







Factors Responsible for the Activities of the Transitional Rites of Passage on Youth's Morality in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

In South Africa, the transitional rites of passage on the morality of the youth have been brought to the fore by ongoing transitional rites depicted by weekend social activities with the practice of substance use and abuse among the youths at various recreational spots. The transitional rites are structured under the guise of “freaks” as an evolving culture among the youths. The freak culture is a counterculture of the usual initiation schools for transitional rites of passage which instil morality among youths. This exploratory qualitative case study aimed to establish the factors responsible for the activities of the transitional rites of passage on youth's morality. Through purposive sampling techniques, data was obtained from 11 stakeholders, spanning custodians, parents, and youths from Thulamela Local Municipality in South Africa. Analysed using thematic analysis, the findings widely showed that the factors responsible for the activities of the transitional rites are the acts of the current ongoing transitional rites effect as an inappropriate behaviour towards youth morality. This study concluded that to establish the factors responsible for the activities of the transitional rites of passage on youth's morality, activities and practices evolved as a current socialization standard for quick maturity status. As a result of that, it will be harder to provide a complete change in this evolving culture. However, what will work is to build on the existing transitional rites of passage to moderate and appropriate the morality of the youth in Thulamela communities. This study would also benefit government departments, particularly the Department of Social Development, in designing appropriate and up-to-date transitional rites of passage policies that place priorities on the moral behaviours of the youths.

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INTRODUCTION

An understanding of transitional rites and their practices varies among cultures, regions, societies and individuals. Within the context of this article, transitional rites refer to rituals that are performed which underpin the transformation of a person or a group of people from one status to another. This

understanding holds common ground in many societies of the world.¹ In recent times, young people have faced transitional rites challenges much more than before because of evolving global cultures. Some studies that look at the factors responsible for the activities of the transitional rites of passage on youth's morality, transitional rites from a worldview noted that globalization significantly plays a role in the challenges faced by youths' transitions, with its western cultural influence reaching across even the smallest communities.² An optimal transitional rites program and activities for youths provide an avenue for change and stability in society. Hence, the effect of sub-optimal transitional rites provides an alternative rite of passage, which often results in immoral behaviour among youths in the society.³

The Anthropology school of thought asserts that where optimal transitional rites are absent, it is created.⁴ Immoral behaviour among youths is another way of depicting the negative effect of youth morality, also referred to as moral decay. In its simplest terms, youth morality can be portrayed as good manners or knowing the difference between right and wrong behaviour.⁵ It is synonymous with righteous, just, virtuous, and good (for right behaviour); while, wrong behaviour is the gradual destruction of a society, an institution, or a system. The term morality brings together both right and wrong behaviour.⁶ Hence, youth morality is emphasized as the degradation of moral values or the decline of righteous deeds or moral decline among the youths in the society.⁷

In recent times, the youths in Thulamela Municipality have been habitually organizing themselves in groups and gangs, some of which are locally known as "freak". A typical "freak culture" in Thulamela involves the hiring of mini-busses by groups of school-going boys and girls to spend social time on weekends away from home without any adult supervision or parents. The method of this transition is contrary to the traditional doctrine of initiation schools of the past (considered to be legitimate), where parents and elders collectively prepared, inducted and introduced the youths for the formal rites of passage. The absence of this formal guidance and induction, in addition to the fact that cultures are evolving, and people are becoming urban-centred, the youths are now enculturating one another and organizing themselves without the supervision of parents and elders for transitional rites.⁸ When there is a lack of adequate preparation in the society, whether formal and/or otherwise, for the induction of its youths' transitional rites, the youths alternatively make their own culture for transition, and this is problematic.⁹ This study analyzes the consequences of the on-going transitional rites on youth morality in Thulamela Municipality.

Transitional rites are fundamentally based on the principles of responsible growth and development in the society. This transition gains due recognition when ceremonies that mark changes in identity are explored within the context of giving-birth, adolescence, matrimony, maternity, and death, as well as seasonal changes.¹⁰ There are mainly three stages involved in transitional rites, namely, separation, liminality, and incorporation.¹¹ Oral history has it that in the past, boys predominantly undergo a traditional rite (ceremonies) of passage that prepares them for effective manhood roles in the society. The focal traditional rites of passage young males go through is 'murundu

¹ Davide Sterchele, "Memorable Tourism Experiences and Their Consequences: An Interaction Ritual (IR) Theory Approach," *Annals of Tourism Research* 81 (2020): 102847.

² Sonya Mann-McFarlane, "Rites of Passage Influence on Cultural Identity and Learning Among Emerging Black/African American Female Adults," 2020.

³ Roy Pointer, *How Do Churches Grow?* (Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1983).

⁴ Pointer, *How Do Churches Grow?*

⁵ W. N. Tan and Maizura Yasin, "Parents' Roles and Parenting Styles on Shaping Children's Morality," *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 8, no. 3C (March 2020): 70–76, <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2020.081608>.

⁶ S. A. Jamader, "Relation between Ethics of Duty and Ethics of Virtue: A Critical Study" (University of North Bengal, 2022).

⁷ Gulnara Tilenbaeva et al., "The Spiritual Culture of the Younger Generation-the Key to the Development of Society," in *E3S Web of Conferences*, vol. 284 (EDP Sciences, 2021), 08021.

⁸ D. Pankiraj, "Transnational Re-Creation: A Study on the Enculturation of the Second-Generation Sri Lankan Tamils in Germany" (Universität Tübingen, 2022).

⁹ Getachew Shambel Endris and Jemal Yousuf Hassan, "Youth Realities, Aspirations, Transitions to Adulthood and Opportunity Structures in the Drylands of Ethiopia," *Report Submitted to ICRISAT. CGIAR*, 2020.

¹⁰ G. I. Lianguluti, "Culture Change and Continuity: The Case of Abaidakho Initiation Rites of Passage, 1918-2010" (University of Nairobi, 2023).

¹¹ M. N. Okafor, "Performing Liminality: Ceramic Processes as Rites of Passage" (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2020).

or mula', where boys at the age of 10 and 20 are circumcised and taught moral behaviour.¹² In addition to the preceding views, the boys during that ceremonial period are also taught how to reverence women, take care of their families, as responsible husbands and fathers, and live an exemplary life. However, the belief in *murundu* is gradually dying amongst Vhavenda, as most parents are neglecting the *murundu* or favour circumcised at hospitals or clinics.¹³ During the same period, girls undergo three different traditional rites (ceremonies) of passage; namely, 'musevhetho' for young girls, 'vhukomba,' for girls who have just reached puberty, and 'domba' for girls ready for marriage. In all these ceremonial stages, the girls are taught proper behaviour; including how to be responsible wives and mothers, and how to be the power in the homes.¹⁴

Accordingly, transitional rites directly concern the issue of personal experience or circumstances in relation to socially defined categories and stages. Those circumstances basically concern the need for youths to have a traditionally legitimated and accepted way of transitioning to adulthood from childhood - a rite of passage, a ritual, a ceremony, an event, or a series of events.¹⁵ There are numerous rites of passage in every society, both developed and developing ones. Among them, particularly in a developed society are school graduation ceremonies, job ceremonies, job promotion ceremonies, significant birthdays (such as turning 16, 21, 30, or 65 in the society), weddings, menopause, retirement, and death.¹⁶ An optimal transitional rites program and activities for youths provide an avenue for change and stability in the society. Hence, the effect of sub-optimal transitional rites provides an alternative rite of passage, which often result in immoral behaviour among youths in the society. Anthropology school of thought asserts that where optimal transitional rites are absent, it is created.¹⁷

Most often, the children who were not able to get culturally legitimate rites of passage (for example, graduation from school and getting a legitimate job), delinquency makes-up the key elements of the legitimate transitional rite of passage, which imbed delinquency. However, this phenomenon is commonly associated with developed societies. A descriptive body of old and new literature noted how wrong doing rates are lower in societies with clearly identifiable and culturally legitimated transitional rites of passage among youths compared to societies without such transitional rites.¹⁸ Transitional rites described above, such as progressing from high school or getting a job, are not equally accessible to everyone, even in developed societies. For those who drop out of school, for example, an important rite of passage from adolescence to adulthood is missing. Without suitable education, securing full-time and genuine occupation may become more difficult. While marriage and parenthood are available to practically everyone, taking on the responsibilities of parenthood may be further complicated for school drop-outs due to underemployment and a lack of other necessary resources for fulfilling the role of parent successfully. Retrospectively, for some of these youths, the gang of delinquency becomes an alternative way to transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Immoral behaviour among youths is another way of depicting the negative effect of youth morality, also referred to as moral decay. In its simplest terms, youth morality can be portrayed as pertaining to a good manner or the difference between right or wrong behaviour. It is synonymous with righteous, just, virtuous, and good (for right behaviour); while, wrong behaviour is the gradual destruction of a society, an institution, or a system. The term morality brings together both right and wrong behaviour. Hence, youth morality is emphasized as the degradation of moral values, the vanishing of righteous deeds, or moral decline among the youths in the society.¹⁹ Adolescent

¹² Alina O Lapushkina, "Transformations of Traditional Culture: The Role of Rites of Passage among the Avatime People in the Modern Era," *Social Evolution & History* 19, no. 1 (2020): 73–88.

¹³ Lapushkina, "Transformations of Traditional Culture: The Role of Rites of Passage among the Avatime People in the Modern Era."

¹⁴ Lapushkina, "Transformations of Traditional Culture: The Role of Rites of Passage among the Avatime People in the Modern Era."

¹⁵ Rendani Tshifhumulo, "Depicting the Vhavenda Women Initiation Schools and Their Cultural Practices in Limpopo Province," in *Handbook of Research on Protecting and Managing Global Indigenous Knowledge Systems* (IGI Global, 2022), 341–64.

¹⁶ Tshifhumulo, "Depicting the Vhavenda Women Initiation Schools and Their Cultural Practices in Limpopo Province."

¹⁷ Peter Awa Nwokoha, "Rites and Rituals for the Dead: Bases for Good Moral Behaviour in Ezzaland, Nigeria," *UNIZIK Journal of Religion and Human Relations* 12, no. 1 (2020): 67–85.

¹⁸ Nixon Sifuna, "A Socio-Cultural Commentary on the Introduction of Male Circumcision in the Traditionally Non-Circumcising Luo Community of Western Kenya," *International Journal of African Society, Cultures and Traditions* 9, no. 1 (2021): 1–23.

¹⁹ Sifuna, "A Socio-Cultural Commentary on the Introduction of Male Circumcision in the Traditionally Non-Circumcising Luo Community of Western Kenya."

pregnancy and parenthood, and youth crimes involving theft and robbery are all examples of immoral behaviour among youths in the society. These frequently immoral and despicable acts involving youth's cruelty and moral paralysis at its worst, are seemingly the effect of transitional rites on youth morality.

The subsequent section explains the literature foundations around the transitional rites practices in Africa, South Africa and Venda where the study was undertaken, and further delves into the theory anchoring the research discourse. It further presents the methodology used to reach inference, and subsequently the discussion of findings based on the results obtained from the analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Transitional rites of passage practices and activities are those cultural practices carried out in a legitimate and recognized manner as growth from a lower or lower status to a higher one, which also entails a change in social status for the participants.²⁰ Sociological and anthropological studies have made known the various distinct functions of transitional rites. An analysis by Mendel and Kłonkowska of the rites of passage and their relation to Christianity showed that transitional rites aid in openly acknowledging the passage of a person or group of persons from one social status to another and fundamentally facilitate within the individual some sort of transformation.²¹ Through the activities of transitional rites, a person gains awareness, which could be social or economic in nature. A study on rites of passage to adulthood and traditional initiation schools in the context of HIV/AIDS in the Limpopo Province, South Africa, purported that transitional rites of passage lead an individual to obtain a solid sense of identity and self-worth compared to other social groupings, and consequently, gain enhanced self-esteem supportive of others.²² In addition to the preceding views, transitional rites of passage facilitate within an individual several acquisitions such as; enlightening, social, and psychological changes of all categories; the attainment of new knowledge, status; and, identity, and the community members' acknowledgment of the transition.²³

Transitional Rite Practices in Africa

Even though there is a spatial distribution of countries in the continent of Africa, diverse cultures, and distinct ethnicities, they have similar institutions that guide traditional rite practices. Although one cannot confidently stress that all the regions of each country practice traditional rite there exists an aspect of it in almost all the countries. The Democratic Republic of Congo, for instance, has a well-known female initiation rite institution. These practices are prominent in the northeast corner of the country (BaMbuti tribe) which considers the girl's first menstrual period as the most special gift in life.²⁴ The initiation which is called "elima" is usually performed soon after she reaches puberty. The girl is secluded for the period of one or two months depending on the progress made during the process of initiation. During the initiation process, the girl is trained by adult relatives to be a good mother. When the initiation process is over the girl is then considered to be ready for marriage and is believed to be entering the world of adults with all its responsibilities.²⁵ The young men in the BaMbuti tribe also attend traditional initiation rites. They usually attend the rites between the ages of 13 to 17 years. These young men are usually secluded from members of their village, friends and family members for

²⁰ Karina Weichold, Sheriffa Mahama, and Nora Fehmer, "Initiation Ceremonies and Rites of Passage," *Encyclopedia of Adolescence*, 2023.

²¹ Yit Sean Chong and Ai Hwa Quek, "Navigating the Contemporary Rites of Passage: A Typology of STEM Professional Identity Transition," *Research in Social Sciences and Technology* 7, no. 3 (2022): 86–100.

²² M. Mashile, "Male Mapulana Learners' Views on the Influences of Cultural Initiation on Their Schooling" (University of Pretoria, 2020).

²³ Mann-McFarlane, "Rites of Passage Influence on Cultural Identity and Learning Among Emerging Black/African American Female Adults."

²⁴ Anindita Chatterjee and Santoshi Halder, "Teaching Grammar in the Context of Writing: A Critical Review," *Journal of Education* 203, no. 4 (2023): 971–83.

²⁵ Harrison Daka et al., "The Role of Traditional Leaders in Ending Early Child Marriages for Education: Experiences from Kalonga Gawa Undi Chiefdom of Katete District, Zambia," 2020.

a period of one year.²⁶ Everything that they are taught in the initiation schools is usually kept a secret and no one is meant to know or hear about the activities that were carried out in the process.

Unlike the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the initiation process for girls is different in Zambia in Southern Africa. There exist seven major subcultural groups who speak the vernacular languages. The subgroups are Bemba, Kaonda, Lozi, Lunda, Luvale, Nyanja, and Tonga.²⁷ The Bemba people in Zambia originated from the Kola region in DRC (formerly known as Zaire), and are an offshoot of the ancient Luba empire.²⁸ The Bemba girls are meant to attend initiation schools before they marry as it was made compulsory for all the girls. The initiation process of Bemba girls is similar to the initiation process of Venda girls.²⁹ Culturally, when a Bemba girl reaches puberty, she usually notifies an older woman and then she is isolated from society and the opposite sex for a few days and waits until the Chisungu ceremony is performed.³⁰ The Chisungu is usually performed after the declaration of her engagement and prior to the marriage ceremony. The future bridegroom has a role to play or in some cases, he will be represented by his sister. The father of the girl provides a hut that will be the Chisungu hut for the duration of the ceremony. Chisungu usually takes place during the winter and summer holidays. The change in terms of the time period was done so that girls could also attend modern schools. As a reflection of the dynamism in the practice, recently, the Roman Catholic women in church now operate initiation schools for girls in Zambia.

In Kenya, there are different ethnic groups such as Kikuyu, Luhya, Luo, Kalenjin, Kamba, Kisii, and Meru. Among these ethnic groups and especially those living in rural areas in Kenya, the traditional transitional rites initiation of girls is the most important aspect of adulthood transformation.³¹ Three basic different types of initiations are practiced in some parts of Kenya. These initiations are mostly involved in genital mutilation.³² Female genital mutilation (also referred to as female circumcision) involves the cutting, or partial or total removal, of the external female genitalia for cultural, religious, or other non-medical reasons.³³ This practice is mostly performed on girls between the ages of four and ten. Type A (normally referred to as clitoridectomy), Type B (normally referred to as excision), and Type C (referred to as infibulations). These are the three forms or types of female genital mutilation that are practiced to varying degrees in Kenya.³⁴ In Kenya, clitoridectomy and excision are the common initiation practiced. On the other hand, infibulations are generally performed in the far-distance eastern areas bordering Somalia. Hence, scholars indicate that it is practiced likely in rural areas, especially among those with low or no educational background /or those with non-Christian faiths.³⁵ Generally, the main purpose for this initiation practice was for the social and cultural control of women's sexuality by removing the most sensitive parts of their sexual organs.³⁶ The practice of female genital mutilation is also practiced by some Christians and Ethiopian Jews who

²⁶ Sifuna, "A Socio-Cultural Commentary on the Introduction of Male Circumcision in the Traditionally Non-Circumcising Luo Community of Western Kenya."

²⁷ Mulumbwa Luchen, *The Evolving Meaning of the Chitenge: A Case Study of Male Students at the University of Zambia* (University of Johannesburg (South Africa), 2021).

²⁸ C. Mwiinga, "Cultural Tourism in Zambia: A Case Study of Umutomboko Traditional Ceremony, 1961-2017" (The University of Zambia, 2023).

²⁹ Sarah Moyo and Nyasha Matanda, "The Chinamwari Initiation Rite in Zimbabwe: Opportunity or Threat to the Girl Child?," *American Research Journal of Humanities & Social Science* 3, no. 11 (2020): 38-43.

³⁰ C. Lwao, "An Investigation of the View That the Chisungu Rite Has Nothing Positive to Offer to the Bemba Culture: A Case of Shibwalya Kapila Chiefdom" (The University of Zambia, 2022).

³¹ Esther Njuguna-Mungai et al., "Gendered Youth Realities, Aspirations, Opportunity Structures and Transitions to Adulthood in the Semi-Arid Tropics: Strategy for Targeting and Engagement" (ICRISAT, 2021).

³² Tasneem Kakal et al., "What Makes a Woman? Understanding the Reasons for and Circumstances of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting in Indonesia, Ethiopia and Kenya," *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 25, no. 7 (2023): 897-913.

³³ Ganiyu O Shakirat et al., "An Overview of Female Genital Mutilation in Africa: Are the Women Beneficiaries or Victims?," *Cureus* 12, no. 9 (2020).

³⁴ Luna Macher and Milena Raoult, "Surgical Interventions for Women with Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A) How Successful Are the Most Common Types of Surgical Interventions for FGM/C Available in Industrialized Countries, and B) Which Factors Influence Whether the Results Are Considered Satisfactory by the Women Receiving Them?," 2021.

³⁵ Niema Adem, "Socio-Cultural and Institutional Factors for the Persistence of Female Genital Mutilation in the Somali Regional State of Ethiopia: The Case of Kebribeyah Town, Fafen Zone" (Haramaya University, 2020).

³⁶ Samson Obi Umeh et al., "Female Genital Mutilation: A Socio-Cultural Myth on the Rights of Nigerian Women," *ACARELAR* 2 (2021): 89.

now reside in Israel.³⁷ This practice is seen as vital to a girl's maturation. The initiation teachings or procedures include instruction about sexuality, sexual relations with husbands, pregnancy, behaviours, and the importance of marrying outside the clan or community. This is generally the only formal instruction a girl receives.³⁸

Another country in Africa where traditional initiation schools are relatively common is Ghana. This country has several tribes such as Akan, MoshiDagomba, Ewe, Ga, Gurma and Yoruba. The Akan tribe is further known to practice traditional initiations for girls. Girls in this tribe are expected to be purified and dignified by traditional ceremonies that are performed at traditional initiation schools.³⁹ Girls in these cultures are isolated soon after they enter puberty. They normally spend a period of two to three weeks in isolation during the process.⁴⁰ During this period of isolation, young women are also been taught the lessons of the traditional transition to adulthood which include sex education, birth control, and also how to relate to men and how to maintain a good marriage.⁴¹ The Akan tribe is known for its strong emphasis on virginity and the girls are expected to remain virgins until they attend traditional initiation rites.⁴² The laws and regulations of this tribe are to ensure that young women reach adulthood with discipline and culture. Traditionally, the girls of this subgroup were not supposed to marry without the process of initiation. It is understood that all girls who go through the process of this initiation will marry soon after they complete the initiation rites.⁴³ African countries play a vital role in the preparation of young women and young men's traditional transitional rites to adulthood. It is also important to note that countries that prioritize the practice of initiation schools seem to have a common goal such as training young women and young men to be good wives and mothers and husbands and fathers as well as to be dignified and responsible men and women in the society.

Transitional Rites in South Africa

The Pondo people in Port Elizabeth of the Eastern Cape province of South Africa are also involved in initiation rites. In this tradition, girls attend the traditional initiation schools soon after the onset of puberty.⁴⁴ In the Pondo tribe, girls are protected in a private place usually to avoid contact with the opposite sex. The most preferred place for seclusion is at her father's hut in which she is kept for a period of three months.⁴⁵ This is done in order to make sure that the girl is fattened, and her complexion treated in order to enable her to be a good-looking wife.⁴⁶ Historically, this practice of initiation was made compulsory for all girls in the community. The girls were usually given out to marriage soon after the completion of the initiation process. In most cases, this was usually at the age of sixteen or eighteen.⁴⁷ During this period, the girl's family is usually approached by other families with offers of marriage proposals. After some agreement about the payment of lobola has been reached with the chosen family, the girl then prepares to leave her family to her husband's house. The practice of paying

³⁷ Aldo Morrone, "Female Genital Mutilation," *Skin Disorders in Migrants*, 2020, 191–207.

³⁸ Harrison Daka, "The Effects of Chinamwali Initiation Schools on Girl Child Education: A Case of Selected Public Primary Schools of Katete District, Zambia," 2020.

³⁹ Lwao, "An Investigation of the View That the Chisungu Rite Has Nothing Positive to Offer to the Bemba Culture: A Case of Shibwalya Kapila Chiefdom."

⁴⁰ Wendy E Ellis, Tara M Dumas, and Lindsey M Forbes, "Physically Isolated but Socially Connected: Psychological Adjustment and Stress among Adolescents during the Initial COVID-19 Crisis," *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science/Revue Canadienne Des Sciences Du Comportement* 52, no. 3 (2020): 177.

⁴¹ Sharon Sassler and Daniel T Lichter, "Cohabitation and Marriage: Complexity and Diversity in Union-formation Patterns," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 82, no. 1 (2020): 35–61.

⁴² Emmanuel Kwesi Anim, "Initiation Rites and Sex Education: A Ghanaian Pentecostal Perspective," *Genders, Sexualities, and Spiritualities in African Pentecostalism: "Your Body Is a Temple of the Holy Spirit,"* 2020, 169–92.

⁴³ Paul Sarfo-Mensah and William Oduro, "Changes in Beliefs and Perceptions about the Natural Environment in the Forest-Savanna Transitional Zone of Ghana: The Influence of Religion," 2010.

⁴⁴ Monde Makiwane, Ntombizonke A Gumede, and Wanga Zembe-Mkabile, *Reflections from the Margins: Complexities, Transitions and Developmental Challenges: The Case of the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa* (African Sun Media, 2021).

⁴⁵ Jennifer Rothchild and Priti Shrestha Piya, "Rituals, Taboos, and Seclusion: Life Stories of Women Navigating Culture and Pushing for Change in Nepal," *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Menstruation Studies*, 2020, 915–29.

⁴⁶ Srirupa Chatterjee and Shreya Rastogi, "Television Culture and the Beauty Bias Problem: An Analysis of India's Postmillennial Television Serials," *Media Asia* 49, no. 3 (2022): 213–34.

⁴⁷ Mikyas Abera et al., "Early Marriage and Women's Empowerment: The Case of Child-Brides in Amhara National Regional State, Ethiopia," *BMC International Health and Human Rights* 20 (2020): 1–16.

cattle is known as *lobola*. *Lobola* is a form of bride-wealth, an economic exchange of joining two families as well as the transfer of rights over the labor and potential childbearing capacity of the woman.⁴⁸ Historically, the payment of *lobola* involved an exchange of property such as cows and clothes, but the process has now changed to the exchange of cash which some people consider to be very expensive.⁴⁹ Currently, *lobola* payments are determined by the educational level of a woman. The higher a woman's educational level, the higher the price of the *lobola* to be charged.⁵⁰ However, it has been assessed that since the 1950s there has been a decrease in participation in the number of girls attending traditional transitional rites largely as a result of the increase in attendance at modern schools.⁵¹

In the Eastern Cape Province, the AmaBhaca, amaXhosa and amaHlubi tribes also practice male initiations.⁵² The initiation processes of all the tribes have certain common features. The process of initiation involves three stages: separation, transition and incorporation.⁵³ The key purpose of the initiation process is to transform boys from dependency on women (their mothers) into the world of men. In this situation, women are too soft, a quality which is considered not good for a man.⁵⁴ The Xhosa adult men gather themselves in the mountains or hills during the initiation process and are given instructions by the elders. These elders are considered to have something to teach youths, certain skills such as dances, stories, magic, visions and rituals.⁵⁵ The boys are also taught what it means to be a 'man'. They are also shown sacred places and objects which are usually located in isolated areas. The process of becoming an adult or a man does not simply unfold.⁵⁶ The initiation process of boys is generally practiced in a number of ethnic groups. However, it is usually practiced differently in other tribes, traditions, cultures and religions. The initiation of boys globally involves two main aspects: the circumcision of the boy's foreskin and the training of boys to enter manhood.⁵⁷ This practice has been in existence since the beginning of history in Africa. For example, during the Biblical times, God told Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you through their generations." (Gen. 17:9) This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.⁵⁸ Circumcision was seen as compulsory for boys following the Jewish tradition. As suggested by the quotation, the practice is not supposed to ever end in the Christian community. The main purpose of the practice is to remember and re-enact the covenant between God and Abraham.⁵⁹

⁴⁸ Christie Sennott, Sangeetha Madhavan, and Youngeun Nam, "Modernizing Marriage: Balancing the Benefits and Liabilities of Bridewealth in Rural South Africa," *Qualitative Sociology* 44, no. 1 (2021): 55–75.

⁴⁹ Silibaziso Mulea, "African Culture and Modernity: A Critical Review of the Vhavenda Lumalo Practice in Zimbabwe," *Lobola (Bridewealth) in Contemporary Southern Africa: Implications for Gender Equality*, 2021, 201–16.

⁵⁰ Tasara Muguti and Nyasha Mlambo, "'I Paid Lobola!' The Interface between Bride Price and Domestic Violence," *Negotiating Patriarchy and Gender in Africa: Discourses, Practices, and Policies*, 2021, 57–72.

⁵¹ T D Mdluli et al., "The Challenges Experienced at Male Initiation Schools: The Case Study of Mthatha District in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa," *African Renaissance* 17, no. 4 (2020): 167.

⁵² Lwandiso Botozo, "Emka Amasiko Magwala Ndini: An Artistic Investigation of AmaXhosa through Exploring Identity and Spirituality," 2023.

⁵³ Shalini Rana and Digvijay Pandya, "Liminality: A Close Study of Historical Roots and Theoretical Structure.," *Language in India* 21, no. 10 (2021).

⁵⁴ Jennifer Eckhardt et al., "Gender in the Making: An Empirical Approach to Understand Gender Relations in the Maker Movement," *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies* 145 (2021): 102548.

⁵⁵ Aphiwe Magadla, "Construction of Personhood within Xhosa Ethnicity: Critical Perspectives Mediating State and Community Conflict over Natural Resources," 2021.

⁵⁶ Daka et al., "The Role of Traditional Leaders in Ending Early Child Marriages for Education: Experiences from Kalonga Gawa Undi Chiefdom of Katete District, Zambia."

⁵⁷ L. Jones, *Foucault's Governmentality: From Theory to Practice* (Princeton University Press, 2021).

⁵⁸ A. W. Strouse, *Form and Foreskin: Medieval Narratives of Circumcision* (Fordham Univ Press, 2021).

⁵⁹ R. I. Denova, *The Origins of Christianity and the New Testament* (John Wiley & Sons, 2021).

Transitional Rites in Venda

Since Venda adolescents are the main subjects of this article, this review briefly explores traditional transitional rites in Venda.⁶⁰ There are three well-known initiation schools for girls in Venda. These are Vhusha, Tshikanda and Domba. Vhusha is the first phase in the initiation process.⁶¹ Traditionally, Venda girls attended Vhusha shortly after the onset of puberty.⁶² Vhusha was conducted in different seasons. This was largely due to the fact that girls did not attend modern schools. It was thought that modern schooling affected the mental skills of girls. Therefore, modern schooling was not a high priority for girls.⁶³ However, at the beginning of the 1950s when Africa/South Africa became exposed to the civilized world, some families started allowing female children to attend modern schools.⁶⁴ Attendance at these schools affected the way and manner Vhusha was conducted. Vhusha is usually held several times a year at the headman's place or the chief's place.⁶⁵ The other traditional transitional rites are -Tshikanda and Domba - these are held less frequently, usually at three to five years intervals at the chief's place and certain senior headman's place. Girls from several districts attended these traditional transitional rites.⁶⁶ In South Africa, the initiation of boys is very common among many certain ethnic groups.

Among Venda people, initiation schools for boys are called Murundu.⁶⁷ In Venda, the traditional initiation of young men usually lasts for a period of three months which is often spent in the bush or mountain. The bush is meant to isolate the initiate from the world of the opposite sex. The process of this initiation involves circumcision. Male circumcision is associated with the transition from childhood to manhood.⁶⁸ Boys in this case are transformed through the circumcision of their penis. It was believed that the removal of a foreskin resulted in the sharpening of the warrior's spear. The spear refers to the penis, which is supposed to be used to strike the elephant.⁶⁹ The elephant here refers to the woman. According to Milubi, cited by Mdhluli the initiation process socializes men to believe that women are their sexual objects.⁷⁰ It was also illustrated by the reference to women's private parts as sexual objects in most of the songs used by initiates during the initiation process.

Traditional Venda societies have a long history of initiation schools signifying rites of passage for the girls, which are called the Vhusha, Tshikanda, and Domba. Venda initiation schools purport that the Vhusha initiation school is the first phase of the transitional initiation process for young girls. Traditionally, Venda girls attend Vhusha shortly after the onset of puberty. Vhusha was conducted in different seasons of the year and this was largely because girls were traditionally demanded in the past not to attend modern schools.⁷¹ The notion was that modern schooling affected the mental skills of girls, so it was not under high priority for girls. However, modern schooling attendance has affected the way and manner Vhusha was conducted, as well as the Tshikanda and Domba that were held less

⁶⁰ Azwinndini Cecilia Mukwevho, Maria Sonto Maputle, and Dorah Ursula Ramathuba, "Growing Up with HIV: Experiences of Transition from Adolescence to Adulthood at Selected Primary Health Facilities in Limpopo Province, South Africa," *Children* 10, no. 5 (2023): 798.

⁶¹ Tshifhumulo, "Depicting the Vhavenda Women Initiation Schools and Their Cultural Practices in Limpopo Province."

⁶² Avhatakali A Ndou-Mammbona, "Exploring Initiation Schools' Impact on HIV and AIDS Management in the Vhembe District of South Africa: An Ethnography," *Health SA Gesondheid* 28 (2023): 2105.

⁶³ A. Emberly and T. Tshitokisi, "Singing through Childhood: The Role of Song in Girl's Initiation Schools in Vhavenda Communities, South Africa," in *The Routledge Companion to Interdisciplinary Studies in Singing*, vol. 2 (Routledge, 2020), 109–22.

⁶⁴ Kamania Wynter-Hoyte and Mukkaramah Smith, "'Hey, Black Child. Do You Know Who You Are?' Using African Diaspora Literacy to Humanize Blackness in Early Childhood Education," *Journal of Literacy Research* 52, no. 4 (2020): 406–31.

⁶⁵ Emberly and Tshitokisi, "Singing through Childhood: The Role of Song in Girl's Initiation Schools in Vhavenda Communities, South Africa."

⁶⁶ Avhatakali A Ndou-Mammbona and Azwihangwisi H Mavhandu-Mudzusi, "Could Vhavenda Initiation Schools Be a Panacea for HIV and AIDS Management in the Vhembe District of South Africa?," *Curationis* 45, no. 1 (2022): 2356.

⁶⁷ T E Mudau, J O Olowoyo, and S O Amoo, "Ethnobotanical Assessment of Medicinal Plants Used Traditionally for Treating Diabetes in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, South Africa," *South African Journal of Botany* 146 (2022): 304–24.

⁶⁸ Mashile, "Male Mapulana Learners' Views on the Influences of Cultural Initiation on Their Schooling."

⁶⁹ Mdhluli et al., "The Challenges Experienced at Male Initiation Schools: The Case Study of Mthatha District in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa."

⁷⁰ Mdhluli et al., "The Challenges Experienced at Male Initiation Schools: The Case Study of Mthatha District in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa."

⁷¹ Mulea, "African Culture and Modernity: A Critical Review of the Vhavenda Lumalo Practice in Zimbabwe."

frequently.⁷² The main essence of the initiation schools for girls as previously indicated was to instil moral behaviour in them. Young boys' initiation school that is called Murundu involves circumcision.⁷³ Circumcision is geared towards the transition from childhood to manhood inculcated with moral lessons.⁷⁴ The transitional rites of passage in Thulamela Municipality basically prepare the youths for marital responsibilities and good behaviour.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Attachment theory describes the impact the parenting factor plays on the development of a child and the early stages of transitional rites events that begin from childbirth. Parenting helps in the preparation of early transitional rites. Therefore, attachment theory which focuses on the parent-child relationship is a more suitable theory to underpin the different transitional rites and events that determine youth morality. The ideas that guided attachment theory show that the theory was the joint effort of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, drawing their ideas from ethology, cybernetics, information processing, developmental psychology, and psychoanalysts, that formulated the basic tenets of the theory. Bowlby's work in that way transformed the rationale around a child's connection to the mother and its interference through separation, deprivation, and passing. On the other hand, Ainsworth's groundbreaking approach not only made it conceivable to test some of Bowlby's ideas but also helped expand the theory and is accountable for some of the new directions it is now taking. Thus, Ainsworth introduced the concept of the attachment figure as a secure base from which a child can use to develop moral behavioural traits. Whereas, Ainsworth articulated the concept of maternal compassion to infant signals and its role in the development of infant-mother attachment patterns. So, youth morality has a lot to do with the youth-parent attachment pattern and experience.

Attachment theory from a rite of passage perspective is often seen as a basic assumption of historical and anthropological approaches, namely that transitional rites of passage are essential perspectives bound in two ways, bound to a precise historical time frame and bound to a specific cultural context. Attachment theory is a theoretical framework which describes and explains the universal phenomenon of infant development of behavioural traits attached to their caregivers.⁷⁵ The theory advanced when researchers traced immoral and behavioural problems which involved youths with little or highly disordered parental care in early childhood.

Attachment theory discourses social-behavioural growth from the viewpoint of both process and outcome and identifies a variety of markers predictive of it or that which lead to that affected behaviour. The theory looks at the exact outcome of early childcare practices;⁷⁶ given the relationships with parents, children develop an internal working model of social behaviours; suggesting that if the child experiences his/her parent as a source of warmth and comfort, the child is more likely to hold a positive self-image of the parent and develops an upright morality.

The impact of parenting/attachment is beyond caring and taking responsibility for a child to be a role model for that child. For the sole purpose that children model their parents, the fundamental goal for effective parenting is the child's growth from reliance and external control to internalization, which is the ability of parents to take initiative and be socially responsible; given that a child progressively adopts social standards and expectations,⁷⁷ which subsequently manifests to a process that facilitates their greater self-regulation skills and responsibility for their own behaviours.⁷⁸ Attachment theory

⁷² Stephanie Psaki et al., "Policies and Interventions to Remove Gender-related Barriers to Girls' School Participation and Learning in Low-and Middle-income Countries: A Systematic Review of the Evidence," *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 18, no. 1 (2022): e1207.

⁷³ Ladzani Kanakana, "Re-Imagining Tshivenda Initiation Schools as Repositories of Life Skills in African Societies in the Covid-19 Era: A Conceptual Intervention," *Indilinga African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems* 21, no. 1 (2022): 93–101.

⁷⁴ Simon Murote Kang'ethe and Aphiwe Mpateni, "A Comparison Of Behaviour And Morality Between Yesteryears' and Contemporary Initiates: The Case Of 2022 Cala And Mdantsane Study," *Journal of Arts & Social Sciences* 10, no. 2 (2023): 82–91.

⁷⁵ Lela Rankin Williams and Patricia R Turner, "Infant Carrying as a Tool to Promote Secure Attachments in Young Mothers: Comparing Intervention and Control Infants during the Still-Face Paradigm," *Infant Behavior and Development* 58 (2020): 101413.

⁷⁶ A. M. O'Grady, "Capturing the Interconnected and Interpersonal Nature of Emotion Concepts: Implications for Social-Emotional Learning" (University of Oxford, 2022).

⁷⁷ Williams and Turner, "Infant Carrying as a Tool to Promote Secure Attachments in Young Mothers: Comparing Intervention and Control Infants during the Still-Face Paradigm."

⁷⁸ B. J. Hanson, "An Examination of Adaptive Functioning in Previously Institutionalized Children Adopted from Russia" (Fielding Graduate University, 2023).

upholds the view that early infant-parent social relationships equally impact the child's views to construct and shape other social behavioural codes in the future. Otherwise, youth morality is reflective of how the parents helped the individual youth through all the various transitional rites of passage from childhood stages.

The concepts of attachment theory are very much related to behavioural development skills and resilience, where resilience is the child's ability to endure risks for poor development, or bounce-back from difficult parenting experiences.⁷⁹ This implies that, for each developing youth, the degree of development of resilient to stressful life events is determined to a very significant degree by the pattern of attachment developed throughout the early years of parenting. Therefore, a youth who had care responsiveness to their emotional needs from childhood is better able to manage his/her own feelings and develop moral behaviour.⁸⁰ This implication goes further to suggest that an individual youth who was properly raised with parental responsiveness, feels surer of his or herself, and because he/she feels surer of themselves, they relate and behave morally. This is the aspect that cues the quality and importance of parenting approaches and practices on youth's development. So, parenting social competences, such as good morals, control, and monitoring, play an important role in developing a youth's social skills, which also includes their sense of self-worth and the entire package of morality.

The main purpose of attachment theory in this study focus is that youth's morality hinges on responsive parenting from infancy and early childhood. Therefore, whenever parents respond to their children in a sensitive and responsive way, those children feel secure that their parent can meet their needs.⁸¹ This is what is known as a secure attachment bond. The study by Andreassen and West indicated that approximately 60 percent of the overall population is securely attached, suggestive of the fact that morally upright children grow through responsive care to regulate feelings effectively, leaving about 40 per cent of the population insecurely attached.⁸² Ultimately, a youth with a securely attached experience can manage his/her behaviour including their morality to avoid getting involved in juvenile delinquent activities.

Secure attachment is pragmatically based on the quality of parenting and transitional experiences.⁸³ The central role of transitional rites of passage is imbedded in mutually social psychology and human biology, confirmatory in disciplines, ranging from sociology and anthropology to economics. From an observational point of view, there is a common association that exists in the relations of psycho-social and economic processes that link early transitional experiences to the youth's moral development. This is to say that parents desirous to avoid the incidence of juvenile delinquency for their young children, must begin to practice it early and it should be geared towards preventing the occurrence of unconventional and rebellious behaviour even from birth. Attachment theory supports the idea that children internalize the practice of warm, responsive care from their parents, and use them to regulate their approaches and guide their behaviour, as they grow older, and when their parents are no longer there for them, the same experience still has an impact on their behaviour.⁸⁴ Future relationships with others, might change these expectations and behaviours, but then, they themselves are influenced by the first attachments experienced. This further suggests that the basic tenet to the development of secure attachment is the quality of early childhood parenting and transitional experiences.

The incidence of immoral behaviour from a theoretical perspective is deemed a social behavioural problem that is developed out of the processes of upbringing. In support of this empirical perspective, Boshoff suggested that the prevalence of juvenile delinquency (which is also youth

⁷⁹ Williams and Turner, "Infant Carrying as a Tool to Promote Secure Attachments in Young Mothers: Comparing Intervention and Control Infants during the Still-Face Paradigm."

⁸⁰ Nastassia J Hajal and Blair Paley, "Parental Emotion and Emotion Regulation: A Critical Target of Study for Research and Intervention to Promote Child Emotion Socialization.," *Developmental Psychology* 56, no. 3 (2020): 403.

⁸¹ Williams and Turner, "Infant Carrying as a Tool to Promote Secure Attachments in Young Mothers: Comparing Intervention and Control Infants during the Still-Face Paradigm."

⁸² C. J. Rathbun, "'We Raised Him Right': An Exploration of Personal Values for Undergraduate Males and Their Parents" (The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, 2021).

⁸³ Mona Delahooke, *Beyond Behaviours: Using Brain Science and Compassion to Understand and Solve Children's Behavioural Challenges* (Hachette UK, 2020).

⁸⁴ John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss: Vol. 1.* (New York: Basic Books, 1969).

immoral behaviour) is critically driven by the youth previous parenting background.⁸⁵ Therefore, optimistic parenting relationships provide and build the foundation for youths to learn against immoral behaviour. Early parent and child relationships hold an influential effect on a youth's morality, including the elementary managing/ problem-solving abilities, and their future capacity for relationships.⁸⁶ Over these interactions, a youth can learn the skills needed to interact with others and to thrive in vulnerable situations. They learn how to manage their emotions and behaviours and create healthy relationships with adults and peers. They also learn how to adjust to new situations and resolve other social encounters confronting them on a daily basis.

The attachment theoretical assertion ties the appropriate behaviour of youths (where inappropriate behaviour leads to the incidence of delinquencies) to a secure attachment bond with parents; assuming such a parenting approach is sensitive and predictive in its early practices and appropriate transitional approach. The attachment itself is a development through which parents and baby sensitively interact with each other from birth. In spite of the fact that this theory is particularly important to a child's transition and growth, studies find secure and insecure attachment classifications are stable at 77 percent of the time, with attachment styles lasting into teenage- hood.⁸⁷ In this manner, the social construction of youth morality is rooted more towards the type of attachment outcome of the youth. Although parenting capabilities can improve or worsen social and emotional development, an early insecure attachment appears to have a lasting negative effect on children's outcomes.⁸⁸ The theory of attachment, from its inception, has been associated exclusively with the externalizing inappropriate behaviour of the youths.⁸⁹ Therefore, the central idea behind attachment assertion helps to explain the type of attachment outcome of youths with their parents with respect to the social construction of youth immorality.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach was used to conduct the study. The qualitative data was collected through key informant interviews, semi-structured and unstructured interviews, as well as unstructured observation. The choice of approach hinged on the fact that the research processes were inductive; analysing the behaviours of the youths based on evidence of observations and developing content themes from verbal responses. This study relied heavily on an interpretive, but more critical approach, to collect qualitative data through interviews. Thulamela Municipality was selected purposively for the present study because the study site is one of the four municipalities in Vhembe district located in the northern part of the Limpopo Province, South Africa. The participants were interviewed face-to-face, in order to gauge their experiences and understand the factors responsible for the current transitional rites of passage. The interviews also allowed the discovery of the inner life of the participants, and their wordless everyday experiences, which provided more insights into the various events taking place in their lives. Content thematic data analysis methods were used to analyse the data. All ethical considerations were followed. The youth participants were mostly considered minors because of their age and the consent forms were signed.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

According to findings, lack of parental engagement, the embrace of modern and western culture, and the youth's rebellious tendencies are responsible for the transitional activities in Thulamela communities on youth's morality.

⁸⁵ S. M. Boshoff, "Navigating Young Motherhood: A Retrospective Study into the Reflections of the Teenage Motherhood Experience by Mothers within a Community of the Western Cape" (Stellenbosch University, 2022).

⁸⁶ Botozo, "Emka Amasiko Magwala Ndini: An Artistic Investigation of AmaXhosa through Exploring Identity and Spirituality."

⁸⁷ Elena Ali, Nicole Letourneau, and Karen Benzies, "Parent-Child Attachment: A Principle-Based Concept Analysis," *SAGE Open Nursing* 7 (2021): 23779608211009000.

⁸⁸ Juan-Pablo Robledo et al., "Back to Basics: A Re-Evaluation of the Relevance of Imprinting in the Genesis of Bowlby's Attachment Theory," *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (2022): 1033746.

⁸⁹ Robledo et al., "Back to Basics: A Re-Evaluation of the Relevance of Imprinting in the Genesis of Bowlby's Attachment Theory."

Lack of Parental Engagement

As stated during the interviews, an informant – a female at 49 years of age whose position in the community is indigenous knowledge defendant and activist indicated the following:

The buck of youths' morality solely lies in their parenting. You know before one becomes a youth; you must be a child first. So, the way most parents raise their children determines very much how these children behave when they are getting mature or older. The transition is not only at the youth level or stage. It starts from when the youth was a child. Dear researchers as an indigenous knowledge custodian, I can confidently tell you parents share the bulk of responsibilities for youths' morality (Participant 10).

The implication of this submission is evidence of the fact that the parenting of the youths in the municipality is not geared towards appropriate and good moral behaviour. It further indicates that the exhibition of bad and immoral behaviors by the youths is a consequence of their parenting background.

Parents in recent times lack the parenting that can foster youths' morality. Those necessary parenting practices are eluded in the youths and it is the contributing factor to their bad behaviour. The findings further revealed that both financial and emotional support from parents is the key factor in ensuring youths' morality. This emerged as a common factor during the interviews with the youths. A male respondent - 22 years old student who grew up with his grandmother stated the following:

My parents are fine with my behaviour, because they don't force me to do anything I don't want or feel like doing. They accept my friends by asking me who is he or she. The boy my mom is holding there is my son. I got him in high school 3 years ago (Participant 2).

This evidence implies that the parents are not raising their children to become responsible adults. The finding significantly indicates the lack of early parental engagement and the support children require by the parents for good moral development. Respondents further indicated that more youths live alone without having parents to guide and morally raise them. Some of the youths from child-headed households externalize bad morality because of a lack of appropriate parenting. As stated during the interviews, an informant – a female at 49 years of age whose position in the community is indigenous knowledge defendant and activist indicated the following:

They are youths who just grow up without appropriate parental care. Some of them are raised by their elder siblings who are also children. Where do you expect good morals from? Nowhere. Because they are no adults experiences to guide them through life and to model them to become responsible in the future. In the minds of several youths, the future is now (Participant 4).

Another male informant, 75 years of age whose position in the community is indigenous knowledge custodian stated the following:

Even the youths who are raised by their biological these days also behave irrationally. They are disrespectful as if they are not coming from a home. The girls get pregnant and the boys are involved in gangs (Participant 9).

The implication of these results suggests that the absence of parental involvement in the lives of the youth results in their bad morals. In addition, the opinions of the informants also point to the fact that even if the youths are raised by their own biological parents, the parents lack the ability to supervise and monitor or engage them in their transition or social behaviour. The lack of awareness from the parents on the social activities of their wards, collectively showed that either they are ignorant of their parenting obligations or they are not bothered by the consequences of the transitional activities. This parenting approach undoubtedly places youths on a negative tangent. This parenting approach largely shows over-permissiveness by the parents on the social activities of the youths, which

contributes to their bad behaviour. The permissiveness also showed a clear lack of parental involvement in the lives of the youths.

Youths' rebelliousness and idleness

Youths' rebelliousness and idleness also emerged as a common factor during the interviews. A male respondent who is 48 years old and a government employee and also a father who holds a Grade 12 certificate stated the following:

Back then the youths were disciplined, but currently, the youths are no longer disciplined to an extent where they have neglected the transitional rites and traditional norms. Back then there was a way in which the elders in the community and parents used to maintain order and discipline among the youths (Participant 3).

When asked about the reasons for the youth's rebelliousness he further added:

The youths have access to money and this money they get mostly from their parents because then they were not given pocket money and all of that. Now the youths can save, and they use the money to buy alcohol and drugs, especially during weekends. The youths get unnecessary savings and do not know what to buy with it, because most of them their parents provide everything for them. Presently, the government has given them a feeding allowance and all the school expenditure is paid for, so they have nothing to do with their money rather than enjoying themselves in a bad manner. To make matters worse, financial support to students (mostly student nurses) from the government is one of the problems for youths' rebelliousness. So, government intervention is needed because the parents cannot do it alone (Participant 11).

These findings show that the youths' rebellious tendencies commonly result from parents' financial support or government financial assistance to aid their academics. The wrong use of the money received for school purposes or perhaps pocket money for an emotional boost is now a contributing factor responsible for youths' bad behaviour. Due to the youths' *freak culture*, they have become disrespectful and lack the discipline for moral conduct.

Idleness was another fundamental reason that was responsible for the bad youths' morality. The lack of informed decisions on engaging in immoral practices and activities is partly because they are not busy with their lives doing productive things. The major factor driving the youths' morality, such as sexual laxity and engagement in crimes, is the lack of adequate engagement in productive functions. This submission emerged as a common fact during the interviews. A female respondent, 49 years old government employee and a single mother stated the following:

This is because of unemployment and a high rate of dropout in school. Back in the day, the youth were very busy with farm work but currently, the lands are been sold or taken by the government and they are left with nothing to do other than get involved with crimes (Participant 4).

These findings indicate that the rate of school dropout and unemployment among the youths which have resulted in idleness have further fuelled their negative behaviour. The lack of farmland for the indigenous parents and their children has played a role in the moral development of the youths.

The Neglect of Tradition and Embrace of Modern Culture

Youths have neglected their common traditional doctrine of transitional rites in favour of modern culture. The embrace of western culture indicates a significant factor contributing to the bad behaviour among the youths. This conclusion was reached based on the common fact shared during the interviews. A male respondent, 49 years stated the following:

The youths are no longer going to the initiation schools anymore because of the western lifestyle and ways of doing things. This their way of doing things brings a

lack of respect. Not anymore like it was in the past. And they prefer going to the hospital for circumcision because they will spend a few days instead of going to the initiation school which takes longer days (Participant 5).

Another female respondent, a 50-year-old mother who was self-employed also indicated the following:

In the past, when a child turned 15 years old, they already knew that it was time for him/her to go to the initiation schools. Going to school was not their first priority because when they came back from initiation school some of them were given spouses. Things are different nowadays because girls fall pregnant as early as 12 years old and likewise as early as 15 boys will be parents too, yet they are still attending schooling. There is a huge difference between the youth of today and back then, even the way we were raised. Children/youths these days can reason and support their reasoning with the statement, 'I have the right.' It is difficult to discipline them (Participant 6).

A female informant – 50 years old single mother whose position in the community is language developer stated:

Churches are playing a role in discouraging youths from attending initiation schools because nowadays children no longer go to murundu, musevhetho, vhukomba, and domba. Those initiation schools used to help young girls know when they developed what to do and what not to do. The youths have neglected the traditions and they are following the western culture (Participant 1).

The findings show that there is a lack of parent-child communication and preparedness for traditional transitional rites of passage in recent times. The parents acknowledged that their children are neglecting traditional transitional rites of passage indicating that their parenting approach that fosters this type of parenting practices is responsible for the neglect of traditional transitional ceremonies. The parents blaming the youths for the neglect of traditional transitional ceremonies further shows a lack of parental engagement in the old traditional doctrine of youths' transition to adulthood.

DISCUSSION

The factors responsible for the activities of the ongoing transitional rites of passage on youths' morality are rooted in the lack of parental engagement in the transition, the rebellious tendencies of the youths and idleness, as well as the neglect of traditional and embrace of modern culture. Peer pressure, globalization, and modernization religious or spiritual beliefs education and awareness are all interconnected factors that significantly influence the activities and behaviours associated with transitional rites. Understanding these influences can provide insight into the significance of these rituals within their respective cultural and social contexts. The findings that emerged largely revealed that the parents lack parental engagement in appropriate transitional rites of passage that affect good moralities. The evidence of the lack of parental engagement revealed from the findings suggested that the youths were not raised and nurtured in the manner for adequate transitional rites of passage that instil optimal morality. The evidence is based on the emerging findings; it is believed that parents of youths neglected the parenting practices responsible for the passage of good morality. Thus, the narrative of transitional rites of passage describes the process that mainly begins from birth to death, thereby, implying that the transitional rites start from childhood involving the help of parents.⁹⁰ Transitional rites of passage directly concern the issue of personal experience in relation to socially defined categories. This personal experience whether good or bad, basically concerned the need for a growing youth to have a culturally legitimated and recognized way of transitioning from being a child

⁹⁰ Mathilde Lindh Jørgensen et al., "Stillbirth—Transitions and Rituals When Birth Brings Death: Data from a Danish National Cohort Seen through an Anthropological Lens," *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences* 36, no. 1 (2022): 100–108.

to being an adult - a rite of passage, a ritual, a ceremony, an event or a series of events.⁹¹ Accordingly, for youths' transition to mark good morality, early parental engagement must prepare such grounds for the grown-up youths.

Additional findings that emerged on the lack of parental engagement as a factor responsible for the youth's freak culture on their morality revealed that parents of youths did not comprehend that the youths' socials or freak culture mark transitional rites of passage. The findings indicated a lack of awareness of youths' socials as transitional rites of passage by their parents. The study by Lipska and Zagórska explained that the role of transitional rites of passage is educational from childhood because it is the forum for fostering attitudes and good behaviours.⁹² On the same note, some studies on parental engagement in children's morality regard parenting as the basic mechanism through which a child learns appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, experiences right and wrong choices in decision-making, acquires skills; and understands the roles and norms of the community.⁹³ Therefore, the lack of parental engagement in transitional rites of passage was the major factor responsible for bad morality among the youths.

The findings on the lack of parental engagement as a factor responsible for the youth's freak culture of bad morality are supported by the Attachment Theory as the theoretical framework guiding this article. Attachment theory advocates that good social and emotional development of youths depends on sensitive and consistent parenting from infancy and early childhood.⁹⁴ Attachment theory supports the idea that children internalize the experience of warm, responsive care from their parents, and use them to regulate their feelings and guide their behaviour, as they grow older, and when their parents are no longer there for them, the same experience still has an impact on their behaviour. The theoretical assertion of attachment bond is found on the premise that often-natural parenting, such as the day-to-day interactions between infants/young children and their parents helps drive their emotional, physical, and intellectual development.⁹⁵ Attachment helps children develop a sense of self-morality and model various emotional expressions as well as emotional regulation skills.⁹⁶

The findings further revealed a parenting permissive approach towards the ongoing transitional rites of passage on youths' morality. The implication of permissive parenting in the transitional rites of passage of the youths resulted in their bad morality due to the lack of the ability to supervise and monitor or engage them in their transition or social behaviour. Lack of awareness from the parents on youths' social activities collectively showed ignorance of their obligations and botherless of the consequences of the transitional activities. This parenting permissiveness approach placed youths on bad morality. Parental engagement according to attachment philosophers from its advocacy is a dynamic, ongoing process, which is interactive with the child. However, while attachment is particularly important to a child in several transitional stages, studies find secure and insecure attachment classifications are stable 77% of the time, with attachment styles lasting into adulthood.⁹⁷ In this manner, youths' transitional rites of passage on morality or ethics root more towards the type of attachment outcome between the parents and youths.

Further findings emerged on the youths' rebelliousness and idleness as a factor responsible for the ongoing transitional rites of passage on their morality. These findings are an indication that the youths' rebellious tendencies commonly resulted from parents' financial support or government financial assistance to aid their academic studies. However, the wrong use of the money received for

⁹¹ Hyekyun Rhee et al., "Parents' Experiences and Perceptions of Healthcare Transition in Adolescents with Asthma: A Qualitative Study," *Children* 10, no. 9 (2023): 1510.

⁹² Anna Lipska and Wanda Zagórska, "Crossing the Threshold. Emerging Adulthood as an Elaborate Liminal Phase of the Rite of Passage," *Kwartalnik Naukowy Fides et Ratio* 46, no. 2 (2021): 7–26.

⁹³ Christopher Joseph An, "Participation, Not Paternalism: Moral Education, Normative Competence and the Child's Entry into the Moral Community," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 52, no. 2 (2020): 192–205.

⁹⁴ Pam Jarvis, "Attachment Theory, Cortisol and Care for the under-Threes in the Twenty-First Century: Constructing Evidence-Informed Policy," *Early Years* 42, no. 4–5 (2022): 450–64.

⁹⁵ S. R. Curtis, "Getting along to Get Ahead: Predictors of Success in an Online Competitive Social Environment" (University of Nevada, 2022).

⁹⁶ Mufid James Hannush and Mufid James Hannush, "Love: The Capacity to Love and Be Love Able," *Markers of Psychosocial Maturation: A Dialectically-Informed Approach*, 2021, 383–481.

⁹⁷ Julia Kantek, "Embarking on a '(Birth) Rite of Passage': Exploring the Role of Liminality and Youth Transitions in Diaspora Tourism Motivation," *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 18, no. 5 (2023): 617–31.

school purposes or perhaps pocket money from parents became a contributory factor responsible for youths' bad behaviour through the effect of substance abuse enabled by financial support. The evidence of youths' rebelliousness portrays and deposits bad morality, consequential of freak culture or youths' socials as transitional rites of passage. Thus, the theoretical notion of transitional rites of passage is often seen within an ecological concept comprising an interlocking set of systems of home, nursery, and school, through which children travel in their early years of socialization.⁹⁸

There are several ways to look at the effect of youths' rebelliousness as a factor responsible for the ongoing transitional rites to adulthood. Most often youth rebelliousness is associated with the effect of early childhood upbringing. A study by Pearson et al., noted that the impact of uninvolved and authoritarian parenting practices instilled youths' rebelliousness.⁹⁹ Transition as a 'rite of passage' is also a 'border-crossing' rooted in moral behaviour and as a rite of the institution.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, the rebellious tendencies that emerged from the findings led to the conclusion of bad youths' morality. However, the studies that expanded children's perspectives of transitions and developed children's agency of morality focus on the effect of rebellious tendencies as an aspect of transition, requiring solutions to socio-cultural well-being and solidarity at society levels and not rebels.¹⁰¹ Therefore, whatever is done from birth to adulthood starting from parents to community members, that helps the youths behave inappropriately with bad morality is seen within the lens of unsuccessful transitional rites of passage.

In addition to the rebellious tendency, idleness was another fundamental reason that was responsible for the bad youths' morality. The youths' involvement in freak culture leading to immoral practices and activities were found to be consequential of the lack of productive opportunities. This situation further plays a role in the factors driving the youths' sexual attitudes and crimes because of the lack of diligent engagement in productive functions.¹⁰² The evidence of these findings is reflective of the demographic characteristics of the study location. Thulamela Municipality is one of the four municipalities in Vhembe District. With respect to the age of household-head, about 19 years and younger stood at 3.3 percent and 20-24 years old stood at 4.6 percent.¹⁰³ However, the unemployment rate within these ages of the household heads stands at 18.6%.¹⁰⁴

Other findings that emerged as factors responsible for the transitional rites of passage on youths' morality were the neglect of tradition and embrace of modern culture. The evidence of these findings showcases the lack of parent-child preparedness for traditional transitional rites of passage in recent times, which usually involved initiation schools. The most basic transition rites are the transition to adulthood from childhood marked with responsible traditional practices that foster good morality. A study described it as a period of social, psychological, economic, and biological transitions, and for many young people, it involves demanding emotional challenges and important choices.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, the nature and quality of young people's future lives depend on how successfully they negotiate through this critical period, whereas, some are neglecting the traditional ways of transitions that instilled good and responsible moralities in favour of western culture with the characteristics of immoralities.

The findings that revealed the neglect of traditional transition in favour of modern culture start with the highlights of observing and according to children's rights. Recent studies observed that the

⁹⁸ Johanna Kingsman, "Rites of Passage Programs for Adolescent Boys in Schools: A Scoping Review," *Boyhood Studies* 14, no. 2 (2021): 90–115.

⁹⁹ Charlotte Pearson et al., "Transition to Where and to What? Exploring the Experiences of Transitions to Adulthood for Young Disabled People," *Journal of Youth Studies* 24, no. 10 (2021): 1291–1307.

¹⁰⁰ K. Kalkman and A. Clark, "Here We like Playing Princesses—Newcomer Migrant Children's Transitions within Day Care: Exploring Role Play as an Indication of Suitability and Home and Belonging," in *Perspectives from Young Children on the Margins* (Routledge, 2020), 120–32.

¹⁰¹ Ksenia Robbe, "Remembering Transition in Contemporary South African and Russian Literatures: Between Melancholia and Repair," *Remembering Transitions: Local Revisions and Global Crossings in Culture and Media* 38 (2023): 285.

¹⁰² Esther Omosede Osagiede, "Roles of Social Workers in Assisting Youth Victims of Sexual Violence" (Mykolo Romerio Universitetas, 2022).

¹⁰³ South African Statistics Council, "Statement on the Results of the Community Survey (CS)," 2007.

¹⁰⁴ Council, "Statement on the Results of the Community Survey (CS)."

¹⁰⁵ Kei Nomaguchi and Melissa A Milkie, "Parenthood and Well-being: A Decade in Review," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 82, no. 1 (2020): 198–223.

challenges for young people making the transition to adulthood are greater today than ever before because of neglect of old traditions. Globalization significantly played a role in the challenges with its power to reach across national boundaries and into the smallest communities, with the actual transformative power of new markets and new technology.¹⁰⁶ The study by Kantek noted that the modern time transitional rites of passage have without a doubt faced a critical challenge due to globalization which brings new ideas and lifestyles that conflict with traditional norms and values.¹⁰⁷

The major findings of this study that emerged as the factors responsible for the activities of the ongoing transitional rites of passage on youths' morality are in line with Durkheim's Functionalism Theory as the theoretical framework of this article.¹⁰⁸ The functionalist theoretical perspective emphasizes the interconnectedness of society by focusing on how each part influences and is influenced by other parts. Therefore, the lack of parental engagement in transitional rites, youths' rebelliousness and idleness, and the embrace of modern culture collectively contribute to youths' morals. From a narrow and specific perspective, functional theory conceptualized that the family provides a context for socializing children; whereas education offers a way to transmit a society's skills, knowledge, and culture to its youth.¹⁰⁹ The vital practical precept of functionalist advocacy is that the actions of individuals should not be explained by the immediate meanings they have for actors. The functionalist view is evident, particularly from the present study findings with respect to youths' freak culture on bad morality which suggest that the lack of adequate early childhood transition and parental engagement contributes to the activities of the ongoing transitional rites of passage on youths' morality.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show a departure from sensitive transitional rites of passage in Thulamela Municipality. To some degree, the researchers found it rather abnormal the complete neglect of traditional initiation schools that transit youths to adulthood with moral lessons by elders and community leaders, whether influenced by Western globalized culture or the preference for medical circumcision. The ongoing transitional rites of passage are fuelled by the youth's social enthusiasm due to the lack of induction by the parents, families, and elders of the community for adequate transitional rites. So, this is partly the fault of the evolving culture calling for attention. It is also clear, however, that the youth's social/freak activities were promoted by curiosity and eagerness for quick mature status, as a result, it will be harder to provide a complete change in this evolving culture. Therefore, what will work is to build on the exciting transitional rites of passage to model appropriate youths' morality for the stability and peacefulness of the society and the Thulamela communities. The fact that factors responsible for the inappropriate transitional rites are the lack of parental engagement in adequate transition, the effect of globalizing culture, and youths' rebelliousness.

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¹⁰⁶ Sabine Pfeiffer, "The Greater Transformation: Digitalization and the Transformative Power of Distributive Forces in Digital Capitalism," *International Critical Thought* 11, no. 4 (2021): 535–52.

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¹⁰⁸ Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method, Social Theory Re-Wired* (New York: Free Press, 2023).

¹⁰⁹ Carlisa Simon, "The Role of Race and Ethnicity in Parental Ethnic-Racial Socialization: A Scoping Review of Research," *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 30 (2021): 182–95.

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