

The Effect of Metaphysics in Confounding Social and Community Development in Africa: Eclectic Contexts

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses the effects of metaphysics on social and community development in the eclectic contexts of Africa. The researcher sourced information through a literature review of data across many English-authored journal articles, monographs, books, and book chapters. The journal papers were accessed from diverse Google search engines such as Google Scholar, EBSCOhost, Research Gate, Web of Science, ResearchGate, Scopus, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), and Google Scholar. The findings presented the following metaphysics-related hurdles confounding social and community development: religious fanaticism, faith from traditional healers in South Africa and Botswana, the unconventional practices of the white garment churches (*Vapostori*) of Zimbabwe and Bazezuru of Botswana, and the mythical environment embedded among the people of South Africa and Botswana. The paper concludes that people's metaphysical beliefs influence social work development paradigms perniciously. This is because people see and interpret developmental reality from their metaphysical lenses. The paper challenges the African governments, in collaboration with other development partners, to strengthen their advocacy campaign to communities that subscribe to unconventional beliefs and ideologies so that they can undergo a paradigm shift to change their anti-developmental beliefs. The findings also widen the literature on the domain of metaphysics.

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INTRODUCTION

Axiomatically, Social work is an engine and stimulus of community development that needs more impetus from government and other development partners, especially in the developing part of the world.¹ It is believed to empower people through its principles, values, and interventions to address a conglomeration of social ills that overwhelm the world.² Moreover, it further emphasises problem-solving and positive change from a strength-based perspective.³ This is because social workers serve as change agents aiming to strengthen people's resilience to various life shocks, facilitating their confidence

¹ Namso Umoren, "Social Work Development in Africa: Encouraging Best Practice," *International Journal of Scientific and Engineering Research* 7, no. 1 (2016): 191–203.

² P. Manhar, *Social and Community Development* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2014); Peter Walker, "Social Work and Community Development," *Community Development Journal* 51, no. 3 (July 2016): 452–54, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsw013>.

³ Cathleen J Faruque and Faisal Ahmmed, "Development of Social Work Education and Practice in an Era of International Collaboration and Cooperation," *Journal of International Social Issues* 2, no. 1 (2013): 61–70.

building in their life endeavours amidst an environment of apathy and despondence and affording them to foster a tranquilized environment.⁴ It is an engine of community.

However, its capacity as a social and community development engine and a change agent is believed to be confounded by some forces that render its operation weak. Discussing such confounding forces and their dynamics in the eclectic contexts of selected African countries is imperative. This positions the effect of metaphysics in undermining the operations of social work. What, then, is metaphysics? While the literature on African metaphysics is dynamic and growing, no common agreement on its meaning, nature, and scope exists. On another front, metaphysics reflects the fundamental nature of being, or ontology, and forms the basis and soul of people's philosophy or belief system.⁵ Metaphysics connotes people's belief systems, how they are constructed/ conceptualised, and implemented, and how they help them fathom reality.⁶ Further, metaphysics in the African context revolves around the spirit beings and their impact in driving reality and power. This also determines people's cultural orientation, morality, social life, capabilities, customs, and enjoyment.⁷ Therefore, constructing a socio-culturalist livelihood of a particular society may reflect that society's metaphysics. The discussion below endeavours to present the hurdles some metaphysical environments pose to the success of social work implementation of social and community development in different locales of the African region.

METHODOLOGY

The paper adopted a secondary literature review with data from many English-authored journal articles, monographs, books, and chapters. The journal papers were accessed from diverse Google search engines such as Google Scholar, EBSCOhost, Research Gate, Web of Science, ResearchGate, Scopus, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), and Google Scholar. The main phrases used to access or tap the requisite literature included *What is the meaning of metaphysics, the role of metaphysics in social work, and metaphysics in African countries*. While about 20 articles were accessed, only nine were found to be very relevant to the subject under authorship. Through coding, the mountains and piles of crude data were cleansed, gleaned, and reorganised to form some themes that constituted the finding of this article.

METAPHYSICAL HURDLES CONSTRAINING EFFORTS OF SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Religious fanaticism and its effects on social and community development

Nobody should undermine the power of faith and people's rights to religious practices and cultures in any part of the world, as they occupy a pivotal place in countries' constitutions.⁸ It is poignantly clear that some practices must be exposed as their outcomes have produced unintended and undesirable outcomes that may be regarded as anti-developmental. To this end, some religious fanaticism has been documented to espouse anti-developmental and perfidious outcomes.⁹ Fanaticism, or extreme and excessive irrational zeal for religion, attracts a lot of metaphysical interpretations. This fanaticism becomes anti-developmental when the followers fail to recognise other important facets of development, such as neglecting their responsibilities, amid other civic ones, such as one's health and those of others, especially

⁴ J. V. Rautenbach and V. S. Nadesan, "Chapter 1: What Is Social Work?," in *Introduction to Social Work*, ed. J. V. Rautenbach, M. Maistry, and A. L. Shokane (Claremont: JUTA, 2022); C U Dhavaleshwar, "The Role of Social Worker in Community Development," *International Research Journal of Social Sciences* 5, no. 10 (2016): 61–63.

⁵ Wilfred Lajul, "African Metaphysics: Traditional and Modern Discussions," in *Themes, Issues and Problems in African Philosophy* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 19–48, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-40796-8_3.

⁶ Lajul, "African Metaphysics: Traditional and Modern Discussions"; Osam Edim Temple, "Metaphysical Challenges of Ethical Leadership in Africa," *Leadership* 8, no. 1 (February 13, 2012): 47–65, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715011426964>; Francis E Ekanem, "On the Ontology of African Philosophy," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention* 1, no. 1 (2012): 54–58.

⁷ F. Etim, "African Metaphysics," *Journal of Asian Scientific Research* 3, no. 1 (2013): 11–17.

⁸ Jewel Amoah and Tom Bennett, "The Freedoms of Religion and Culture under the South African Constitution: Do Traditional African Religions Enjoy Equal Treatment?," *Journal of Law and Religion* 24, no. 1 (2008): 1–20.

⁹ T.C. Isioma, O.I. Ebenezer, and O. Malachy, "Usage of Effective Communication in Curbing Religious Fanaticism: The Nigerian Experience," *New Media & Mass Communication* 67 (2018): 53–58.

the needs of their children, such as schooling and health.¹⁰ The practice, therefore, runs against the aspirations and practices of social and community development.¹¹

Inopportunately, religious fanaticism has effectively dented the fanatics' mode of social interaction between them and other members of society by adopting a new pattern of perceptions and ideas unfriendly to the other members. They, therefore, become agents of jeopardising peace and tranquillity that the tenets of social and community development object to promoting.¹² It is inopportune that some people become exclusive as well as violent as they engage to defend their ideological stand. Regrettably, many world conflicts have been driven and perfected by religious conflicts, with some Islamic-leaning fanatics being motivated by the belief that the practice endears the fanatic to "nirvana", or the Kingdom of God.¹³ The practices of fanaticism, therefore, can be viewed through metaphysical lenses.

Perhaps it is good to explore more subtle forms of fanaticism that may also attract the lenses of metaphysics. Since fanaticism makes its protagonists blind to any other truth or cause and is more often based on superstition or imagination,¹⁴ this researcher is of the view that the deaths of the many followers of the late T.B Joshua church of Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN), who met their death in 2014 when the church collapsed, can be connected to metaphysics.¹⁵ The followers of the late T.B. Joshua or their proxies fanatically believed that T.B. Joshua had strong spiritual powers to heal all kinds of maladies, especially those that defy the practices of biomedics of today or other spiritual personalities. Sadly, of the 115 persons who perished in the church collapse, 67 were South Africans.¹⁶ The followers met their deaths when the church structure they were occupying collapsed mysteriously, with some people suspecting the building might have collapsed due to structural failure. In contrast, others suspected the collapse emanated from a well-orchestrated attack done through a helicopter onslaught.¹⁷ Perhaps another similar episode is the deaths of eleven of the followers of Prophet Magaya's Prophetic Healing Deliverance (PHD) through a stampede during a crusade in Kwekwe stadium in Zimbabwe.¹⁸ Perhaps a more fascinating and perturbing case of fanaticism and metaphysical interpretations is the operations of the Good News International Ministry (GNM) led by Pastor Paul Nthenge Mackenzie of Kenya, who, at the beginning of 2023, convinced his followers to assemble with their family members and fast to death to go to heaven.¹⁹ It was later discovered that people in the fasting venue of Shakahola forest in Kenya's Kilifi District were dying every day and getting buried, some members of the same family in the same pit. While the act may also be criminal, it is believed that close to 500 died in the situation.²⁰

Faith from Traditional Healers in the Southern African Countries

Documented evidence suggests that community development praxis in many of the Southern African countries, such as South Africa and Botswana, suffer perniciously under the deeply entrenched faith in the operatives and practices of the traditional healers, whose faith prescriptions happen to be opposed to those of the contemporary societies.²¹ For example, in the 2001-2010 decade, when Botswana was fighting to stem the tide of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, with the country experiencing an HIV/AIDS

¹⁰ D B Resnik, "Responsibility for Health: Personal, Social, and Environmental: Table 1," *Journal of Medical Ethics* 33, no. 8 (August 2007): 444–45, <https://doi.org/10.1136/jme.2006.017574>.

¹¹ Ina Conradie and Ingrid Robeyns, "Aspirations and Human Development Interventions," *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities* 14, no. 4 (2013): 559–80.

¹² Conradie and Robeyns, "Aspirations and Human Development Interventions."

¹³ Isioma, Ebenezer, and Malachy, "Usage of Effective Communication in Curbing Religious Fanaticism: The Nigerian Experience."

¹⁴ William H Leach, "Religious Fanaticism: Asset or Debit?," *The Biblical World* 53, no. 3 (1919): 240–44.

¹⁵ A.M. Mathebula and J.J. Smallwood, "Religious Building Collapses: The Heavy Price of Short Cuts in Places of Worship and Pilgrimage Site Construction," *Procedia Engineering* 196 (2017): 919–29, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.proeng.2017.08.025>.

¹⁶ Mathebula and Smallwood, "Religious Building Collapses: The Heavy Price of Short Cuts in Places of Worship and Pilgrimage Site Construction."

¹⁷ Helena Van Coller and Idowu A Akinloye, "Death in Worship Places: Evaluating the Roles of Religious Organisations and State Governments in Reducing the Risks of Religious Disaster," *Jambá: Journal of Disaster Risk Studies* 13, no. 1 (2021): 1–10.

¹⁸ Takesure C. Mahohoma, "A Theological Evaluation of God Business: A Case Study of the Prophetic Healing and Deliverance Ministries of Zimbabwe," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 73, no. 2 (February 16, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i2.4529>.

¹⁹ S. Mwende, "Shakahola Death Rises to 419," *Star Newspaper*, July 18, 2023, <https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2023-07-18-shakahola-death-toll-rises-to-419/>.

²⁰ Mwende, "Shakahola Death Rises to 419."

²¹ Simon Kang'ethe, "Attitudes of PLWHA and Other Selected Communities in Tsabong towards Operationalising Biomedical and Traditional Therapies in Tandem to Face the AIDS Epidemic," *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk* 48, no. 1 (2012).

prevalence rate of more than 20%, the impact of the faith prescribed from the traditional healers perfidiously affected the HIV/AIDS campaign and advances of community development.²² While the government and other NGOs tried to strengthen advocacy to ensure communities processed the reality of consistently and persistently using contraceptives such as condoms to step up prevention, as well as religiously accepting to take the ARVS faithfully, some traditional healers undermined the campaign by suggesting they could proffer some therapeutic concoctions for prevention.²³ This motivated some communities to develop apathy in knowing their HIV status, as well as lowered their confidence in the use of contraceptives and taking ARVS. On the other hand, while the Department of Social Development, through social workers, campaigned to urge the communities not to mix the anti-retroviral drugs with any other therapeutic concoctions so that they can be effective, those who were faithful to the therapeutic prescriptions of the traditional healers would mix the two therapies, to the detriment of the effectiveness of the ARVs. This saw many people who would have survived HIV/AIDS succumb to death or attend biomedical clinics when they were debilitatingly weak.²⁴

A 2008 research study by Kang'ethe in the Tsabong District of Botswana documents scenarios where many people would disagree with being tested for HIV/AIDS but keep on following the regimen proffered to them by the traditional healers.²⁵ They would then come to the rescue of biomedical clinics at the point of death. Indeed, the faith system offered by the traditional healers in the decade described and possibly before then saw a serious conflict between the tenets of social and community development initiated by the government and the practices of traditional healers. This researcher is of the view that while the faith system advocated by the traditional healers is waning in most of the Southern African countries as modernization and globalization continue to take a huge toll,²⁶ the government and other community development practitioners need to continue to assess and research how traditional practitioners could derail community development, especially in the deeper rural areas. This is because contemporary research in some rural areas in South Africa reflects that people do not have the adequate requisite information to address HIV/AIDS. At the same time, infrastructures such as clinics where they can get contraceptives such as HIV/AIDS are very far apart.²⁷

Paradoxically, perhaps it is also important to indicate that several traditional healers are a plus to community development. Research shows that some have agreed to work collaboratively and synergistically with modern biomedical and other development practitioners, such as social workers.²⁸ In a study that explored the work of traditional health practitioners (THPs), including healers, they handled their clients with some degree of effectiveness while enlisting the support of biomedical and other development practitioners. The THPs expressed their willingness and readiness to learn beyond their healing system.²⁹

Indigenous churches and their perfidy to tenets of social and community development

While social workers need to be religiously and culturally competent to embrace the spirit and ethos of diversity,³⁰ some religious beliefs become unfriendly to social and community development. While the practices of religions are supposed to make people obedient and offer respect to the authorities, and be

²² Kang'ethe, "Attitudes of PLWHA and Other Selected Communities in Tsabong towards Operationalising Biomedical and Traditional Therapies in Tandem to Face the AIDS Epidemic."

²³ Kang'ethe, "Attitudes of PLWHA and Other Selected Communities in Tsabong towards Operationalising Biomedical and Traditional Therapies in Tandem to Face the AIDS Epidemic."

²⁴ Kang'ethe, "Attitudes of PLWHA and Other Selected Communities in Tsabong towards Operationalising Biomedical and Traditional Therapies in Tandem to Face the AIDS Epidemic."

²⁵ Kang'ethe, "Attitudes of PLWHA and Other Selected Communities in Tsabong towards Operationalising Biomedical and Traditional Therapies in Tandem to Face the AIDS Epidemic."

²⁶ Jabulani Owen Nene, "The Concept of Traditional Healing and Its Role in African Modern Society," *International Journal of Social Science and Human Behavior Study* 1, no. 1 (2014): 1–15.

²⁷ Simon Murote Kang'ethe, "Disclosure Deficit Experienced by People Living with HIV/AIDS in Alice and Its Environs in Eastern Cape Province, South Africa: Perceptions of Selected Stakeholders," *Indian Journal of Palliative Care* 26, no. 1 (2020): 28.

²⁸ Thembelihle Zuma et al., "The Role of Traditional Health Practitioners in Rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa: Generic or Mode Specific?," *BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine* 16, no. 1 (December 22, 2016): 304, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12906-016-1293-8>.

²⁹ Zuma et al., "The Role of Traditional Health Practitioners in Rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa: Generic or Mode Specific?"

³⁰ C. Zastrow, *Introduction to Social Work and Social Welfare. Empowering People*, 10th ed. (United States of America: Linda Shreiber, 2010).

ambassadors of peace, some religious faiths make their followers difficult, unfriendly, and agents of anti-development.³¹ The following discussions will centre on a few Indigenous churches and their development deficit.

White garment churches (Vapostori) in Zimbabwe and Botswana and their developmental deficit.

White garment churches in Zimbabwe fall into two groups: one whose theology and spirituality are biblically oriented. In contrast, the other group does not read the bible, but its leaders claim they directly hear from the holy spirit.³² Examples of latter groupings are churches led by the spiritual leader Johane Masowe.³³ Perhaps what is metaphysical or borders on metaphysics manifesting social and community development deficit is the fact that these groupings discourage their church members from accessing bio-medical health delivery systems or engaging in the immunisation of their children against dangerous diseases such as poliomyelitis.³⁴

Another Johane Masowe grouping is the Bazezuru of Botswana, which is believed to be the offspring of Shona people who originated from Zimbabwe, most of whom are bonafide citizens of Botswana. In contrast, others' citizenship status has been confounded by their refusal to denounce their Zimbabwean citizenship.³⁵ Although they are reputed to possess strong business skills compared to other local Batswana, their religious and cultural practices are unfriendly to social and community development. Since Botswana has been fighting HIV/AIDS for several decades and is one of the countries experiencing very high prevalence in the globe,³⁶ this community has failed to attend modern clinics nor accepted that their children be immunised, with only a few of their children attending school. This means that while the government endeavours to move the country to achieve many of the aspirations of the UN-driven Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the stubbornness of the Bazezuru in entrenching their faith only in traditional healing and prayer makes them miss out in health development.

Optimistically, the culture of Bazezuru taking children to school and some accepting modern therapeutic interventions is slowly crouching in.³⁷ While some protagonists indicate that these people should be forced to comply with the forces of development, this has not been easy to achieve as the country guarantees everyone's rights to their faith and culture. Perhaps it is only when the government criminalises the act of not taking their children to school will such a move succeeds. However, this may also have a moral and an ethical dynamic that this paper may not discuss. Perhaps a worrisome thing is the fact that the Bazezuru community is polygynous, and in case the husband or one of the wives gets infected with HIV/AIDS, then the rest of the wives stand a high chance of being infected.³⁸ The case of Bazezuru and their disobedience can be compared to the followers of Ngcobo "Seven Angels Church/Mancoba Ministries" in South Africa, where people resign from work, and children drop out of school to go and spend time in the mountains praying and conducting other church rituals. Inopportunely, church operations blind the followers to their civic obligations of doing work and their children attending school. It is no wonder that this group faces many confrontations with law enforcement agents.³⁹

³¹ Harold G. Koenig, "Religion, Spirituality, and Health: The Research and Clinical Implications," *ISRN Psychiatry* 2012 (December 16, 2012): 1–33, <https://doi.org/10.5402/2012/278730>.

³² M. Engelke, *A Problem of Presence: Beyond Scripture in an African Church* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007).

³³ David Bishau, *Reign With Him for Thousand Years (Rev 20: 6)-A Socio-Hermeneutical Exposition of Biblical and Contemporary Millenarian Movements in Zimbabwe as Radical Responses to Deprivation*, vol. 2 (University of Bamberg Press, 2010).

³⁴ Obvious Vengeyi, "Mapositori Churches and Politics in Zimbabwe: Political Dramas to Win the Support of Mapositori Churches," *Exchange* 40, no. 4 (2011): 351–68, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157254311X600753>.

³⁵ S. Rantsimako, "Botswana: Bazezuru Seeks Clarity on Their Citizenship," *Citizen's Right in African Initiative*, October 4, 2012.

³⁶ Kabo Matlho et al., "HIV Prevalence and Related Behaviours of Older People in Botswana — Secondary Analysis of the Botswana AIDS Impact Survey (BAIS) IV," *African Journal of AIDS Research* 18, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 18–26, <https://doi.org/10.2989/16085906.2018.1552162>.

³⁷ Eureka Mokibelo, "Implementation of the Language-in-Education Policy and Achieving Education for All Goals in Botswana Primary Schools," *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 4, no. 1 (2016): 157–64.

³⁸ Georges Reniers and Susan Watkins, "Polygyny and the Spread of HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Case of Benign Concurrency," *AIDS* 24, no. 2 (January 2010): 299–307, <https://doi.org/10.1097/QAD.0b013e328333af03>.

³⁹ S. Velaphi, "Mancoba Church Leader 'a Man of God and Jack of All Trades,'" March 4, 2018.

Mythical environment confounding community development praxis.

Myths are commonly considered narratives, beliefs, perceptions, and thinking that play a fundamental role in explaining complex societal issues.⁴⁰ Authoritative people in society usually concoct them to explain some complex ideas or ideologies to society. Therefore, they shape people's beliefs and behaviour.⁴¹ Accepting a myth depends on the people's faith in the source and the complexity of an issue. For example, when people fail to understand the aetiology of a disease, this motivates the development of myths as a possible answer to the phenomenon, leading to stigma and labelling directed to those who display symptoms associated with a particular disease. Since myths usually do not present the factual reality of a phenomenon, they can sometimes constitute some grains of truth, propagating fear and becoming misleading and anti-developmental.⁴² It is, therefore, important that they are demystified.⁴³ Perhaps myths are a setback to aspects of community development praxis because they breed fear, stigma, and stigmatisation of events that society cannot easily fathom.⁴⁴ It is these outcomes associated with myths that make community development interventions an arduous task.

In Southern African countries, such as South Africa and Botswana, diseases such as HIV/AIDS continue to experience stigma and stigmatisation.⁴⁵ Reinforcing the ideologies of Irving Goffman, Kang'ethe avers that stigma constitutes an act of disapproval of a particular individual based on characteristics that distinguish them from other members of society.⁴⁶ This deters one from freely mixing with the members of society.⁴⁷ This, therefore, compromises one's level of social expression, freedom, self-worth, integrity, and human rights.⁴⁸ This has made efforts by human service organisations responsible for social development, usually through the practices and interventions of social workers in these countries, and other members of social service interventions, to experience an arduous challenge in the fight against the stigma associated with diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

In the South African region, with Botswana and South Africa bearing the brunt edge of stigma, diseases such as HIV/AIDS have suffered bouts of stigma.⁴⁹ Since stigma must be stemmed down if HIV/AIDS must be tackled effectively, this has increased the need for the government to spend money by employing many social workers to lead the anti-stigma campaign. It is good to indicate that while the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS has been going down significantly in the two countries in the last few decades, the stigma associated with some newer diseases, such as coronavirus, is still to be quelled.⁵⁰ This makes it imperative that advocacy and meaningful information dissemination by members of social service professionals such as social workers are strengthened. It is also pivotal that community education about these diseases, especially their aetiology, and epidemiology, be processed and owned. This will no doubt bring down the levels of stigma. Empirical evidence abounds suggesting that information that seems to normalise diseases such as HIV/AIDS and make those living with it earn a normal life or achieve positive living, unequivocally reduces stigma and its concomitant ramifications.⁵¹

⁴⁰ Fatih Mehmet Berk, "The Role of Mythology as a Cultural Identity and a Cultural Heritage: The Case of Phrygian Mythology," *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 225 (2016): 67–73.

⁴¹ Tarif Hussian et al., "COVID-19 Pandemic: An Era of Myths and Misleading Advertisements," *Journal of Generic Medicines: The Business Journal for the Generic Medicines Sector* 17, no. 2 (June 20, 2021): 49–54, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741134320988324>.

⁴² Hussian et al., "COVID-19 Pandemic: An Era of Myths and Misleading Advertisements."

⁴³ Swapnajeet Sahoo et al., "Demystifying the Myths about COVID-19 Infection and Its Societal Importance," *Asian Journal of Psychiatry* 54 (December 2020): 102244, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajp.2020.102244>.

⁴⁴ V Earnshaw, "Don't Let Fear of Covid-19 Turn into Stigma," *Harvard Business Review* 6 (2020).

⁴⁵ Jana Jarolimova et al., "Medical Mistrust and Stigma Associated with COVID-19 among People Living with HIV in South Africa," *AIDS and Behavior* 25, no. 12 (2021): 3967–77; M.J. Visser et al., "HIV/AIDS Stigma in a South African Community," *AIDS Care* 21, no. 2 (February 19, 2009): 197–206, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540120801932157>.

⁴⁶ S M Kang'ethe, "An Examination of HIV and AIDS Campaign in South Africa towards Eliminating Stigmatisation," *Journal of Human Ecology* 49, no. 3 (2015): 317–26.

⁴⁷ Veena Das, "Stigma, Contagion, Defect: Issues in the Anthropology of Public Health," *Stigma and Global Health: Developing a Research Agenda* 5 (2001): 5–7.

⁴⁸ Peter G Kirchschräger, "Human Dignity and Human Rights: Fostering and Protecting Pluralism and Particularity," *Interdisciplinary Journal for Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society* 6, no. 1 (2020): 90–106.

⁴⁹ Jarolimova et al., "Medical Mistrust and Stigma Associated with COVID-19 among People Living with HIV in South Africa"; Visser et al., "HIV/AIDS Stigma in a South African Community."

⁵⁰ Jarolimova et al., "Medical Mistrust and Stigma Associated with COVID-19 among People Living with HIV in South Africa."

⁵¹ Carla Makhlof Obermeyer, Parijat Baijal, and Elisabetta Pegurri, "Facilitating HIV Disclosure across Diverse Settings: A Review," *American Journal of Public Health* 101, no. 6 (2011): 1011–23.

Perhaps myths and fallacies become anti-developmental in that the environment has economically been exploited by cultural traditionalists such as traditional healers, spiritualists, herbalists, witches and wizards,⁵² Those who make the communities they hail from believe that they have the power to arrest some diseases that biomedical practitioners have failed to offer a solution to or are still struggling to answer. They, therefore, wish the communities to completely miss out on the knowledge about the basic facts of disease for their advantage.⁵³

Social Work Implications

Embracing some unconventional beliefs that inform a grouping's metaphysical environment in many eclectic settings poses a social and community development deficit.⁵⁴ This is because people's metaphysical environment determines their spirituality and practices. These unconventional beliefs impede the grouping from adequately tapping the socio-cultural endowments in a particular locale.⁵⁵ This poses serious implications for social work, as it is concerned with the ample exploitation of the resources at people's disposal to improve their livelihood.⁵⁶ An example is when a certain belief denies children the opportunity to go to school or seek medical attention, which are rights that most countries' constitutions guarantee and support the global sustainable development goals.⁵⁷ However, attempting to woo a certain population group to abandon their beliefs also poses an ethical and moral dilemma. This is because most countries also highly esteem people's socio-cultural rights. However, some protagonists would argue that some rights are more important than others, putting health and education rights in question.

This researcher believes that since some of these beliefs are unfriendly to social and community development, they should not continue to be given space, even though they may have been practiced since immemorial. In collaboration with other development partners such as NGOs, governments should put more advocacy efforts into demonstrating to such communities that there is a need for population grouping to undergo a paradigm shift to change the said beliefs. This perhaps puts the Bazezuru of Botswana on the spot, as they do not want their children to undergo any form of clinical immunisation or go to school.⁵⁸

Importantly, all governments should ensure no population grouping is left behind because of the metaphysical environment. This researcher needs to point out that efforts by the Botswana government to implore the leadership of some indigenous groupings, such as the Basarwa, to embrace packages of development by ensuring all their children attend school amid changing their archaic ways of living that suffer some developmental deficit, has inopportunely been frustrated by the western governments in the name of defending the Indigenous people to be allowed to live in their indigenous ecosystem.⁵⁹ A few decades ago, this in Botswana attracted a court battle between the Basarwa and the government, whose judgment indicated that the Basarwa should not disturb their indigenous lives.⁶⁰ This seriously impacts social work as the community is at the periphery of the country's mainstream developmental paradigm. This also importantly positions social workers to fight for social justice and against any force that makes a population group suffer some form of exclusion.⁶¹

⁵² Kang'ethe, "Attitudes of PLWHA and Other Selected Communities in Tsabong towards Operationalising Biomedical and Traditional Therapies in Tandem to Face the AIDS Epidemic."

⁵³ Kang'ethe, "Attitudes of PLWHA and Other Selected Communities in Tsabong towards Operationalising Biomedical and Traditional Therapies in Tandem to Face the AIDS Epidemic."

⁵⁴ S. Ebimgbo, P. Agwu, and U. Okoye, "Spirituality and Religion in Social Work," in *Social Work in Nigeria: Book of Readings*, ed. U. Okoye, N Chukwu, and P. Agwu (Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press Ltd., 2017), 93–103.

⁵⁵ Ebimgbo, Agwu, and Okoye, "Spirituality and Religion in Social Work."

⁵⁶ Zastrow, *Introduction to Social Work and Social Welfare. Empowering People*.

⁵⁷ Kroll, Warchold, and Pradhan, "Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Are We Successful in Turning Trade-Offs into Synergies?"

⁵⁸ T. Setsiba, "Botswana: When Religion Hinders Education," *Mmegi Newspaper*, June 17, 2005.

⁵⁹ Emile Boonzaier, "An 'Historic Victory' for the Basarwa in Botswana?: Reading the Evidence," *Anthropology Southern Africa* 34, no. 3–4 (January 25, 2011): 96–103, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23323256.2011.11500013>.

⁶⁰ Boonzaier, "An 'Historic Victory' for the Basarwa in Botswana?: Reading the Evidence."

⁶¹ J. Coninck, J. Culp, and V. Taylor, *African Perspectives on Social Justice* (Kampala: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2013).

CONCLUSION

The article has discussed the effects of metaphysics on social and community development in the eclectic contexts of Africa. The findings have revealed various metaphysics-related hurdles confounding social and community development, which have been discussed. It must be noted that despite many countries' constitutions embracing socio-cultural rights, governments need to establish a scorecard weighing balance that will dissuade socio-economic unfriendly cultures. This is because adherence to some metaphysical-leaning cultures and beliefs can lead to the exclusion of some groups. Moreover, some of these metaphysical leaning practices, such as those that deny children the right to attend school and accept vaccination, also breach the rights of children. Although confounding cultural rights vis-a-vis fulfilling some other important life imperatives poses a moral dilemma, it is important that development practitioners, in collaboration with governments, continue to strongly unleash strong advocacy against metaphysics that are socio-economically unfriendly. This study is, therefore, of the position that metaphysics that drives systems into the peripherals of development should be annihilated in societies.

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