the timeliness of the exploration, the study draws upon recent scholarly sources that illuminate the evolving landscape of initiation schools and their impact on the younger generation.

The study aims to understand the dynamics of initiation schools and their perceived value among African youth in the face of shifting cultural perspectives and modern influences. This research problem encapsulates the complexities surrounding the traditional practice of initiation schools within African communities, specifically focusing on the changing perceptions and diminished value attributed to these institutions among the younger generation. The problem acknowledges the influence of modernisation, Westernisation, and external factors that contribute to the evolving attitudes of African youth toward initiation schools, thereby posing challenges to the preservation of cultural heritage and communal identity. The central question revolves around how initiation schools can adapt and remain relevant in the face of cultural shifts and what strategies can be employed to bridge the gap between traditional values and contemporary perspectives among African youth.

The purpose of this study is to comprehensively explore the knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs of African teenage boys regarding initiation schools, with a focus on understanding the factors influencing shifting perceptions among the youth.

The study aims to unravel the intricate cultural and philosophical underpinnings shaping the perspectives of African teenage boys regarding initiation schools. These institutions embody the essence of cultural heritage with their rites of passage, rituals, and teachings. They are repositories of knowledge, symbolising the transition from adolescence to adulthood and imparting the communal norms and values deemed essential for the community's identity.<sup>2</sup>

However, the topic also highlights the challenges cultural heritage faces in the contemporary context. The declining attendance and changing perceptions of initiation schools among the youth reflect the tension between traditional practices and modern influences. The preference for hospital circumcisions and the commercialisation of initiation practices underscores the need to safeguard these cultural institutions from erosion.

In essence, the study on initiation schools and African teenage boys' perspectives contributes to the ongoing dialogue about the resilience and adaptability of cultural heritage. It prompts a reflection on how these cultural practices can be sustained and cherished in the face of evolving societal dynamics. The research findings are not merely academic; they have practical implications for preserving cultural heritage, bridging generational gaps, and fostering a harmonious coexistence of tradition and modernity within these communities.

This research holds paramount significance as it aims to deepen the understanding of the cultural and philosophical dimensions shaping African teenage boys' perspectives on initiation schools, contributing substantially to existing knowledge. Culturally, it plays a crucial role in preserving

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<sup>1</sup> Heidi Sairanen, Kristiina Kumpulainen, and Anu Kajamaa, "An Investigation into Children's Agency: Children's Initiatives and Practitioners' Responses in Finnish Early Childhood Education," *Early Child Development and Care* 192, no. 1 (2022): 112–23.

<sup>2</sup> Juan A García-Esparza, "Are World Heritage Concepts of Integrity and Authenticity Lacking in Dynamism? A Critical Approach to Mediterranean Autotopic Landscapes," *Landscape Research* 43, no. 6 (2018): 817–30.

indigenous traditions, ensuring the transmission of cultural heritage, and fostering communal identity. Moreover, fostering better understanding between older and younger community members promotes cohesion within the community fabric. Educationally, the study's recommendations, including the integration of initiation school history into curricula, enrich the learning experiences of students by seamlessly merging formal schooling with indigenous knowledge. The findings also carry practical implications, influencing policy adjustments to align governmental and community policies with the cultural values of the community. By shedding light on the commercialisation of initiation schools, the research underscores the need to prevent economic exploitation and safeguard the cultural integrity of these institutions. In essence, this study transcends academic realms, offering valuable insights into the well-being of communities and the harmonious coexistence of traditional and modern elements within African societies.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **African Philosophical Underpinnings**

In the African context, the philosophical framework of Ubuntu provides a profound underpinning for understanding the intricate dynamics of initiation schools and the knowledge acquired within them. Ubuntu, often translated as "I am because we are," emphasises the interconnectedness of individuals within a community. This philosophical perspective recognises the communal nature of knowledge transmission, especially within rites of passage such as initiation schools.<sup>3</sup>

Initiation schools, deeply rooted in Ubuntu philosophy, serve as vital spaces for transmitting individual knowledge and communal wisdom. These institutions' shared experiences and teachings contribute to the individual's holistic development within the community's collective context. Ubuntu philosophy asserts that an individual's identity and well-being are inherently tied to their relationships with others, and initiation schools play a crucial role in fostering and strengthening these communal bonds.<sup>4</sup>

The title, "Ubuntu Wisdom Unveiled," signifies the unveiling of individual perspectives and the collective wisdom embedded in African teenage boys' knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs concerning initiation schools. This philosophical lens emphasises the communal and interdependent nature of the insights gained during the initiation process.

The deep dive into knowledge and the unveiling of perspectives align with Ubuntu principles, acknowledging that the understanding of initiation schools goes beyond individual viewpoints. It encompasses a shared cultural heritage, where the younger generation inherits and evolves cultural wisdom through initiation experiences. This exploration, rooted in Ubuntu philosophy, seeks to highlight the interconnectedness of knowledge, community, and individual identity within the context of initiation schools in African communities.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Initiation schools, deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of African societies, have been a subject of scholarly interest and debate. While academic attention has often centred on challenges and recommendations, a notable gap exists regarding a comprehensive exploration of African teenage boys' knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs who undergo these initiation ceremonies. This literature review seeks to provide context to this research by examining existing studies, theories, and cultural perspectives related to initiation schools.

### **Historical Significance of Initiation Schools**

Initiation schools have a rich historical context in African cultures, serving as rites of passage marking the transition from adolescence to adulthood. They play a crucial role in transmitting cultural

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<sup>3</sup> Shauna Mottiar and Mvuselelo Ngcoya, "Indigenous Philanthropy: Challenging Western Preconceptions," in *The Routledge Companion to Philanthropy* (Routledge, 2016), 151–61.

<sup>4</sup> David Robinson-Morris, *Ubuntu and Buddhism in Higher Education: An Ontological Rethinking* (Routledge, 2018).

knowledge, values, and societal norms from generation to generation (Yankuzo, 2014). However, recent trends indicate a decline in attendance and a shifting perception among the youth.

### **Cultural Transmission and Ubuntu Philosophy**

Ubuntu philosophy, deeply ingrained in many African societies, emphasises the interconnectedness of individuals within a community. Through their communal nature, initiation schools become spaces where Ubuntu values are instilled. This includes a sense of collective identity, responsibility, and shared cultural wisdom. Exploring the knowledge gained during initiation in the context of Ubuntu philosophy provides a holistic understanding.<sup>5</sup>

### **Changing Perceptions Among the Youth**

The advent of modernisation and alternative practices, such as hospital circumcisions, has led to a perceptible shift in how young people perceive initiation schools. The youth's evolving knowledge may be influenced by globalisation, access to information, and changing cultural landscapes, raising questions about the continued relevance and effectiveness of initiation practices.<sup>6</sup>

### **Challenges and Criticisms**

While initiation schools are revered for their cultural significance, they face challenges. Previous studies have highlighted issues such as health risks, instances of abuse, and the need to standardise practices. Understanding these challenges is crucial in contextualising the perceptions of the youth and framing recommendations for cultural preservation.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Role of Traditional Leaders**

Traditional leaders play a pivotal role in the continuity of initiation practices. Their influence extends to the initiation process, and their engagement in fostering awareness among the youth is crucial. Exploring the literature on the role of traditional leaders provides insights into potential strategies for bridging the generational gap in understanding initiation schools.<sup>8</sup> Cultural heritage encompasses the tangible and intangible aspects of a community's traditions, practices, and values passed down through generations. Initiation schools, deeply rooted in the cultural tapestry of indigenous South African communities, serve as vital conduits for transmitting this cultural heritage. Cultural heritage is not static; it evolves with time, responding to societal changes and external influences.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a qualitative research design, employing an exploratory approach. This design was chosen to deeply explore the knowledge of African teenage boys regarding initiation schools. Qualitative methods are well-suited for capturing individuals' rich and nuanced perspectives, allowing for a holistic understanding of their experiences.<sup>9</sup>

The research focused on African teenage boys who have undergone initiation ceremonies. A purposive sampling technique was utilised to ensure participants have a direct and recent experience with initiation schools.<sup>10</sup> A diverse sample of approximately 15 participants was sought to ensure a broad representation of perspectives. Young boys ages between 7 and 15 years at a tender age to be

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<sup>5</sup> Dorine E Van Norren, "The Sustainable Development Goals Viewed through Gross National Happiness, Ubuntu, and Buen Vivir," *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics* 20, no. 3 (2020): 431–58.

<sup>6</sup> Thandeka Yasmee Ndaba, "Understanding the Sexual Pleasure Perceptions and Preferences of Black African University Going Women in the Context of Male Circumcision" (2020).

<sup>7</sup> Russell Bishop, "Freeing Ourselves from Neo-Colonial Dominance in Research: A Kaupapa Māori Approach to Creating Knowledge," in *Freeing Ourselves* (Brill, 2011), 1–30.

<sup>8</sup> Linda C Theron, "Toward a Culturally and Contextually Sensitive Understanding of Resilience: Privileging the Voices of Black, South African Young People," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 31, no. 6 (2016): 635–70.

<sup>9</sup> John W Creswell, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (Pearson Education, Inc, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Dean Whitehead and Lisa Whitehead, "Sampling Data and Data Collection in Qualitative Research," *Nursing and Midwifery Research: Methods and Appraisal for Evidence-Based Practice* 5 (2016): 111–27.

initiated. This number may be adjusted based on data saturation.<sup>11</sup> Face-to-face, in-depth interviews were the primary method of data collection. These semi-structured interviews allowed participants to share their experiences, knowledge gained, and personal perspectives on initiation schools in Vhembe District as the area is known for for initiation institutions.

Data was collected in the local language and later translated.<sup>12</sup> Relevant documents, such as cultural texts, literature, and documents related to initiation ceremonies, were analysed to provide contextual insights. Participants were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose and procedures. Informed consent will be obtained before interviews, ensuring voluntary participation. Participants' identities were protected, and all data was anonymised to maintain confidentiality. Transcribed interviews and document data were subjected to thematic analysis. Patterns, themes, and categories related to knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs were identified. The analysis was an iterative process that allowed the emergence of new themes. Preliminary findings were shared with participants to ensure accuracy and to incorporate their feedback into the analysis.<sup>13</sup> Regular discussions with colleagues and experts in qualitative research were conducted to enhance the study's rigour.<sup>14</sup>

## PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The researcher asked participants what initiation school is to establish their understanding of the study topic, and, given their answers and explanations, all participants seemed to understand precisely what initiation is. The question was: "In your own words, how would you define and describe initiation school?" The researcher saw it best to establish the participants' understanding of initiation school. Different views were submitted by participants and some participants had this to say:

*"Initiation school is a formal, traditional institution wherein norms and values of the society are transmitted to the younger generation as per their gender. In male initiation schools, for example, only male elderly people impart the norms and values, and women have a demarcated area beyond which they are not supposed to reach; the same applies to female initiation schools."* (Participant A)

*"Well, it refers to an institution that coordinates the transition of a young person from one stage (childhood) to another (Adulthood) guided by elderly people from the same society from which the initiates come."* (Participant B)

*"Initiation school refers to a place wherein young people, both male and female, are taught about the different roles they ought to play within their respect communities; teachings around respect, manhood, womanhood, and parenthood are taught."* (Participant C)

## Initiation School Attendance Age

The researcher asked participants about the proper age at which one would be deemed eligible to attend initiation school. The main question asked in this regard was: "What is a suitable age for one to attend initiation school?" Participants had this to say:

*Replied in Tshivenda: "Kale mutukana ovha atshi ya murunduni u thoma kha minwaha ya fumithanu, ubva hafho hoyo nutukana u namba avha munna ngauri uvha atshi vho divha zwine munna aita fhedzi ano maduvha ri khou wana vhana vhare na minwaha ya sumbe vha tshi khou"*

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<sup>11</sup> Shelina Bhamani et al., "Home Learning in Times of COVID: Experiences of Parents.," *Journal of Education and Educational Development* 7, no. 1 (2020): 9–26.

<sup>12</sup> Jérémy Derriennic et al., "Patient, Carer and Healthcare Professional Experiences of Complex Care Quality in Multidisciplinary Primary Healthcare Centres: Qualitative Study with Face-to-Face, in-Depth Interviews and Focus Groups in Five French Multidisciplinary Primary Healthcare Centres," *BMJ Open* 11, no. 12 (2021): e050165.

<sup>13</sup> Ashley Castleberry and Amanda Nolen, "Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Research Data: Is It as Easy as It Sounds?," *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning* 10, no. 6 (2018): 807–15.

<sup>14</sup> Cindy Hail, Beth Hurst, and Deanne Camp, "Peer Debriefing: Teachers' Reflective Practices for Professional Growth.," *Critical Questions in Education* 2, no. 2 (2011): 74–83.

*fumbiswa hune ndia di vhudzisa uri nwana mungafho uvha a khou gudiswa mini zwine zwi tou sumba uri maitete a khou enda a tshiya.”*

*Translation: “In the olden days, one would attend initiation school starting from the age of 15 since back then they were deemed an adult and were ready to enter into adulthood and fulfil various roles within the community; nowadays, however, you even see a child who is still around their seventh age going to initiation school so I ask myself what exactly are they going to learn in initiation school and that shows that there is a moral decay in our society.” (Participant G)*

*“For females, one usually attends initiation school when they start their menstrual cycle because they are considered as adults; therefore, initiation school prepares them for any adult responsibilities; males attend when they are around 16 and above.” (Participant C)*

*“In this day and age, it is no longer important for one to attend initiation school because parents now use these traditional institutions to get things such as money, clothes, and other household items through a welcoming ceremony.” (Participant D)*

### **Initiation School Curricula**

Guided by the objective of establishing some of the content covered in initiation schools, the researcher asked about the curricula of these initiation schools. The researcher wanted to establish what content is contained in these initiation schools and how the delivered content impacts the youth. The main question was: “What exactly is taught in initiation school?”

What content do initiation schools cover in their lessons?” Participants voiced their opinions, and this is what they said:

*“One of the things I learned during my time as an initiate was reproductive health. There, I learned about HIV/AIDS and how to prevent me from getting it through the practice of safe sex.” (Participant A)*

*“Manhood mainly dominates male initiation school; we learn what it means to be a man, your role in your family and within the society in general, we learn about respect and many other things.” (Participant F)*

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Community Voice and Responsibility**

The study underscored that attending initiation school is pivotal for male children to earn recognition as men in the community, providing them with a voice in important matters. The findings emphasise that without undergoing initiation, regardless of age, a male is relegated to the status of a boy, who is unable to contribute to community discussions or decisions, especially in formal gatherings.

### **The Shift in Youth Perceptions**

Contrary to the traditional significance of initiation schools, the study reveals a noteworthy shift in how the youth perceive these institutions. Western influences have led to the perception that initiation schools are outdated and regressive. Participants prefer hospital circumcisions, considering them a safer and more modern alternative, contributing to the declining value attributed to traditional initiation practices.

### **Impact of Religious Beliefs and Fear**

A significant factor influencing the changing attitudes of young people towards initiation schools is the influence of certain religious beliefs that discourage participation. Additionally, the fear of challenges, including reported deaths during initiation ceremonies, contributes to a reluctance among youth to engage in these traditional rites of passage.

### ***Commercialisation and Degradation of Value***

The study highlights a disconcerting trend where parents exploit initiation schools for personal gain, using them to acquire material possessions and money. This commercialisation of the initiation process has led to a perceived degradation of the institution's value. Many participants express disillusionment, noting that initiation schools no longer serve the profound cultural and societal purposes they once did, as recounted by the older generation.

One of the central themes highlighted in the research to show its significance also indicated in the literature review, is the tension between cultural preservation and modernisation. The shift in youth perceptions towards initiation schools, influenced by Western ideologies, underscores broader societal changes impacting traditional practices. This shift raises questions about the sustainability and relevance of initiation rituals in contemporary contexts. While cultural evolution is inevitable, it is essential to critically evaluate the implications of these changes on cultural heritage and community cohesion.

Moreover, the sheds light on the role of initiation schools in social cohesion and identity formation within the community was crucial. Participants' descriptions of initiation as a communal institution for transmitting societal norms and values underscore its importance in fostering a sense of belonging and shared identity. However, concerns about the commercialisation of initiation practices raise ethical considerations regarding the exploitation of cultural traditions for material gain. This highlights the need for safeguarding the integrity and authenticity of initiation rituals against commercial interests.

Furthermore, the inclusion of reproductive health education in initiation school curricula reflects proactive efforts to address public health concerns. By equipping young people with knowledge about HIV/AIDS prevention and safe sex practices, initiation schools can contribute to efforts aimed at reducing health disparities and promoting overall well-being within the community. However, it is essential to ensure that health education programs within initiation schools are culturally sensitive and aligned with community values.

The research also underscores the importance of youth engagement and empowerment in decision-making processes related to cultural practices. Understanding youth perspectives on initiation schools can inform interventions aimed at promoting meaningful participation and agency among young people. Empowering youth to actively shape cultural norms and practices fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility within the community.

### **Discussion Summary**

In summary, the study illuminates a complex landscape where the cultural importance of initiation schools clashes with evolving youth perceptions influenced by Westernisation, religious beliefs, and safety concerns. Furthermore, the commercial exploitation of these sacred institutions raises questions about their integrity and the enduring value they offer the younger generation.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

### ***Cultural Identity and Community Dynamics***

The findings underscore the crucial role initiation schools play in shaping cultural identity and community dynamics. The shift in youth perceptions, influenced by Westernisation and modern practices, has implications for preserving cultural heritage. Failure to recognise the importance of initiation schools may lead to a dilution of cultural identity and a potential breakdown in traditional community structures.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Inter-generational Communication and Harmony***

The study reveals a generational divide in the perceptions of initiation schools, with older generations valuing them for cultural preservation. This divide has implications for inter-generational

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<sup>15</sup> Nan M Sussman, "The Dynamic Nature of Cultural Identity throughout Cultural Transitions: Why Home Is Not so Sweet," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 4, no. 4 (2000): 355–73.

communication and harmony within communities. Bridging this gap through awareness and education initiatives is essential to foster understanding and cohesion between older and younger community members.

### ***Educational Integration and Cultural Sensitivity***

The recommendation to integrate initiation school history into the educational curriculum has implications for educational policies and practices. Such integration requires a commitment to cultural sensitivity and recognition of indigenous knowledge. The inclusion of holidays for attendance at cultural schools emphasises the importance of balancing Western education with indigenous practices, acknowledging the holistic development of learners.

### ***Health and Safety Concerns***

The shift in youth preferences towards hospital circumcisions due to perceived safety concerns during initiation has implications for the health and well-being of individuals. Addressing these concerns requires collaborative efforts between traditional practitioners, the Department of Health, and community leaders to ensure that initiation practices align with contemporary health standards, safeguarding the initiates' physical and mental well-being.

### ***Economic and Cultural Exploitation***

The study identifies the commercialisation of initiation schools by parents seeking material gain, impacting the cultural integrity of these institutions. This has broader implications for the commodification of cultural practices. Implementing measures to prevent economic exploitation is crucial for maintaining the authentic cultural value of initiation schools.

### ***Preservation of Indigenous Knowledge***

The call for the documentation of Indigenous knowledge carries implications for the preservation and accessibility of cultural wisdom. The active involvement of knowledgeable individuals and certified students in this documentation process is vital for ensuring the sustainability of initiation practices. Failure to document this knowledge risks its loss and the erosion of traditional cultural practices.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings and discussion the following recommendations have been made for preserving the significance of Initiation Schools.

### ***Community Awareness Initiatives***

Recognizing the pivotal role of initiation schools in transmitting cultural norms, standards, and values, it is recommended that traditional leaders collaborate with traditional health practitioners and the Department of Health to launch community awareness campaigns. These initiatives elucidating the importance of initiation schools in fostering cultural identity and community cohesion should specifically target the youth. By fostering awareness, the aim is to instil a sense of responsibility and pride among the younger generation regarding their participation in these cultural rites.

### ***Integration into Educational Curricula***

To address the perceptual shift among the youth towards initiation schools, the study recommends the inclusion of initiation school history and significance in the curriculum policy statement of the Department of Basic Education. This integration will ensure that learners are exposed to the cultural heritage and historical context of initiation schools early, fostering a better understanding of their importance. Additionally, scheduling holidays to accommodate attendance at these cultural schools will bridge the gap between indigenous and Western education, promoting a holistic approach to learning.



### **Documentation of Indigenous Knowledge**

Acknowledging the risk of indigenous knowledge, particularly related to initiation schools, being lost with the passing of knowledgeable elders, the study advocates for the systematic documentation of this knowledge. Certified students and recognised knowledge holders should spearhead this documentation process, ensuring that the intricate details of initiation practices, cultural values, and norms are preserved for future generations. This documentation effort aims to safeguard indigenous knowledge from extinction, allowing it to serve as a valuable resource for the continued cultural enrichment of indigenous communities. These recommendations collectively seek to bridge the gap between traditional practices and evolving perspectives, ensuring the enduring significance of initiation schools in the cultural tapestry of indigenous communities. Through awareness, education, and documentation, it is anticipated that these cultural institutions can thrive and continue contributing to the holistic development of the youth while preserving the rich cultural heritage for generations.

### **CONCLUSION**

The study's implications underscore the intricate interplay between cultural practices, education, health, and economic factors in the context of initiation schools. Addressing these implications requires collaborative efforts from community leaders, educational authorities, health practitioners, and individuals committed to preserving indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage. This comprehensive study has delved into the intricate dynamics surrounding initiation schools and the evolving perceptions among African youth. The findings have illuminated these institutions' critical role in cultural transmission, shaping community identity, and fostering a sense of responsibility among the younger generation. The generational shift in attitudes, influenced by Westernisation, modernisation, and safety concerns, challenges the continuity of these cultural practices. The study has recommended proactive measures to bridge the gap between traditional values and contemporary perspectives. Community awareness campaigns, educational curriculum enhancements, and policy adjustments emerge as essential strategies to preserve the significance of initiation schools. Moreover, the call for documenting indigenous knowledge underscores the importance of safeguarding cultural wisdom for future generations.

In essence, this research serves as a timely and vital contribution to the ongoing discourse on cultural preservation in the face of societal transformations. By recognising the implications of changing perceptions and offering tangible recommendations, the study aims to guide efforts toward harmonising traditional practices with the evolving landscape, ensuring the enduring relevance and value of initiation schools within African communities.

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