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Table of Content

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Full Length Research Paper

Social utility of the elderly and settlement of land conflicts among the Agni-Djuablin (Ivory Coast)

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In Agni society in Côte d'Ivoire in general, we are increasingly witnessing the dynamics of intergenerational relationships which are often illustrated by the process of depreciation of the elderly. However, among the Agni of the Djuablin region, we note the social usefulness of the elderly through their participation in the settlement of conflicts over land management. This research therefore aims to analyze the social participation of the elderly in the settlement of land disputes in this region. In a qualitative approach, the sampling by reasoned choice made it possible to retain five (5) villages where land conflicts are rife on a recurring basis. Over a discontinuous period of three months, from March 11 to June 15, 2020, semi-structured individual and group interviews were conducted with 30 actors, including 10 aged 60 or over (village chiefs and notables) and 20 other actors: Collective and institutional. From the thematic analysis of the speeches, it emerges that the Agni have various representations of the earth: An inalienable good, soul, life, wealth and the reproduction of social identity. Also, the absence of laws following the independence of Côte d'Ivoire, the new legal provisions for the appropriation of land, the juxtaposition of customary and modern systems of succession, the modification of the social environment, resulting from urbanization have been cited as the origins of conflicts. These break down into intra-group or intra-family conflicts within the same group or family. The resolution of these conflicts requires the participation of the elderly, with regard to the social prestige linked to their status as patriarchs and their relationship to the divinity who legitimizes their power.

Key words: Social participation, elderly, land conflicts, Côte d'Ivoire.

INTRODUCTION

The economic and political changes affecting all social structures have contributed to reconsidering among certain peoples of the Ivory Coast the social roles and position occupied by the elderly. We are increasingly witnessing the dynamics of intergenerational relationships which are often illustrated by the process of depreciation of the elderly. Age, both a natural and cultural parameter, engages a series of dimensions: structural (social

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relations that are built on the basis of age), strategic (age could be mobilized to achieve objectives and plans for position oneself in the social field), ideological (age can structure beliefs, standards, values, perceptions, discourses, social practices, in other words, social representations) and symbolic (categorization from age: the oldest are the wisest). This whole series configures its interest and importance in Africa in general and in Côte d'Ivoire in particular. However, with the profound socio-cultural and economic changes underway, the representations which, until now have structured the relationship with old age, are changing and posing new challenges in terms of intergenerational balance.

Indeed, these representations, consequences of the various orientations put in place (political, economic, cultural and educational), relating to social, community and family structures, have undergone profound changes. These are characterized by the intrusion of modern social forms which have made it possible to lead to a coexistence of customary social structures (royalty, chiefdom, notability, tribe, lineage, clan, undivided family, etc.) and modern social structures (council regional, prefecture and sub-prefecture, town hall, tribunal, etc.) which can be observed in Côte d'Ivoire. This situation has not been without impact on certain categories of the population, in particular, the most vulnerable members of society. Children, women, people with disabilities and especially the elderly who were, at one time, considered to be the linchpins in decision-making spheres, are faced with a loss of recognition. The consequence seems to be the negation of cultural foundations and the reappearance of new models like those of the West, for example, in various areas of society. In this context, therefore, the elderly are relegated from a position of sacralization, from which they were presented as the pivots of societies and their ancestral traditions to those of simple members. These elderly people go from being the guarantors of their sustainability and their symbolic and material survival to that of exclusion from the main social roles they previously played. In Agni society in Côte d'Ivoire in general, these findings can be observed in the reduction of the decision-making field of seniors who are nowadays losing their control over material, matrimonial and symbolic resources. However, in the Djuablin region, a place of diverse social transactions and pluralistic logics (where quest, self-assertion and private accumulation of wealth dominate), it is observed that seniors continue to participate socially. This region of constant competition due to its strategic position (border region with Ghana) and investment opportunities (coffee, cocoa, rubber tree cultivation, oil palm, food products, etc.), receives requests for use of its earthly space. This favors the scarcity of land, and also the emergence of intra-family, inter-community conflicts, putting the elderly in the first place in the settlement process, despite the existence of a modern system for settling conflicts (Police, Gendarmerie, Sub-Prefecture…). Indeed, it is clear that

certain endogenous institutions such as royalty, the chiefdom and its notability still survive in this social space and continue to value the elderly. It is these older people who, from a structural point of view, by virtue of their status and roles, constitute the main actors of these social institutions. From a symbolic point of view, the socio-cultural practices mobilized by the elders with reference to the ideology (representations, beliefs, etc.) conveyed in their social frameworks often induce happy outcomes in the settlement of land conflicts which often oppose individual and collective actors and institutional. This is illustrated by the village chiefs who, according to Bagayoko and Koné (2017), were able to be mobilized to intervene in the management of much more political Ivorian conflicts. As Boubacar et al. (2010) underlines: "through an unexpected return, the weight of traditional chiefs as moral authorities, both in the eyes of the populations and of the rulers at the top of the state, enables them to settle disputes which normally fall within the competence of state institutions (…). In Niger, for example, missions led by representatives of the highly respected Association of Traditional Chiefs of Niger have helped resolve political crises on several occasions". Also, a study conducted by Adou (2012) reports the active involvement of the kings and chiefs of Côte d'Ivoire, through their associations, in peace initiatives at the local level. And as mentioned by Bagayoko and Koné (2017), one of the most visible and beneficial uses of traditional conflict management mechanisms in Ivorian society has been the effective involvement of traditional power structures (mainly led by the elderly) in social stability during the long period of conflict that the country went through. These elders will be effective conciliators in the local conflicts of the period opposing indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. In this context, therefore, seniors are still the subject of many considerations. At advanced age (60 years and beyond), are attached the values of respect and courtesy in the order of knowledge, morals and the exercise of political, economic, social, cultural and religious powers (Tanoh, 2014; Dayoro, 2008; Kacou, 2013; Ebénézer, 2009). In this regard, issues related to the elderly have been the subject of several studies mainly under three approaches. The first issues were concerned with institutional offers and the living conditions of retirees in Côte d'Ivoire (Dayoro, 2008; Ossiri et al., 2017). Then, socio-anthropological studies have been devoted to the question of the survival of institutions for the valorization of the elderly such as the ébêb in Odjukru society (Kacou, 2013) and to the mistreatment of the elderly linked to intergenerational conflicts (Tanoh, 2014). Most of these studies either opened up unresolved questions about older people's relationships to politics or observed them as "mirrors of the social game (Dayoro, 2008; Kacou, 2013; Tanoh, 2014). These three approaches have the advantage of presenting the importance of this category in question, in this case, the institutional, political, cultural, religious and

social dimension. However, we can always, in the extension of these, question the updating and maintenance of the elderly in social and economic negotiations in a context of modernity, thus calling into question the paradigm of decline of the third age stated by Lefrancois (2007). We then have to ask the following question: what roles do the elderly play in the settlement of land disputes in the Djuablin region of Côte d'Ivoire?

The general objective of this research is therefore to analyze the social participation of the elderly in terms of the roles played in the settlement of land conflicts. More specifically, it is about:

(1) identify the social representations of land among the Agni of Djuablin;
(2) identify the origins, natures and typologies of land conflicts;
(3) investigate the roles played by the elderly in resolving conflicts over land management.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study took place in the district of Comoé, precisely in the region of Djuablin located in the east of the Ivory Coast. This is limited to the north by the Gontougo region, to the south by the Mé and Moronou regions, to the west by the Ifou region and to the east by the Republic of Ghana (INS, 2014). At the administrative level, this region has three departments including Abengourou the capital, Agnibilékro and Bétié. Its cosmopolitan population of indigenous and non-indigenous people is estimated at 560,432 inhabitants (INS, 2014). The study took place in five villages in Agnibilékro, a town 270 km from Abidjan. This city borders with Ghana and is mainly populated by Agni-Djuablin. According to the same sources, its economy is essentially based on agriculture which constitutes its main wealth. The main products of the region are perennial crops (mainly cocoa and coffee) and food crops (plantains, yams, cassava, vegetables, rice, fruit and market garden products, etc). In this context, the land use rates are particularly high. This generates many land conflicts whose resolution requires the involvement of the elderly, holders of cultural, social, economic and symbolic capital. It is to better understand the social utility of the elderly through their contribution to the resolution of these land conflicts that five villages where these conflicts are very recurrent were selected for this study (Figure 1).

The investigations were carried out in 5 villages in this region. In an essentially qualitative approach, sampling by reasoned choice made it possible to retain these villages. This non-probability sampling procedure consisted in selecting participants, that is to say villages where land conflicts are rife. The choice of these villages was made on the basis of data provided by the customary authorities of the said region. The 10 senior actors aged 60 or over from these five villages are considered typical of the target population. They were chosen on the basis of specific criteria such as their participation in the settlement of land conflicts of the intra-family and inter-community type despite the existence of a modern conflict settlement system (Police, Gendarmerie, Sub-Prefecture, etc). Thus, this qualitative sample was oriented or targeted rather than drawn at random. In total, the study involved 30 actors, including 10 aged 60 or over made up of village chiefs and their notables who constitute the target population. To these are added 2 judicial authorities and 3 officials of the land service and cadastre of the Ministry of Construction and Urbanization of the Djuablin region; they constitute the expert population. 5 leaders

of allochthonous and non-native communities, 5 leaders of women's associations and 5 leaders of youth associations and executives from different villages constitute the control population. The choice of these collective and institutional actors is justified by their regular and experienced involvement in the resolution of land conflicts in this region. The study used tools such as semi-structured individual and group interview guides. Over a discontinuous period of three months, from March 11 to June 15, 2020, these interviews were carried out with the individual, collective and institutional actors indicated earlier. The individual interviews carried out according to the availability of the respondents were recorded using a dictaphone. With these interviewees, the interviews concerned the following themes that furnish the interview guide: social representations of land among the Agni of Djuablin; the origins, nature and typologies of land conflicts; the roles played by older people in resolving conflicts over land management. The use of manual counting as a process seemed more suited to the thematic analysis of the interview guides. It has a considerable advantage in the categorization of the variables of the different themes, in order to better appreciate the responses collected in the field of investigation. The choice of manual analysis is also justified by the fact that the study is part of a qualitative approach. Clearly, the analysis of the data collected followed the following process: transcription of the data recorded by seizure from the Microsoft Office Word 2007 software; preparation of files with codes that can identify the transcription of the interviews of the respondents; grouping of interviews by topic; construction of analysis categories and significance units. This qualitative approach involves a content analysis. This analysis turns out to be necessary and judicious as far as understanding the retention of seniors in this transitional society is concerned.

RESULTS

The main results of this research revolve around three major points: social representations of land among the Agni of Djuablin; the origins, natures and typologies of land conflicts; the roles played by the elderly in resolving conflicts over land management.

Social representations of land among the Agni of Djuablin

Land, an inalienable good

For most of the Agni of Djuablin, land is a fundamental wealth. It contains all the values on the political, economic, religious and cultural levels. For them, owning land is a power because it contributes to the permanence of their social organization. Seniors express themselves in these terms:

"On our land, our ancestors from Ghana settled. They arrived in Ivory Coast around the 1680s. Since those ancient times, they have organized all our royalty, our lineages, our great families and even our lives, from generation to generation around these lands. These are our possessions and we cannot pass them on or give them up to anyone" (AE, 93 years old).
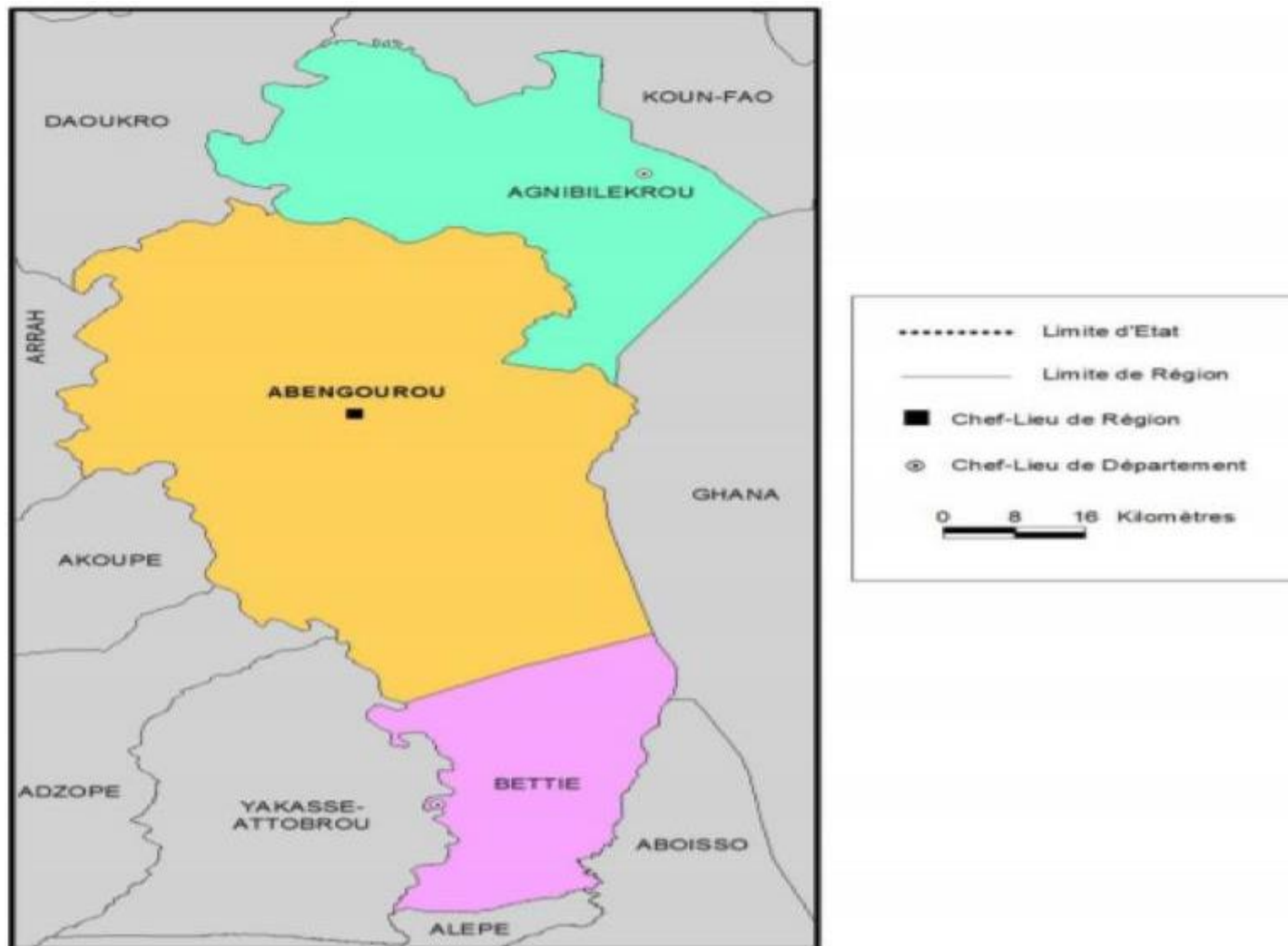
Figure 1. Location of Agnibilekro in the Indenie-Djuabin region.
Source: General Population and Housing Census (RGPH), 2014, Côte d'Ivoire.

From this speech, it emerges that the social, political, economic, religious and cultural organization of the Agni of Djuablin takes place around their lands. One can easily understand the extent and recurrence of the conflicting social relations that are structured around the land in this region. The land is therefore presented as an inalienable good for this people.

The earth, synonymous with "soul", life, wealth, reproduction of social identity

In Agni society, the earth is seen as "the soul". Indeed, the yam tuber, for example cultivated in the ground, is ideologically and symbolically represented there. This tuber therefore occupies a prominent place in this society. The yam festival, which is held annually there,

allows these peoples to worship their land and their ancestors who bequeathed it to them as an asset and inheritance. The soul is also the spirit or the relationship that visible actors have with invisible actors (spirits, ancestors, diviners, etc). And, generally, it is the land that is worshiped and that constitutes this point of contact between the two groups of actors. Life, wealth and even identity reproduction stem from the quality of this relationship between these actors. The following speech by a patriarch illustrates this well:

"The earth is our soul! It is through her that we come into contact with our spirits, diviners and ancestors. We do nothing without invoking them. They are the ones who left us the land. Our success in everything we do comes from them. The land is therefore our whole life, it is our wealth, it is the heritage of the Agni. You can recognize

the Agni by its land, its large plantations and its riches" (ET, 91 years old).

In short, owning land makes it possible to acquire material wealth which confers social prestige. The earth organizes social life or certain aspects of life are organized around the earth.

The origins, nature and typologies of land conflicts

In the Agni villages of Djuablin, land disputes have several origins. Among these, economic, cultural and political causes have emerged from the discourse. The following are noted.

Political causes linked to the absence of texts after the independence of Côte d'Ivoire

During the accession of the Ivory Coast to independence, a period essentially characterized by an absence of texts specifically governing the matter, it was thought that all the land was vacant. Freedom was thus given to all those who wished to occupy and exploit the plots of land which interested them, as long as they had the means to acquire them. The latter could all the more claim to own the said lands, especially since their approach had been favored or encouraged by political will. The following speech situates us on the question:

"Foreigners have come to settle on our land because the first President of the Republic said that the land belongs to whoever develops it. It was this law that created all the problems we have today with those who came to settle on the land our parents left us" (K.A., 88).

This speech highlights the complaint about illegal land tenure by migrants in the aftermath of Côte d'Ivoire's independence. To add to this, another denounces Ivorian civil law which favors the subsidiary succession of property to the detriment of customary law which is organized around the matrilineal system.

Cultural and economic causes: Succession systems challenged by conflicts of interest

The system of succession among the Agni follows the logic of the system of matriclans. The goods are constituted within the framework of matrilineage and are managed there by the patriarchs. This is what this elder expressed in these terms:

"With us, goods like land and plantations remain in the family. And it is the elders who manage them and who appoint the heirs. It is first the brother of the deceased who is designated as heir, and after that come the

nephews, that is to say the sons of the sister of the deceased. But with the new law, it is the children of the deceased brother who must inherit. It is this law that sent a lot of land issues to our Agni families and villages" (A.J., 81 years old).

From these different discourses, it emerges that the migratory phenomenon experienced by this border region and the juxtaposition of two contradictory legal systems (customary and modern) in their execution, combined with economic and social issues, have generated enough land conflicts in the region (Djuablin region). The subject of these conflicts is precisely about exploitable land.

The modification of the social environment, a consequence of urbanization

The modification of the social environment, consequent to the urbanization which inserted the village into the city, modified the economy of the village based on agricultural activity. For the respondents, the villages of Djuablin knew until very recently the existence of traditional plantation zones with the cultures of coffee, cocoa and other industrial cash crops, such as oil palm, sweet banana, as well as food crops such as cassava and yams. Urbanization has therefore acted as a brake on the development of sustainable agriculture by occupying village lands. The break with this type of economy took place at a rapid pace in the late 1960s in the Agni villages with the corollary of many conflicts. According to the respondents, a land conflict is necessarily linked to land. The evocation of the term conflict is associated with a certain number of words, namely palaver, history, dispute, disagreement, opposition, antagonism, belligerence with a person or a group of people. The following speech situates us:

"In our villages, there are too many palaver because of the land: palaver in families between nephews and their maternal uncles, palaver between children and their cousins, palaver between villagers and strangers. Eeeeeh! It's too much. And that tires us old people. We spend all of our time settling issues between people" (BK, 87 years old).

It can be seen that the words used by the respondents refer to the different manifestations of land conflicts. In other words, they gave indicators of land conflicts, that is to say a social definition of conflict. On analysis, we realize that it necessarily takes another person for there to be a conflict. As a result, the land conflict could be understood as a social relationship. The social components within the framework of this research refer to the following conflict elements: actors, motives, manifestations. Two types of conflicts emerge as the

following.

Intra-group or intra-family conflicts: Within the same group or within a family. In this case, the conflicts are generally between the nephews and the sons of the deceased (ascendant), members of the same family, members of two families or two neighbors. The different types of conflict are based on the actors of the conflict in relation to the social unit of reference: the group.

"Our customs here do not suit widows and their children at all. When a woman loses her husband, she is stripped of everything (plantation, forest, house ...) because it is neither for her nor her children to inherit the property left by the husband or biological father. It's the old people who decide everything. Very often the widow is sent home with her children. So today, with the new laws, women and their children are also standing up to claim property. And that sends a lot of problems to families and villages. There's even death in it all. People can kill you for inheritance" (Group interview, women and young people).

For the village authorities interviewed, intra-family conflicts are the most frequent in Djuablin. In fact, from various and multifaceted causes, these conflicts involve various actors: men and women, whether young or old, from the same family or the same clan. This is how we have either land disputes between nephews or between sons and nephews.

Intergroup conflicts: Between two or more groups (ethnic, religious, political), intracommunity or intergroup conflicts are conflicts between families or ethnic communities. They are modest compared to other types of land disputes in Djuablin. For OS (54 years old, non-native),

"When whoever gave you the land to cultivate dies, that's where the problems start with the heirs. The solution is to do the papers ... But even that too, there is too much palaver in it."

In short, for village authorities, executives and young people, land disputes between families and between neighboring communities concern family lands, clans whose limits are historically already known by each family or clan. For them, conflict occurs when there is encroachment, either voluntarily or through ignorance, on the plots of one family by another family. Depending on the oldest member and the village chief, conflicts can also arise from donations and rental contracts and sales of disputed land, depending on whether a member of a family acquires a parcel of land by donation or by rental of land from another family member. The non-recognition of the legitimacy of this donation or of the rental clauses by a member of the donor family is a source of conflict.

The roles played by older people in resolving conflicts over land management

According to the respondents, in the socio-political system of Djuablin, the mode of settlement of these conflicts depends on the customary and legislative systems in force.

The customary system

Both in other sectors of social life and in the context of land, the company Agni du Djuablin has a legal frame of reference on which its operations are based. This system gives rights to seniors in the sense that they are the ones who hold the decision-making power. In this customary system, ownership is collective. Only families can own the land. As this patriarch aptly put it:

"With us, the inheritance takes place in the large family, and it is the eldest sibling who we designate as heir. If he is not there, it is the eldest nephew of the same-mother sister that we choose as our heir. Not all of the deceased's sons, daughters and wives can inherit. And it is we Patriarchs who play this role" (NJ, 89 years old).

From this speech, it emerges that the roles of the elderly, according to the customary system, consist in the choice of the heirs of inheritance and patrimonial assets. They must, in this way, ensure that these goods, consisting mainly of land and plantations, effectively remain in the family. Any conflict arising from the use of the earth's space finds its frame of reference within families. Apart from them, the village authorities are involved.

The legislative system

In their attempt to resolve conflicts, they are relayed to the competent institutional actors, in case the village authorities feel limited.

"We are working together with the village authorities in resolving land disputes which are very recurrent in this border region in Ghana. The region is very fertile and attracts many migrants. The problem is that the people have their customs which have nothing to do with the legal and legal provisions with which we work. Perceptions of conflicts are different as to their origins and the ways and means of resolving them. But, we always end up getting along" (Group interview, Judicial authorities and Land and Cadastre Service).

Recourse to the legislative mechanism intervenes in matters of intra-community land conflict when the traditional procedure has failed or is contested by one of the parties. Here, it is made right to the legitimate beneficiaries in the event of succession to the property

on the basis of presentation of the supporting documents (will, title of property, title of land). Its application in a cultural framework dominated by custom remains particularly difficult with the opportunistic behavior of certain land stakeholders. Often the decisions rendered by the authorities (prefect, judge) are contested by one or the other party who then finds the opportunity to take refuge in custom. This is how the customary authorities made up of elders are called upon again by the actors to settle disputes that have not yet been resolved.

Also, the settlement of land disputes by the elders obeys certain rules and procedures. According to respondents, settlement procedures are generally done amicably. Or, the parties do not spontaneously resort to modern legislation. The elders are the first to be seized because they know the history of the families' lands. However, their decisions are still not perceived as objective due to their tendency to favor certain actors, with reference to custom, to the detriment of others disqualified by custom but legitimized by civil law.

Likewise, before the customary authorities, disputes are settled amicably on the basis of socio-legal logics lying halfway between customary law and land regulations. This amalgamation of two systems obeys the concern of institutional actors to find a solution likely to ease the social tensions resulting from land conflicts. Actors therefore have a wide range of regulatory bodies that they can call upon. In addition, we note that recourse to a body obeys the objectives and interests pursued by these actors. Indeed, individuals who have more confidence in habits and customs bring the conflict to customary bodies when they are certain of winning their case, while those who claim modern law seize either the court or the prefecture. It is therefore not easy to determine or define a trajectory followed by individuals. This shows the complexity of land disputes. In the process of settling land disputes at the customary court, the college of notables designates certain notables to conduct an investigation which will consist in collecting testimonies and making visits to sites, the subject of litigation.

It is in light of the survey data that the customary court deliberates. In short, words and empirical observation form the basis of the settlement of land disputes by the elderly. Given that speech is the pledge or symbolic referent in any process of seeking a solution to conflicts in this society, it is important to dwell on the social status of speech activated by the elderly in order to establish their influence in the conflict resolution.

DISCUSSION

From the analysis of the results obtained, the following points will emerge which will be the subject of the discussion: ideological productions associated with land as sources of conflicts, contradictions between customary and modern legal systems as sources of

conflicts, social prestige linked to the status of the elderly as a facilitator in the settlement of land disputes.

Ideological productions (beliefs, values, practices, standards) associated with land as sources of conflict

Ideology is defined as an intellectual and symbolic construction having a relationship with social behavior and the material life of social groups (Bourdon and Bourricaud, 2015). Ideology can designate what causes social actors to take as true normative propositions that are in essence and unprovable, and positive propositions which can be either unprovable or not demonstrated.

These authors believe that ideologies are constructions serving as a support for collective action and corresponding to specific issues; whether it is the strengthening of the cohesion of an institution, the legitimization of conduct and commitments or even the demonstration of merits.

About the land, in fact, Kobo says this: "Formerly perceived as a collective, inalienable good or a genitor deity, the land is above all, now an instrument, a source of enrichment or of affirmation of its ethnic identity (Kobo, 2003). Investigations in the villages of Djuablin show that the land for the Agni is a source of enrichment and above all an affirmation of their ethnic identity. As perceived in the imagination of Agni society, the earth is comparable to the "soul" and this allows it to exist socially. The earth is sacred because it is a gift from God. Each piece of land is owned by spirits, geniuses from whom men must ask permission before settling there. It is on her that the peoples settle. The land "is all of life, it is wealth, it is the heritage of the Agni." Therefore, we understand the close relationship of this people to the land. For populations, land constitutes a structuring element in the social reproduction of their identity. With regard to land disputes between nephews, the Agni company is a company with a matrilineal system. In this system, it is the eldest nephew who is allowed to inherit from his maternal uncle. This means that as long as the eldest is alive the younger must always wait. In addition, if it happens that while this younger brother is working with his uncle that elder is absent, when the uncle dies the application of inheritance standards often proves to be conflicting.

Because, these two situations will lead the cadet to categorically oppose this situation which he describes as unfair. According to respondents, conflicts between sons and nephews or uncles are the most frequent and violent. Also, in a society where women only have indirect access to land through their children, they play an important role in these conflicts. Very often forgotten after widowhood, the deceased's wife can count on her children to feed her before she enters into another marriage. They then activate the antagonism between various children and their uncle or nephew. For their part,

the sisters of the deceased constitute the opposing party supporting the nephews. They are protectors of tradition when it is favorable to them. Rightly or wrongly, they support one side or the other. Based on this observation, the relationship between sons and nephews deteriorated. From there, these relationships are now conflicting in the sense that the sons no longer trust the nephews who refer to customary norms, while the sons refer to the law, that is to say to the administrative authorities. This divergence of views most often leads the parties to the conflict to resort to practices that are not recommended, that is to say magico-religious or occult practices in order to bend the adversary. In these conflicts which thus ensue between the nephews and the sons of the deceased, a solution is always found in the end for the conflicting parties, even if it may take years. Compromises emerge after discussion, but it is unfortunate that conflicts only subside after death on the side of the conflicting parties. In the sense that, in the way man cannot detach himself from his soul during his lifetime, in the same way the Agni cannot also detach himself from the earth at the risk of seeing their land disappear. This is why it cannot be permanently transferred to any individual who does not belong to the community. The land suddenly appears as the symbol of the cultural identity of this people for its social reproduction. Reproduction should therefore be the object of a lot of wisdom and finesse because the question of the land is very sensitive and the elders are, suddenly, the social category empowered to negotiate, to resolve conflicts because of experience acquired and mastery of the history of the people as well as land issues. This social representation of the land is a very important fact that has been taken into account in the socio-political organization.

Contradictions between customary and modern legal systems as sources of conflict

In the aftermath of independence, a famous political slogan according to which "the land belongs to those who developit" was launched by Félix Houphouët-Boigny. It is in this context and in this logic that a rural land code was voted on March 20, 1963. However, this text which ignored the habits and customs observed in most of our regions, further contributed to create tensions (Dagrou, 2005). It is therefore this legal vacuum, which had lasted too long, that Law No. 98-750 of 23 December 1998 establishing the Rural Land Code is supposed to fill. Its main objective is to bring order to this very sensitive area. It has the merit of specifying the rules and principles which will henceforth govern the occupation and exploitation of the land. It made it possible to circumscribe the latent or latent conflicts which undoubtedly found their source in the "legal vagueness", that is to say in the absence of specific texts applicable in the matter. In addition, there are many

conflicts of interest in the succession systems in the Agni company. Customary societies are governed by two systems of succession and inheritance, the matrilineal system and the patrilineal system. The principles established at the level of these systems allow the transmission, without too many obstacles, of the family patrimony from one generation to another. Conflicts appear only between statutory beneficiaries of the inheritance. In matrilineal society, the first order of succession is the uterine brother, followed by the nephews (the sons of the mother's sister). This disposition is justified among all Akan whose system is matrilineal by the evocation of the story of Queen Abla Pokou. By passing the goods on to his brother or to a uterine nephew, one is sure that the good remains in the lineage and is managed by a relative (Koné and Kouamé, 2000). Thus, the modification of the sociological structure of the family, which is no longer totally governed by customary rules, renders inoperative the various legal registers on which potential heirs rely to ensure their right to inheritance and to the devolution of property prevails. Upon the death of a spouse, especially the husband, all latent or manifest conflicts of interest are revealed in all their contradictions. The conflict of legal systems (customary versus modern) has the consequences of weakening or completely destroying the unity of the family. Special interests take precedence over the need to preserve the cohesion of yesteryear. Succession disputes, which can take years to resolve, deprive children of the resources to meet their needs. It is the same when customary rules come to be imposed. Women and children are then stripped of everything without the heirs assuming the responsibilities imposed on them by custom: caring for widows and children. Thus, since the adoption of Law No. 64-379 of October 1964 relating to inheritance, another system of inheritance has come to be juxtaposed to the old one without ever having been able to replace it, nor to dominate it completely. In this context of dynamic social relations, having regard to political, social and cultural changes, the reference systems of the actors put on hold the beginnings of a rupture between the woman with her children and the in-laws. On this basis, customary law is intended to be the benchmark instrument in terms of the management and distribution of inheritance goods in the Djuablin. The preeminence of custom thus responds to a strategy of reproducing the village cultural identity, in a customary system losing its marks and landmarks. These contradictions between the legal systems (customary versus modern) are marked by land conflicts as to the latent or manifest interests of the competing actors. These land conflicts in Djuablin manifest themselves in fights, killings, witchcraft, curses, fetishism and poisoning. As for the actors, the conflicts are generally between the nephews and the sons of the deceased (ascendant), members of the same family, members of two families or two neighbors. With regard to the reasons mentioned, the customary mode

of succession or inheritance, land management, contestation of land ownership, emerged from the speeches of the interviewees. In addition to these elements, there is confusion or ignorance of the land code, the application of the 1964 law on inheritance, the grabbing of land by the elders or the wealthy and the sale of family land. From the reasons mentioned by the respondents, two types of causes emerge: the causes linked to the logics of the actors and the structural causes, that is to say those independent of the actors. The causes linked to the logics of the actors concern the sale of family land, the contestation of land ownership and the grabbing of land by the elders or the well-to-do. These causes linked to the logics of the actors are apparently without any issue of conflict. They bring together two logics: individual logics or collective logics. In the imaginary Agni, the land belongs not to the individual but to the family. The deed of sale would then be nonsense and rightly a disregard of this provision, hence the obvious conflict. Moreover, the seizure of land by the elders deconstructs the ideology of the community to establish an individual logic of land appropriation that is based on non-collective properties (capital, cultural, symbolic, economic, etc). As for the structural causes, they refer to the customary mode of succession or inheritance, that is to say the application of the 1964 law on inheritance. It is then that contradictions appear in the articulation between the customary instances of conflict management. According to legal and administrative logic, in fact, succession and inheritance are passed on from father to son, while customary authorities establish the uterine route. Updating this contradiction due to the economic issues involved is reflected in conflicts of succession. The possibilities offered by this contradiction theoretically put the logics of the actors on the back burner and paradoxically contribute to opposing them. Therefore, two systems (customary and modern) that claim to be universal coexist while being mutually exclusive, and their reproduction only promotes conflicts within the Agni community. Thus the sometimes intergenerational social interactions around the land are marked by conflicts because due to urbanization, economic activities, such as agriculture and fishing no longer exist, and the land remains the only source of wealth for present and future generations. In other words, the social and economic issues as set out are sufficient to justify the climate of conflict maintained in the land arena. This duality of land ownership by the state and by the villagers carries the seeds of conflict situations in view of the decisive issues of land.

Social prestige linked to the status of the elderly as a facilitator in the settlement of land disputes

Social status is the place that a person occupies in the social structure. In Agni society, the place of elders is therefore culturally defined. If the statute emphasizes the legal and social situation, the role, for its part, emphasizes the tasks to be assumed and the expected behaviors. The role of elders therefore consists, on the whole, of behaviors that are legitimately expected of them. Their role in society is above all linked to their status as an old man, as a patriarch. In the socio-political system of Djuablin, the status of senior citizen reserves privileges to senior citizens. In this, the outward sign of this prestige is the renewed honor of the elders. All decision-making sessions, meetings in the village are chaired absolutely by the deans. They are the ones who solemnly open the sessions and the clauses. They are not subject to contributions and do not go to war. So, through the office of the dean, we celebrate the seizure of power by the old people. During the ceremony an emphasis is placed on age, proof that everything is done to celebrate old age (Dayoro and Kacou, 2010). In the field of land disputes, the elders are thus considered as people of experience, "who have lived, who have seen and who know…". In this sense, therefore, they become a reference (Tanoh, 2014). Indeed, the land appears in Agni society as the symbol of the cultural identity of this people for its social reproduction. Reproduction should therefore be the subject of a great deal of wisdom and finesse. And, the question of the land being very sensitive, the elders are, suddenly, the social category empowered to negotiate, to resolve conflicts because of the experience acquired and the mastery of the history of the people as well as of the problems earthen. In view of the aforementioned, it emerges that, by virtue of their status, the elderly play important roles in the settlement of land disputes in the Djuablin region. The settlement of these land disputes is also related to the social prestige attached to their status as an elderly person, as a patriarch. And this privileged status of seniors can be seen on several levels. From a legal standpoint, for example, the oldest member has all the powers necessary to resolve disputes (Tanoh, 2014). Indeed, it represents the last legal authority of the village; hence his decision to dispossess a stakeholder of a piece of land and reassign it to another without appeal. Economically, the community is organizing itself to meet its needs so that it can easily perform its functions, including the settlement of land disputes. This is how in Djuablin, there are goods whose profits are mobilized to support it. Socially, under the palaver tree, the announcement of the arrival of the oldest member de facto commands members of the community to remain silent until he settles down. On the occasion of the assemblies, the elders have a special place reserved for them and they receive distinguished greetings from other social categories of the community due to their status. Regarding the management of village affairs such as land disputes, the dean has directly under his orders and services all generations of the village. In this way, the

Agni society, through the oldest member, covers the elderly with laurel. Thus, the first palm that she offers to the elderly is the highest and honorary office of governor (dean of the village). Added to this are all the attributes of power, such as kaolin, cane and fly swatches which tend to worship the elderly since they refer to the religious field. Horizontally, the oldest member is the first of the Agni and vertically the extension of the ancestors, in that they hold the cultural heritage of the society. This relationship with the divinity constitutes a source of legitimization of the power of the elderly of Djuablin in the resolution of conflicts and in particular land disputes. This religious power makes the elderly intermediaries between members of society and ancestors. Thus, whether within the family, the generation and the village, its actions and opinions in relation to the settlement of these conflicts are decisive. All these social prestiges linked to their status, which are recognized in families and in other villages, make it easier for the elderly to settle land disputes in the Djuablin region.

Conclusion

The objective of this research was to analyze the social participation of the elderly in the settlement of land disputes in the Djuablin region. The qualitative approach was used and thanks to the sampling by reasoned choice, five (5) villages where land conflicts are rife on a recurring basis served as a geographical field for the research. Semi-structured individual and group interviews were conducted with 30 actors including 10 aged 60 or over (village chiefs and notables) and 20 other collective and institutional actors. The thematic analysis of the speeches of the interviewees highlighted the roles played by the elderly in terms of social participation. It is essentially a question of ensuring the safeguard of the family and community patrimonial and inheritance assets on which they are established as custodians. In this context, therefore, the choice of heirs is their responsibility, in strict compliance with customary law which governs the Agni du Djuablin company. They are thus responsible for settling all types of conflicts, in particular land disputes resulting from the procedure of succession, dispossession and reappropriation of land. The study also showed that the Agni of Djuablin variously represent the land as an inalienable good, soul, life, wealth and the reproduction of social identity. And, it is precisely around the earth that conflicts are structured. The conflicts observed in Djuablin are the consequence of the dualism of the systems and standards of reference of the actors in a field of competition where the various actors mobilize resources and capital according to their social positions. In such a situation, the participation of the elderly in the settlement of land disputes should be encouraged in Côte d'Ivoire; hence the social significance of the study. This social participation takes place with regard to the capital held by the elderly and the symbolic power recognized and legitimized by the social actors of the reference space. Beyond this social scope, the study is also intended to contribute to the reflection on the status and social roles of the elderly in Côte d'Ivoire. This is the basis for the scientific scope of the study. In perspective, this research could be deepened by broadening the geographic and social fields to all Agni regions of the Ivory Coast in order to better understand this social reality.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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Towards meaningful social development in the covid-19 era: Strategies for capacity building in a gang-affected community in Port Elizabeth (Gqeberha), South Africa

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At the second think-tank session of the Helenvale Dialogues initiative held in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, in May 2018, the main theme of the session focused on scenario planning for the community of Helenvale, regarded as one of the most fragile and volatile communities in Port Elizabeth. The author, as an invited member of the think-tank, engaged in group discussions with other attendees, with the aim of outlining three possible scenarios for where the Helenvale community could find itself by 2030. None of the scenarios predicted the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic which began in 2020, and wreaked havoc across the country and globally. Within this context, this article highlights what the author considers to be three key focus areas for meaningful capacity building and social development in the community, in order to avoid the most negative scenario that could impact on Helenvale, particularly within the "new normal" of the Covid-19 environment. Attention is given particularly to the challenge of gangsterism and gang violence, one of the most serious issues affecting the community.

Key words: Social development, capacity building, Covid-19, gangsterism, gang violence, urban upgrading initiative, community coaching, negative subculture, indigenous knowledge, Port Elizabeth (Gqeberha).

INTRODUCTION

Gangs and gang violence, as well as the many challenges associated with them, affect various communities throughout the world. Indeed, scholars such as Hagedorn (2005:153) have asserted that gangs are significant worldwide phenomenon and they are directly linked to the effects of globalisation. Hence, both in the developed and developing world, gangs are not only found but have a marked impact on the communities in which they are found. Given the worldwide occurrence of gangs, South Africa is not excluded from the myriad countries where gangs present a challenge to established authority. Gangs are found in various communities throughout South Africa. However, media reports seem to suggest that particular regions and particular communities are the most adversely affected by gangs. For example, the Cape Flats communities of the Western Cape Province are regarded as the most prolific gang-affected areas in the country. In a report by Dolley (2017), the former Minister of Police, Fikile Mbalula, singled out the Hard Livings gang, which has 'strongholds in several Cape Town suburbs', as one of the most dangerous formations in Cape Town. In the same report,

it was also mentioned that the Hard Livings group had been involved in a turf war with two other prominent gangs, namely the Sexy Boys and the 28s. Between April 2016 and March 2017, almost 100 gang-related murders had occurred in another Cape Flats suburb, Bishop Lavis, widely regarded as a stronghold of the 28s gang (Dolley, 2017).

In addition to the Western Cape, the Eastern Cape Province is also regarded as a region affected by gangs. In particular, the northern suburbs of Port Elizabeth in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality are the most affected by gangs. In a report by Sain (2018), a suspected gang-related shooting had occurred in the residential area of Shauderville. It was alleged that the three victims of the shooting were members of a gang known as the China Ah Shene, and they were in conflict with another group called the *Spotbouers* which is the group that the alleged shooter belonged to. A 2016 report revealed that, according to local police statistics, there had been a notable increase in gang-related shootings and violence between 2012 and 2016. Furthermore, police noted that the Gelvandale and Bethelsdorp precincts, where twenty-one known gangs were in operation, were leading the upward trend (Van Aardt, 2016).

Arguably the most notorious residential area in the northern suburbs of Port Elizabeth, and the one that many regard as the centre of gangsterism in the whole city, is Helenvale. Ironically, the community is also one that has been singled out for fast-tracked development initiatives. Despite these efforts, the community remains volatile and susceptible to ongoing gang violence. According to Capa (2018), development projects in Helenvale had ground to a halt for a period of at least six months (between December 2017 and June 2018) 'as workers fear for their safety because of the gang violence in the area.' As a consequence, the Mandela Bay Development Agency (MBDA) was struggling to meet project completion targets. As one strategy to overcome these challenges, the MBDA organised a think-tank or colloquium entitled the *Helenvale Dialogues*, in which invited academics, development practitioners, law enforcement officials and others were tasked with developing strategies to address the on-going development challenges in Helenvale (Helenvale Dialogues Series, 2018).

The issues discussed in this article are to be understood in relation to the above-mentioned context, as well as the social impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The author, as one of the invited participants in the 2018 *Helenvale Dialogues* symposium, identified three key areas that are critical for meaningful capacity building and development in the community. This article seeks to elaborate on each of these key areas, and argues that all three of them would need to be addressed in order to improve the success of development initiatives in Helenvale, as well as contribute to building meaningful citizenship within the community. Building this capacity, it is argued, would be an invaluable resource to enabling community resilience in the wake of on-going social challenges, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The discussion is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data was gathered mainly through the well-known anthropological method of participant-observation (PO). The author was invited to be a participant in the think-tank session, along with other stakeholders and community representatives. While participating in the discussions, the author was able to acquire significant information about the contemporary context of Helenvale, and the possible future scenarios that the community could face. Observation enabled the author to detach from the dialogues and conversations and reflect on the deliberations as an outsider. The information garnered from observation provided the complementary etic perspective, enabling the author to apply an analytical and critical lens to the scenario planning.

Secondary data, used primarily to complement the data gained from PO, and to provide much needed context to the issues under discussion, was gathered from relevant literature. This did not only included scholarly works, but also news articles and other online sources deemed relevant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following is a discussion of the author's reflections and analysis of the data gathered through participant-observation and study of the relevant literature.

Outline of the challenge of gangsterism and gang violence in Helenvale

While there has been little scholarly research on gangs in the northern areas of Port Elizabeth, compared to what has been done in the Western Cape, recent works by Petrus and Kinnes (2018) have outlined the nature and scope of the challenge of gangsterism in Port Elizabeth. Recent reports on gang violence in Port Elizabeth asserted that gang-related murders were intensifying, particularly in the communities of Helenvale and Gelvandale. In addition, the increase in gang violence appears to have been linked to the trial of a Dustlifes gang leader, who was facing triple murder charges in Port Eizabeth (Paulse, 2018). In the same report it was indicated that there were seventeen gangs operating in the northern areas, and that drugs remain instrumental in young children turning to gangsterism (Paulse, 2018). However, the context of gangsterism in the northern areas is more complex than only involving drugs as a push factor for youths to join gangs.

There were historical and contemporary factors that have significantly impacted on the extent of gangsterism in the northern areas of Port Elizabeth. These factors underpinned the context of gangsterism. One of these

factors was past and present coloured identity dynamics in the communities of the northern areas. The vast majority of the inhabitants of the northern areas are predominantly coloured people, and this has been the demographic of the northern areas since their creation under the Apartheid Group Areas legislation. According to an online information repository for the northern areas, the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth [are] a historically Coloured demarcated residential area (Napedia, 2018). The designation of the northern areas as a coloured group area was linked to another piece of Apartheid legislation, the Population Registration Act of 1950. This legislation segregated South African citizens into identifiable races. The 'coloured' category was created for persons of mixed race who could not be included in the white, African or Asian categories. Many scholars of coloured identity, including Du Pre (1992a, 1992b), Erasmus (2001), Adhikari (2002, 2004, 2006, 2008), and Petrus (2018) have put forward arguments that coloured identity was much more than merely race or ethnicity, and that the complexities surrounding the identity have endured from the colonial and apartheid eras, and into the post-apartheid context. For the purposes of the current discussion, it suffices to indicate that the consequences of the dynamics of coloured identity, which include perceptions of marginalisation and negative views of coloured heritage, have created a social context that not only creates but reinforces gangsterism.

A second factor underpinning the context of gangsterism in the northern areas concerns the negative and, in some cases, even destructive subcultures that prevail in communities such as Helenvale. Three of these identifiable subcultures include the gang subculture, the stone-throwing subculture among school-going youths, and the subculture of poverty. While each of these subcultures is discussed in more detail later, it is necessary to point out here that the symbiotic relationship between each of these subcultures creates an enabling environment for gangsterism. Some aspects of the gang subculture have already been alluded to earlier in the discussion. While marginality, or perceptions of marginality, is a key aspect of the gang subculture, there are also other aspects, such as stigmatisation and the notion that gangs occupy an ambivalent position in their communities. Despite gangs being perceived negatively by community residents, they have nevertheless been able to integrate themselves into the social organisation of their community, mainly by 'establishing themselves as critical institutions of provision'. In other words, particularly the larger, more established and more organised gangs have been able to fill the vacuum left by the failure of legitimate structures to provide services to marginalised communities such as Helenvale. In the contemporary context, where many government institutions are characterised by rampant corruption and non-delivery of key basic services, gangs have, to a certain extent, hijacked some of these functions.

This has placed them in an ambivalent position: on the one hand they are viewed as criminal organisations that threaten the safety and security of residents; yet, on the other, they fulfil a role that legitimate structures are unable to.

A third factor, one that emerged in 2020, is the impact of the lockdown restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Although the national lockdown was intended to prevent further infection of the pandemic, as well as maintain law and order in communities, ironically, in Helenvale, it had the opposite effect, particularly in relation to gang-related crime. According to Daniels (2021), the lockdown in the northern areas of Port Elizabeth (which includes Helenvale), had 'done nothing to ease the level of crime and violence the people of the northern areas endure. Rival gangs exchange gun fire on a daily basis while women and children suffer under spiralling gender-based crimes.' This conclusion was reached following a two-day visit by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) to the area. The Human Rights Commissioner, Chris Nissen, stated that 'Gangsterism is glorified in the area', and that gang culture was entrenched (Daniels, 2021). Despite lockdown regulations, gang violence and other crimes continued, thereby implying that the lockdown exacerbated ongoing socio-economic challenges in the community.

Efforts to address social, economic and safety issues in Helenvale: the Safety and Peace through Urban Upgrading (SPUU) initiative

In an effort to address the challenge of gangs in Helenvale, the municipal authorities and political leadership of Port Elizabeth proceeded to fast-track urban development in the northern areas, and prioritised Helenvale due to the extent of the problems created by the lack of development in the area. Consequently, in 2012 a joint initiative between the South African and German governments was launched, with the express aim of curbing crime and violence in Port Elizabeth, as well as introducing opportunities for development and urban upgrading in priority areas. Hence, the Safety and Peace through Urban Upgrading (SPUU) programme was implemented, and Helenvale was identified as the target community for the project (SPUU Inception Report and Masterplan, 2014).

The SPUU initiative was envisioned to follow a dual approach to development in Helenvale. This dual approach involved establishing 'soft' social programmes, including crime prevention, as well as the provision of 'hard' infrastructure, specifically safe public open spaces and pedestrian pathways (Helenvale Dialogue Series, 2018: 2). Five project components were identified, namely safety in public space, safety in schools, improved perspectives for youth, reduction in domestic

violence and improvement in living space (housing) (SPUU Inception Report and Masterplan, 2014: 6). However, as said earlier, the implementations of some programmes have been disrupted by gang-related activities, while, almost simultaneously, the socio-economic challenges in Helenvale have increased (Helenvale Dialogue Series, 2018: 2). A further complication is the politicisation of both the urban development initiative and the gang issue. The Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality, which includes Port Elizabeth, has been a highly contested political space for years, with the African National Congress (ANC) and Democratic Alliance (DA) vying for control of the metro, the latter having won the most recent battle in 2016 (Fick, 2016; Spies, 2016). Much like the situation in the Western Cape, the political contestation in Port Elizabeth has negatively affected development and other initiatives aimed at curbing gangsterism and enhancing community safety and security. In fact, some corrupt political officials have been reputed to have used gangs to further their agendas (Petrus and Kinnes 2018). It is thus not too much of a stretch to speculate that recent sabotaging of SPUU development projects in Helenvale may be the result of political manipulation of some gangs in the area.

The above context catalysed the need for a multi-stakeholder colloquium to identify and address the obstacles to the SPUU programmes. As a result, the MBDA's Helenvale Dialogue Series (2018) has sought to bring together experts and other stakeholders in an effort to identify key areas of concern in the implementation of the SPUU initiative, and to suggest alternatives or possible solutions.

The Helenvale Dialogue Series: Scenario planning for 2030

At the heart of the Helenvale colloquium held in March 2018 was scenario planning around what Helenvale would look like by 2030. Several key dimensions were identified and scenario planning was done for each dimension. The scenario planning involved identifying the problems and challenges in each dimension, what the worst case scenario would likely be, and what steps could be taken to avoid such a worst case scenario. The following were the key dimensions identified for scenario planning:

1. Gangs, crime reduction and prevention
2. Identity, social cohesion, sense of community and place
3. Education, skill and youth development
4. Economic development and livelihoods
5. Planning and institutional challenges (Helenvale Dialogue Series, 2018: 5-12)

From the discussions held during the colloquium, various

challenges were highlighted that were deemed to be unique and specific to the Helenvale community. These challenges included:

1. Abnormally high levels of unemployment
2. Poverty
3. Gang-related violence
4. The fractured nature of families
5. Lack of community cohesion
6. Sense of hopelessness (Helenvale Dialogue Series, 2018: 14)

In light of the above, the author identified three key focus areas to improve capacity building in Helenvale, as well as to enhance the effectiveness of development initiatives. The focus areas stem from a holistic view of development challenges in Helenvale.

The three key focus areas for capacity building and development

Life skills training and community coaching

One of the most critical and fundamental aspects necessary to facilitate effective development in a community such as Helenvale is capacity building through critical skills training. Given the already discussed types of social challenges affecting the community, there are two significant areas of capacity building that would benefit and enhance the effectiveness of development programmes. These areas are life skills training and community coaching. Various international studies have highlighted the impact of life skills training on the social and behavioural skills of individuals, particularly children and young adults. According to Kazemi et al. (2014), life skills' training has a positive influence on self-esteem and communication skills. These scholars conducted a quasi-experimental study among forty primary school learners with learning disabilities. In another study, Moshki et al. (2014) found that life skills training had a positive effect on drug abuse preventive behaviours among university students. The above examples suggest that life skills and life skills training are critical components particularly for child and youth development. However, what do the concepts *life skills* and *life skills training* mean? According to the UNICEF (2003), life skills refer to 'psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life'. These skills are loosely grouped into three categories, namely cognitive, personal and interpersonal skills. Furthermore, a life skill training, or life skills education, involves 'a structured programme of needs- and outcomes-based participatory learning that aims to increase positive and adaptive behaviour by assisting individuals to develop and practise psycho-

social skills that minimise risk factors and maximise protective factors' (UNICEF 2003).

In order to address social challenges such as substance abuse, violence and gangsterism, all of which negatively impact on the implementation and effectiveness of development programmes, life skills training is a way of addressing these issues. As indicated, a structured training programme focusing on improving positive and adaptive behaviour among the youth could assist in addressing the social challenges in Helenvale. Arguably, trying to implement development initiatives in a community where many of the residents lack the necessary adaptive skills will have the opposite effect than what may be envisaged. Hence, building the community's capacity by teaching life skills is a viable strategy to improve the effectiveness of development programmes. Linked to life skills training is the related aspect of community coaching. According to Emery et al. (2011: 1), community coaching is a process where the community coach serves as 'a guide who supports communities and organizations in identifying and achieving their goals.' Community coaching is an extension of what is typically referred to as *life coaching*, the main difference being that while life coaching focuses on individuals, community coaching deals with communities and related organisations. Thus, community coaching is most useful within the context of community projects in which the coach plays a supportive and guidance role, rather than prescribing or dictating to the community. Community coaching developed in the United States in the mid-1980s, when a non-profit research and development organisation in North Carolina attempted to increase the speed and success rates of educational reform projects in local communities through the provision of community-based technical assistance (Emery et al., 2011: 5). The success of this strategy led to the organisation using a coaching-based approach in other change initiatives. Within a decade, various rural development practitioners and funders began to incorporate a coaching approach into their community change initiatives (Emery et al., 2011: 6).

Community coaching is based on several fundamental principles that make it indispensable for capacity building and development in communities. First, community coaching is concerned with helping communities to move from a needs-based approach to an asset-based approach. Hence, community coaches 'do not provide answers; they [rather] support capacity building by helping community members…to find their own solutions' (Emery et al., 2011: 9). Secondly, community coaching is based on relationships and a social context. This means that 'Successful coaching requires that all four elements of the [community development/change] equation (funders, intermediaries, coaches and community team members) be in harmony on the goals and processes involved in the project.' (Emery et al., 2011: 10). The third fundamental in community coaching is the emphasis

on co-learning, where coaching shifts from the so-called "expert model" characteristic of individual coaching, to a model based on co-learning and collaboration. The coach does 'not do things for the community, but rather learn[s] with community members about how to build their capacity…' (Emery et al., 2011: 11).

Applied anthropologists who work in the field of development anthropology will immediately see the similarities between community coaching and action anthropology. The anthropologist Sol Tax and his associates are generally credited with the founding of this form of applied anthropology following Tax's work among the Fox Indians of Iowa in the late 1940s (Piddington, 1960: 201; Bennett, 1996: 34). Notwithstanding the critiques levelled against applied anthropology in general, and action anthropology in particular (Bennett, 1996: 30-34, 37-39), the emphasis of action anthropology on the role of the anthropologist as a change agent, and on the wellbeing of the community in which planned change was being implemented, most closely resembles community coaching. As Bennett (1996: 34) stated, action anthropology was about treating community members as 'equal participants', with the view of helping them to find ways of 'solving problems' in their community. The overlap between community coaching and action anthropology is also reflected in what established community coaches regard as one of the key competencies required of the community coach. According to Emery et al. (2011: 16), 'all community coaches must also have grounding in cultural competency in order to relate to and engage with diverse people in a community.' Hence, the combination of community coaching and action anthropology forms a viable strategy for capacity building and community development.

Addressing negative subcultures in the community

The second key focus area to enhance capacity building and development in a fragile community such as Helenvale is to identify and address negative subcultures that have become obstacles to development. There are two negative subcultures that can be identified, namely the subculture of poverty and the stone-throwing subculture among school-going youths. The subculture of poverty was first identified in the anthropological work of Oscar Lewis, who did ethnographic research on poverty among Puerto Ricans in both Puerto Rico and New York (1966). In essence, Lewis argued that certain conditions predisposed poor communities to a 'way of life' that develops into a (sub) culture of poverty. These conditions he identified as persistently high rates of unemployment and underemployment; the failure of society to provide social, political and economic organisation; a bilateral kinship system that favours the nuclear family; the dominant class assertion that stresses upward mobility

and emphasises the accumulation of wealth and property; and the dominant class assertion that low economic status results from individual inferiority and personal inadequacy (Lewis, 1966: 21). Consequently, the subculture of poverty emerges, but the real danger is in the manner in which the subculture perpetuates itself. Once again according to Lewis (1966: 21), 'By the time slum children are six or seven they have usually absorbed the basic attitudes and values of their subculture.' This means that the value system underpinning the subculture of poverty is transferred from one generation to the next, thereby entrenching the subculture. The Helenvale community is characterised by a similar subculture, given the prevailing conditions in the community. The challenges identified in the *Helenvale Dialogue Series*, as outlined above, attest to this. Gangsterism thus forms an integral part of the subculture of poverty, as many youths regard this as the only viable option to escape material poverty. Unfortunately, since gangs are a product of the prevailing subculture, the youths are never able to truly escape, but remain trapped within the subculture.

The stone-throwing subculture appears to be specifically found in the school environment. In Helenvale, 'stone-throwing was not a new or recent phenomenon but formed an integral part of the subculture of gangsterism.' He further argues that stone-throwing and gangsterism existed in a symbiotic relationship, as both were built upon similar value systems. Stone-throwing refers to the subculture where young boys of school-going age form groups and engage in a game of throwing stones at each other. When someone is hurt, then it is expected that the members of his group retaliate. Such a situation has the potential to become violent and to spill out into the streets. Established gangs take interest in these conflicts as they use these incidences as mechanisms for recruitment. The stone-throwing subculture prepares boys for the gangs as it is here where they learn the very same values that underpin the gang lifestyle, namely loyalty to one's group, aggression, retaliation and the internalisation of the 'street code value system'. Both the subculture of poverty and the subculture of stone-throwing are negative subcultures that need to be addressed. These subcultures represent obstacles to capacity building and development. Successful development cannot occur if the negative value system of these subcultures is entrenched in the community.

Harnessing and utilising Indigenous Knowledge (IK) and heritage through cultural education

In line with the above-mentioned principle of helping the community shift towards an asset-based approach, one of the key assets in the Helenvale community is the existing indigenous knowledge. Unfortunately, much of this knowledge remains untapped due to various factors

including the impact of negative perceptions of heritage and identity. Interestingly, this also links to the occurrence of gangsterism in the community. According to Jensen (2008), there is a relationship between gangs in some coloured communities and coloured identity dynamics. For example, the gangs, much like coloured identity itself, are characterised by ambivalence or liminality, meaning that while they are a part of the community, they also are not, because they represent all that is negative about coloured identity. Also, and in line with the point just made, those males who belong to or associate with coloured gangs symbolise the stereotype of the *skollie* (thug) (Jensen 2008: 2-5). The idea of negative stereotypes and meanings attached to coloured identity has been an area of interest for various scholars of coloured history and coloured identity (Du Pre 1992a, 1992b; Adhikari 2006, 2008). These scholars have pointed out that negative perceptions of coloured heritage and identity have continued to be a feature of perceptions of coloured identity, not only by other groups but also by coloured people themselves.

From the above it follows that there is a need for some form of cultural education to address negative perceptions of coloured identity and heritage in vulnerable communities such as Helenvale, and to use such opportunities as a mechanism to encourage the inclusion of heritage and local knowledge in development initiatives. The importance of local or indigenous knowledge in the socio-economic development of local communities has been consistently stressed in national policy documents such as the South African Indigenous Knowledge Systems Policy of 2004. The restoration of a sense of pride in the community will have a positive impact on the mindset of residents, and may help to encourage greater participation in development. This relates to the points made earlier regarding community coaching, where the focus is on utilising local knowledge and local expertise, thereby foregrounding the available assets in the community. This approach is also critical to encourage a bottom-up rather than top-down approach to development. As recently as 2016, some commentators were still of the opinion that development in South Africa was not participatory or democratic, despite the necessary structures being in place (Buccus, 2016). Thus, one way to facilitate a bottom-up development strategy is to include local knowledge and expertise. However, in order to achieve this it is necessary to restore pride in local knowledge and identity.

Conclusion

There are few who would question those vulnerable communities such as the one referred to in this discussion should be prioritised for development initiatives. However, as was shown, development in the community of Helenvale is hampered by challenges such as gangsterism that has not only delayed programmes,

but has also resulted in financial and other resources going to waste. The MBDA's *Helenvale Dialogues* colloquium was designed to find alternatives to address this challenge, specifically through scenario planning. As indicated, the author identified three key areas for capacity building that could potentially aid development programmes in the community. This discussion elaborated on these key areas and aimed to show how each of them could potentially contribute to addressing the underlying concerns that have become obstacles to development. Each of these three focus areas is necessary to develop a holistic strategy. Also, the interconnectedness between each focus area suggests that all three are necessary to address, rather than singling out one or two at the expense of others. By emphasising the identified focus areas, it is possible that meaningful capacity building and development can then be achieved in Helenvale, which ultimately would be a step in the right direction to prevent the worst case scenario of a Helenvale left in the grip of gangsterism and under-development.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interest.

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W.E.B. Du Bois: Prophet of social justice in the 21st Century

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These are times that trouble the soul. American sociologist, pragmatist, and race historian, W.E.B. Du Bois can be helpful in examining and resolving some of the racial and political tensions in the United States. After the lynching of sixty-two African Americans in Atlanta in 1906, Du Bois wrote a year later that the problem of the nineteenth century is the problem of color line. An examination of his' race theory is helpful in the same way as history is instructive. Black history is intertwined and forms with the mosaic of American history. Du Bois as a sociologist cannot be separated from Du Bois as a social activist. His life was one of incessant struggle to challenge the status quo and to expose the contradictory nature of nation's ideals. His intellectual pedigree underscores his political and social activism. Du Bois is relevant today to the secular as well and the religious world in the struggle for social justice. This paper argues that a re-reading of Du Bois should be examined in view of the totality of his own professed religious and spiritual temperament and sensibilities. Du Bois challenges the discipline of sociology to probe into the unexplored dimension of his life and works. This is also a clarion call for young people of all races and ethnicities to interrogate the relevance of his work in addressing social justice. His theory informs his praxis more so today as the nation faces new challenges in post-Obama presidency and the ravaging effects of COVID-19.

Key words: Africanism, double consciousness, Africa, justice inequality, Jim Crow, racism, sociology, prophets, secular.

INTRODUCTION

Whether writing or talking about scientific sociology in the United States, few scholars hardly mention W.E.B. Du Bois even though in the history of the discipline Du Bois was foremost. As the first African American to obtain and earned PhD from Harvard University, his breadth of knowledge and exposure spanned many continents. Morris asserted that "the first school of scientific sociology in the United States was founded by a black professor located in a historically black university in the South (Morris) Du Bois joined Atlanta University in 1897, the year usually deemed to be the starting point of the University of Chicago being the first and the most influential School of Sociology in the United States. Some American universities have challenged this prevailing and accepted view of the primacy of the University of Chicago (Morris, 2015). American academy

has by and large denied the place and position of Du Bois in the pantheons of origins of sociology in the United States.

The counterview that Du Bois is America's founding scholar of sociology par excellence is not only unknown and untaught but it failed to give Du Bois the proper recognition he deserves.[1] Du Bois lived through the Jim Crow era in the United States where the "scientific" captivity of race as a product of biology rather than a social construct deeply affected academia. Du Bois vociferously disagreed through his lectures and writings. In essence, racist views are not just the prerogative of the unlettered population but were also deeply held mostly white social scientists who defined blacks as biologically and culturally inferior (Morris, 2015). Du Bois is however slowly receiving the recognition due to him now after over six decades of his death in Ghana, West Africa.

Du Bois was an internationalist, his over nine decades of living culminating in his death and burial in Accra, Ghana is reminiscent of the power of the human spirit to transcend race, gender, and class. Third, Du Bois speaks to people today like the foremost and formidable ancestor with inimitable voice from the great beyond enlightening their enlightenment even in these dark days that try the soul. As one black scholar indicated, Du Bois entire life itself was truthfully a powerful, prophetic and prayerful act." Du Bois' familiarity and profound references to Hebrew literature reverberate in the entire body of his work. It is pertinent to reference one of W.E.B. Du Bois's sociological prayers taken from Prayers for Dark People: (Du Bois, 1980).[2]

Give us this night, O God, Peace in our land and the long silence that comes after strain and upheaval. Let us sense the solemnity of this day – its mighty meaning, its deep duty. Save this government. Cherish its great ideals – give strength and honesty and unbending courage to him whom the people have named Chief Magistrate of these United States and make our country in truth a land where all men and women are free and equal in the pursuit of happiness. Amen.[3]

Events of the last three decades, from the beating of Rodney King to series of documented police brutality against black people have made the above prayers not only prescient and prophetic but also timely. These are times that trouble the soul. From Black Lives Matter to police brutality and the mass incarceration of young black men, the need for the discipline of sociology to learn from history of black struggle, especially from one of the key

figures in that struggle cannot be overstated. W.E.B. Du Bois still matters today almost six decades after his death in Ghana, West Africa. In fact, one of the core concerns of Black Lives Matter was not only the racial profiling and police brutality but also the unpresented mass incarceration and sentencing disparity of young black men compared to others in the United States. Michelle Alexander ably noted that there are more black Americans incarcerated today than they were enslaved in the middle of the nineteenth century, a serious cause for concern on the nature of the New Jim Crow (Alexander, 2010).

The aforementioned prayer is reminiscent of Declaration of Independence of the United States: "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness." From every historical experience of black people, this founding document was not intended or applicable to people of color. In fact, to distinguish oneself from back Americans became the price and the hallmarks of citizenship. In fact, for others to demonstrate they are historically and categorically different from blacks, opposite to, and even hostile to blacks became structured in the very fabric of the nation (Matory, 2015). It does not matter if the person making the distinction was native born American part of the hordes coming from the Old World. The stigma on blacks still remains the same even among the new immigrants from other parts of the world. Du Bois prayer to God to make our country in truth a land where all men and women are free and equal in the pursuit of happiness is apt and relevant. There are five areas of focus on Du Bois as a Prophet of Social Justice in the 21st century. I will now begin with the first part, the historical aspect of Du Bois life.

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology used in this paper is largely qualitative which by and large seek to describe, explain, and explore the aspects of Du Bois life more so during the last ten years before his death in 1963. The descriptive aspect of qualitative research often involves some form of interpretivist tradition in what Carr (Carr, 2021) describes as "thick description" with substantive reference to Clifford Geertz book, The Interpretation of Cultures (Geertz, 1973). Thick description includes understanding of behavior within social context in a manner that eventually provides knowledge of the behavior to outsiders.

Additionally, the explanatory aspect of qualitative approach to research aims to articulate processes in which social phenomena unfolds. Exploratory aspect of this qualitative approach is like a guidepost that helps them study social issues or problems in a targeted way. In this project, the key statement of the problem is the pervasive and pernicious forms of subjugation, oppression, and dehumanization African Americans have faced right from the moment of entry into the US involuntarily. Du Bois was born three years after the end of the Civil War in the US and right from the moment when it dawned on him that he was black, the veil between him and the American society remained intact until his emigration to

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[1] I remember to my utter dismay and shock, sitting at a graduate sociology seminar at the University of Denver where the professor even failed to acknowledge that Du Bois was a sociologist according to the very definition of the word.

[2] My Past, Present and Future: http://tomekhet.tumblr.com/post/53149836396/du-bois-25th-birthday-message-to-himself

[3] W. E. B. Du Bois. 1980. Prayers for Dark People. The University of Massachusetts Press: Amherst Page 5.

Ghana.

Literature reviews include autobiographical experiences of Du Bois himself as well as some of his writings on existence in black America. His life was replete with the theme of social justice when speaking, writing, or in other forms of engagement with people at home and abroad. The writer also had the privilege of attending a conference moderated by Professor Edward Blum for three weeks at Calvin College, which provided opportunities for extensive dialog on Du Bois.

Blum's magisterial work on Du Bois was a major influence on this paper (Blum, 2007a). Finally, this project is to some extent is methodologically similar to an earlier work done by the author on: Ethno-religious Power: Yoruba Immigrant Women in the United States.[4] The method of data collection for this and earlier projects is not dissimilar: it is qualitative with an ethnographic bent in the sense that some forms of unstructured interviews were used to interact with students, professors, and authors who see Du Bois as living legend even after many decades of his death. Sample key discussion and interview questions are listed hereunder:

Sample interview/discussion/focus group questions

1) How were Du Bois childhood experiences at Great Barrington relevant today in race relations in the United States?
2) Du Bois lived through the Jim Crow laws in the US and many people have suggested that there is now a New Jim Crow in the US in light of the black prison population and the increasing surge in hate crimes and brutality against blacks. What are the similarities and differences?
3) Du Bois was an internationalist by and large. To what extent is this manifested among black scholars today especially as it relates to Africa?
4) The theory of the Talented Tenth was widely debated between Du Bois and Booker T. Washington. How do you think this plays out today especially among young African Americans?
5) The past few years have witnessed forms of resistance, Black Lives Matter, MeToo Movement, Violence against black in forms of police brutality, and the evisceration of the Voting Rights Acts by the Supreme Court and now by the states' legislature. What does portend to future race relations in the United States?
6) We have expressions like post-racial, post-Obama, and post-civil right. However, have things really changed in the US after the election of the first Black President?

RESULTS

Responses to the methodological questions above vary according to the audience. The following are the breakdown according to students, faculty members interviewed (Blum in person and Raboteau, West, and Gates through video presentations and books). Ten outsiders whose knowledge of Du Bois was sparse and limited also form part of this project.

First, most students were impressed with Du Bois academic pedigree and his resolve to make something out of his life despite growing up in rather difficult times in American history. White students were especially impressed with his scholarship being the first African American to obtain a doctoral degree from Harvard. The

experience of Du Bois being shunned and rejected after giving a Valentine card to a girl in his class in elementary school had a particularly negative response among white female students. They thought despite the racial divide inthe country, the gesture given by Du Bois to the girl was thought of as severe, dehumanizing and uncalled for; in essence simply discourteous. A few black students in class could relate to the experience even though they live one hundred and fifty years after Du Bois experience and encounter with the girl. Some suggested that was probably one of the reasons that led to the veil espoused by Du Bois separating him from the white world in the years to come. Notable however is the fact that most students have never heard of Du Bois before the experience, which is a testament to the paucity of historical knowledge not only about the United States in general but the black experience?

Second, the topic of police brutality was one that engendered lively discussion in light of the killings of George Floyd, Sandra Bland, Michael Brown, and other black youths who were constantly racially profiled. Some students opined that it is understandable why Black Lives Matter has become the new Civil Rights movement and it is simply unconscionable why anyone who deny the facts on the killing and dehumanization of blacks. They see the connection dating back to 1992 brutal beating of Rodney King by the police who were eventually not found guilty despite the furor it brought all over the nation. Students who have taken the course in Urban Sociology were able to connect the concept of the New Jim Crow to the title of the book, the New Jim Crow (Alexander, 2010). The significance of Du Bois in the area of social justice which formed the warp and weft of his life left the students convinced that his relevance in the intellectual world of academia in the United States cannot be ignored or dismissed.

Third, dialog with Professor Blum was especially instructive. It was one thing to read an author and quite another to meet face to face with her/him to expatiate more on the book. Blum is a lover of Du Bois through and through. His prodigious knowledge of Du Bois was firmly demonstrated in the book he wrote in later years on the Color of Christ where he made copious references to Du Bois early religious life and faith in God which was not abandoned despite some people claiming that Du Bois was an agnostic later in life (Blum and Harvey, 2012). Blum's discussion on the last rite performed by a minister of the gospel who had to be specially flown to Ghana to officiate struck me as rather salient. The discussion was as if Blum was there at the burial ceremony itself. It was one of the highlights of the encounter and the conference.

Du Bois as a prophetic voice

Sociologists can be heralded as prophets by the nature of their engagement with societies. Through critical analysis, research and use of different perspectives, they

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[4]Olagoke, Abolade, Ezekiel. Chapter 11 in: Bonafacio, Glenda, T. and Angeles, Vivian S.M. 2011. Gender, Religion, and Migration: Pathways of Integration. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, INC.: Boulder.

speak to societies with the hope of social change. Whether it is Marx, Weber, Comte, and others, the goal is to have a new science of society towards changing it. The whole essence of social scientific research is to look at a problem, formulate hypothesis, do extensive literature review, collect and analyze data with the hope that whatever conclusion one reaches will be applied to society. Sociology is parts of the agents of social change, changing the future of societies, communities, nations and the world.

Du Bois childhood at Great Barrington MA was marked by church attendance and religious activities and was richly shaped by the Spirituals and other songs of sorrows of his ancestors. According to Blum, Du Bois heard these songs as a student teacher in Nashville in the 1880s where he found meaning within meaning culminating even in the title of his book, "The Soul of Black Folk."(Blum, 2007c). Toward the tail end of his life before emigrating to Ghana joined the Holy Trinity Church in Brooklyn, a multi-racial church which Du Bois felt comfortable at least to be a member. The minister of the church, William Howard Melish gave the last rite in Ghana before Du Bois was buried. It was further noted that he had to obtain a special passport to fly to Ghana for this important ceremony (Blum, 2007c)

The word prophet used in this sense to describe Dubois is rather in rather incomplete or sanitized. According to Josh Kwan, "In Old Testament times, the archetypal prophets were often loners who railed against the sorry state of the world. They walked closely with God, listened to His truth, and spoke out as a piercing voice in opposition to mainstream culture, often to deaf and obstinate ears." In this day and age, one does not have to wear robes with the long staff like Moses to speak truth to power.

Prophetic voices can be in social organizations, social institutions, cultures, and other organs of human societies. In essence, prophetic voices do not necessarily have to be shaped and patterned according to Moses, Ezekiel, Jeremiah or Daniel. Some of our prophetic voices can be agnostics, atheists, free thinkers, Christians, Muslims or people from other religious or non-religious affiliations. We have had them in the past: abolitionists, women's rights movement, civil rights movement, Black Lives Matter, LGBTQ, and many others where men and women, young and old desire to change societies or organizations from inside out, not as lonely voice from the outside – like the biblical prophets. In the final analysis the goal is to challenge and address structures of evil, address inequalities, intolerance, and inequities in societies. Du Bois work and life demonstrated qualities and characteristics of a prophet.

DISCUSSION

The key components of the discussion section are amalgamation of interactions among two contemporarily relevant scholars on Du Bois (Blum and Raboteau), classroom discussions, and focus groups on some germane aspects of Du Bois writings. The aforementioned questions were tabled for discussions in light of the current spate of killings and hate crimes against African Americans. Also inclusive are video lectures by Professors Cornel West and Henry Louis Gates who were colleagues at Harvard University. Both scholars are avowedly Du Bosians in intellectual and pedagogical orientations. Their texts and video presentations have been used in sociological theories class at Waynesburg University. Professor West has also given lectures on many campuses in the United States including my alma mater at Wheaton College. Some students from Waynesburg University have had opportunities to hear him speak at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA. All these interactions have formative influences on the subsequent discourses below, results and conclusion.

Du Bois oral, social, and academic history is littered with religious themes. Not only is this demonstrated in many autobiographies, but also in his many publications. According to Edward Blum, "Religious ideas shaped Du Bois autobiographical works, and stood as constitutive elements of his shifting sense and presentation of self" (Blum, 2007b). Du Bois religious childhood in Great Barrington in Massachusetts inculcated in him Christian morals and values which formed and informed his belief in communities that transcended racial boundaries. He saw his life as a holy calling where higher powers prepared him to be the mouthpiece of his community to the world at large. African American experience of slavery, sorry songs, and the absurdity of life in the United States for black men and women enabled him to tap into transcended forces to address the situation in life of his people.

It is in this regard that they are able to see the complexity of the life of Du Bois, the many sides of his soul, so to speak. Blum (2007a) further elaborated that Du Bois many autobiographies "served as mythologies of the self where he drew on a variety of religious allusions and symbolic structures to present his self as a hero-priest and a prophet teacher." Like the prophets of Israel, he spoke truth to power. On his twenty-fifth birthday celebration, Du Bois' religious laden message was poignant then and it is reminiscent of the conditions of those living as pariahs in societies. He recapitulated and appropriated Queen Esther's words: "I will go unto the king, which is not according to the law and if I perish – I perish."

Du Bois also saw his life with markers in epochal events in world history: For example, a prophetic figure, Du Bois saw cosmic elements in his autobiographical narratives and social history. In highly racialized America of his time, Du Bois was a prophetic intellectual with a black face. His life, struggles, challenges were interwoven and shaped by racial discrimination and racial consciousness under Jim Crow. This in essence, was following the long traditions of African Americans from the

time when the first Africans were involuntarily brought to the Americas: Du Bois history and racial formation were therefore in line with the traditions and conversations with the likes of Richard Allen, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, and Malcolm X. According to Blum, and for Du Bois, "religion animated their perspectives on self and society, their conception of being and living."[5]

Du Bois as a sociologist and social activist

Du Bois has been described in many appellations: sociologist, historian, secular prophet, social activist among many. Throughout his life and career which spanned over nine decades, after his doctoral degree from Harvard University and University of Berlin, he taught Latin and Greek at Wilberforce University, did a social history of the Negro in Philadelphia, taught sociology and history at Atlanta University, editor of the Crisis after Atlanta academic career, and was engaged in many social and political activities in the United States and around the world. He even ran for Senate in 1950, with all these appellations, some have found it difficult to pin Du Bois down to a pin down or compartmentalize Du Bois under a single academic or professional rubric. The author remembers during my graduate program when a professor said he did not consider Du Bois a sociologist. He was just getting immersed in the writings of Du Bois at the time and this deeply infuriated him that he began to have some doubts about whether the professor was being charitable to the entire gamut of Du Bois life and works. On one hand, Smith (2014) description of the discipline of sociology is applicable to Du Bois when he asserted:

Sociology as an academic discipline appears on the surface to be a secular scientific enterprise. Its founding fathers were mostly atheists. Its basic operating premises are secular and naturalistic. And its disciplinary culture is indifferent and sometimes hostile to religion, often for what are thought of as rationalistic and scientific reasons. Sociologists today are disproportionately not religious, compared to all Americans, and often irreligious people.[6]

Even though Du Bois' childhood at Great Barrington in Massachusetts was marked by church attendance, Sunday school and other religious activities, by the time he got to Fisk and Harvard University, and eventually the

University of Berlin, his faith in dogmatic and unthinking Christianity had waned. Some even described him as agnostic not only because of this exposure to Ivy League institutions and interaction with men of letters of the day, but more so with the encounter at Wilberforce University when he was asked to lead in prayers in a student gathering. Du Bois, apart from taking classes and being influenced by the likes of William James at Harvard University he was also a contemporary of Max Weber.

For a long time, ordinary people's experiences and day to day interactions especially in religious milieu while not taken seriously on their own terms but to be better analyzed and understood through sociological interpretations of their scientific causes and meanings in terms of conceptual analysis like class struggle, inequality, social control, anomie, alienation, etc, all these need to be reevaluated and re-examined. In fact, Smith project and purpose is to see sociology itself as a sacred project at heart. He would further assert in this regard:

Sociology today is animated by sacred impulses, driven by sacred commitments and serves a sacred project. We might even say that American sociology's project is spiritual as long as we understand the full breadth and depth of what "spiritual" in this case means. American sociology in short, does not escape the analytic net that it casts over the rest of the ordinary world. Sociology itself is part of the very human, very social, and often social and spiritual world.[7]

Du Bois would agree no less with Smith with the exception of a more critical race theory in light of experiences of people of color after over one hundred years when he wrote, "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of color line." While things have remarkably changed today especially in the social, political and economic lives of African Americans, vestiges of racism still remain even in post-Obama racial realities. It is in this regard that Du Bois still speaks to us, not as an arm-chair sociologist, but as a social activist who is not afraid of whose ox is gored in addressing the structures of evil and structures of oppression local, nationally, and globally. Perhaps it is apt to remember that sociologists too are influenced not only by their social background but can also be part of the problem if they fail to take this into consideration and operate under the rubrics of positivist value neutrality. Despite his many foibles especially in his membership of the Communist Party in 1961, Du Bois was not remiss in addressing social structures and the ways they have subjected African Americans to inferior and perpetual juniority in human affairs especially in the United States. His sociological orthodoxy was underscored by praxis not only among his academic peers but also among the downtrodden and the disinherited of the earth.

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[5] Discussion with Professor Edward Blum at Christian Scholars Conference on the Color of Christ, Calvin College Grand Rapids, Michigan, Summer 2016. This conference provided an avenue to discuss key aspects of Du Bois life with someone whose work on Du Bois has shed more light on his prophetic voices and the relevance of these voices today in Black America.

[6] Christian Smith (2014). The Sacred Project of American Sociology. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Page IX.   See also Elaine Howard Ecklund and Christopher Scheitle, 2007, "Religion among Academic Scientists: Distinctions, Disciplines, and Demographics," *Social Problems*, 54(2): 289-307.

[7] Ibid. page X.

One of the greatest tributes paid to Du Bois life and works is demonstrated in the work of Shawn Alexander (Alexander, 2015) when he wrote:

Despite his ineradicable presence in American and international history, and numerous academic pages written about his activism and intellectual brilliance, the vast majority of Americans still have little knowledge of the man, his thought, or his actions.[8]

To underscore's Alexander's assertion, perhaps it is this poverty of knowledge about Du Bois that brought up the possibility of exhuming his body from where he was buried in Ghana inn a conversation between students of color at Harvard University in the early nineties, something which was thought to be almost sacrilegious by African students at Harvard that the old sage would be disturbed in his grave just to satisfy the seemingly lack of curiosity to learn about one of the greatest minds in the United States. Regarding the breadth of Du Bois scholarship and activism, Alexander went further by asserting:

He was an extraordinary author who published twenty books of poetry literature, and social, historical, economic, and political inquiry, the majority of which appeared in the final third of his life. In addition, he gave countless addresses, wrote hundreds of newspaper columns, edited a number of academic and popular journals, and helped form and actively participated in many civil rights organizations.[9]

Conclusion

Very few people have read or heard about W.E.B. Du Bois today, even at college campuses. He lived through Jim Crow and died on the eve of Dr. King's "I have a Dream" speech in Washington in 1963. The sixties were marked an era of televised media where many people at home and abroad witnessed brutalities against blacks in broad daylight. Things have remarkably improved over the last thirty years with the Internet, Facebook, Instagram and other forms of social media. George Floyd's killing in Minnesota would not have the effect on the populace even to the point of convicting a police officer for murder had it not been a teenager's smartphone who recorded the more than nine minutes of the officer's kneed on his neck. In fact, it was seeing these atrocities online that prodded many whites locally and globally to ask, what can be done to address the ideal of reconciling the country's founding principle with practice. As Albert Raboteau observed, "This kind of

empathetic understanding is crucial to releasing the efficacy of the redemptive suffering that King and others preached" (Raboteau, 2016). Events are not only witnessed simultaneously in the US but also all over the world.

Du Bois underscored the American dilemma in 1901 by asserting that "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line." Apart from roles which race and racism had played in the past in perpetual subjugation of blacks and other minorities, COVID-19 further exacerbated the problem with minorities, aged, and those in the frontline bearing the brunt of those affected by the pandemic. The situation does not stop here: sweeping attacks on refugees, immigrants, foreigners, women, members of the LGBTQ communities, Jews, and many others have had their humanities assaulted as in no other time in American history. The engendering of injustice, intolerance and inequalities all point to the precariousness of humanity which does not augur well for the future (Pannell, 2021). Du Bois's color line was a line that brought further distances between peoples, races, ethnicities, cultures, religion and classes.

The choice is between going forward, getting things right so the nation is not further plunged into disaster and maintaining the status quo of denials, and instigation of fears, partisanship that failed to reckon with reason, science, and facts. It is a choice between the fulfilling the ideals of demoracy or springing toward fascism and authoritarianism.

History can be the guide only if the leaders and the people being led can learn from it. Du Bois' prayer written in 1910 can be instructive as the nation finds itself in this predicament. Du Bois still speaks today as this final prayer attests:

Give us in our day O God to see the fulfillment of thy vision of peace may these young people grow to despise false ideals of conquest and empire all the tinsel of war. May we strive to replace force with justice?

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflicts of interests.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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[8] Shawn Leigh Alexander. 2015. W.E.B. Du Bois: An American Intellectual and Activist. Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield, page vii.
[9] Ibid. page vii.

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Full Length Research Paper

The plight of people with disabilities and children with cerebral palsy: The role of social work and multi-disciplinary approach

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Disability and cerebral palsy can occur at any time of any individual's life. Conditions such as cerebral palsy affect mostly children and can be seen as one of the birth defects. A study was conducted to investigate the plight of children with cerebral palsy (CP) and their families in Moses Kotane Hospital, Bojanala District. This was done as the area of disability is mostly neglected in the helping profession. To gain insight about the nature, types and challenges of CP, availability of services addressing the problems and needs of children with CP and their families as well as people with disabilities are covered in this study. Another objective of this study was to assess social work services provided to children with CP and their families as well as other disciplines like the occupational therapy especially in outreach services. Qualitative research approach was adopted using semi-structured interviews as a method to collect data. Purposive sampling was employed to identify participants and 10 children with cerebral palsy were recruited. These were sourced from the hospital where they were all receiving medical treatment. Themes and sub-themes were developed. The findings confirmed that children with cerebral palsy experience problems that have a negative and direct impact on their families. Psycho-social challenges were identified, constant medical care, special diet, poverty and unemployment pose also a risk as many are from impoverished background. Conclusions in this study indicate that families of children with cerebral palsy and other disabilities encounter many challenges from socialization to general medical care. Further, a multi-disciplinary approach including occupational therapy is essential as well as the role of social workers.

Key words: Disability, Cerebral Palsy, children, plight, social worker, family.

INTRODUCTION

People with disabilities are the nation's largest minority and tend to be marginalized in all aspects of life. Cerebral palsy (CP) is defined in Shorvon et al. (2011) as a group of permanent disorders of the development of movement and posture, causing activity limitations that are attributed to non-progressive disturbances that occurred in the

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developing infant brain. WHO (2011) estimated that 15% of the world population have some form of disabilities. According to the statistics from the Department of Social Welfare, the registered number of disabled people is 197,519. CP is the most common physically disabling paediatric condition globally (Gagliardi et al., 2008). Worldwide, there are number of people living with cerebral palsy. Developed countries with sophisticated medical services are also experiencing cases of those having or living with Cerebral Palsy. Donald et al. (2014) continued to say that in Africa CP rates have been found to be even higher, with an estimated prevalence of 2-10 cases per 1000 births. In Malaysia people with disabilities (PWDs) can be considered as one of the most vulnerable of the minority group in the Malaysian population. A total number of 359,203 disabled people were registered with the Department of Social Welfare in December 2012. In their research, Olawale et al. (2013) state that psychological stress associated with cerebral palsy is known to be one of the most pressing conditions of families. Lyons et al. (2010) state that children with cerebral palsy experience much pain and are more likely to have emotional and behavioural difficulties than children in the general population, and that they take part in fewer activities than other children of their age. The view is held by UNICEF (2013) in their report that children with cerebral palsy are often excluded in many activities that other children undergo which serves to render them uniquely vulnerable, denying them respect and dignity, their individuality and often their right to life. Thus, children with cerebral palsy are often marginalized and excluded, experiencing prevalent violations of their rights. Discrimination against CP children arises as a result of lack of understanding and knowledge of its causes and implications, fear of difference, fear of contagion or contamination and cultural views on disability (Cooper, 2002). The views of Islam and Cojacaru (2015) are supported that South Africa as a developing country has a high number of children born with CP which is estimated between 1 and 8%. The researcher brings forth the lack of resources in some rural areas in South Africa which predisposes poor families and more so families were disability is present. The absence of fathers in some instances deprives children of both parents and the much needed father's support.

In this study, the authors hold the view that caring for a child with CP poses many challenges and expenses to the family in terms of visits to the health facility as well as special food that they have to eat. Many of the children with cerebral palsy rely on their mothers/care givers for feeding, bathing, toileting in their daily life. This article deals broadly with people with disabilities and specifically with children with Cerebral Palsy in the Moses Kotane District. A qualitative approach was utilized and interviews with mothers and care-givers of these children were conducted. Statistics on the prevalence and nature of children with Cerebral Palsy was collected from Moses Kotane Hospital and Job Shimangane Tabane Hospital in Rustenburg, Bophelong Hospital in Mafikeng and Klerksdorp/Tshepong Hospital Complex in Klerksdorp in the North West province. The total number of CP patients from these four hospitals was 547.

REVIEWED LITERATURE

Cerebral Palsy is defined by Ross and Deverrell (2010) as a group of disorders of the development of movement and posture, causing activity limitations that are attributed to non-progressive disturbances in the developing infant brain. These authors' research showed that the motor disturbances of CP are frequently associated with disturbances of sensations, perception, cognition, communication and behaviour caused by epilepsy, or secondary musculoskeletal problems.   There are few opportunities to place young children in appropriate day care facilities particularly those with severe disabilities from families with limited financial resources and South Africa is a good example when it comes to limited resources for children with disabilities and CP. Care centres do not have resources and space to accommodate people with disabilities and parents and caregivers have no means of support as a result.

Prevalence of CP is estimated from 1.5 to more than 4 per 1000 live births or children of a defined age range. About 1 in 323 children has been identified with CP according to estimates from CDCs Autism and Developmental Disabilities (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). In Africa statistics shows that CP is the most common cause of physical disability in children worldwide. However, little is reported on this condition in the African context. The prevalence in Zimbabwe is estimated to be at 1.55 per 1000 in rural areas and 3.3 per 1000 in urban areas.

Diagnosis of cerebral palsy

In some black families, cerebral palsy is a rare phenomenon. Zastrow et al. (2019) define CP as a disability involving problems in muscular control and coordination resulting from damage to the brain's muscle-control. According to Ross et al. (2010), the diagnosis of cerebral palsy is based on a clinical assessment, and not on laboratory or neuro-imaging. When possible, neurologic testing and neuro-imaging studies are used to enhance the understanding of the infant's movement or lack of movement and the possible prognosis. A view is held by the researchers that the evaluation of a child with cerebral palsy requires a multidisciplinary approach with a team of professionals comprising a paediatrician or pediatric neurologist, occupational therapist, a physiotherapist, child psychologist and a social worker.

The diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy is made by the doctor. Causes of cerebral palsy differ from one individual to another and may not be connected to brain damage. Some causes occur before (pre-), during (peri-) and after (post-) natal. These include infections like malaria, measles, low birth rate, child asphyxia, implications from premature birth as well as head injury whereas the mother could be exposed to rubella, HIV/AIDS, toxemia, cytomegalovirus, multiple pregnancies etc. (Ross et al., 2010).

Four types of Cerebral Palsy are identified and usually grouped according to the way the condition affects a person's movement or the way it affects a particular body part. Types of cerebral palsies are spastic, athetoid, ataxic and mixed cerebral palsy. They are classified as follows: *Spastic cerebral palsy.* This is said to be the most common type of CP. It affects approximately seventy percent (70%) of children with CP. *Athetoid cerebral palsy* is another type of cerebral palsy**.** It is characterized by **i**nvoluntary movement which is uncontrollable, slow or fast, jerky, tremor or rotator patterns. The third type of cerebral palsy is *Ataxic cerebral palsy*. This is this is the least common type CP characterized by unsteadiness, shaky movements or tremors. Ataxic cerebral paralysis is recognized to reduce muscle timbre. Ross and Deverrell (2010) mention a fourth type of CP known as *Mixed CP* whereby two types of cerebral palsy occur in one body at the same time. In this type, the spastic cerebral palsy and the athetoid cerebral palsy combine and are responsible for various disabilities in a child.

Problems experienced by the cerebral palsied and people with disabilities

People with disability, whether physical or mental, experience problems and challenges. Some of the challenges include discrimination, medical, behavioural as well as exclusion and lack of access to resources, amongst others

Discrimination

People with disabilities are at risk of being oppressed, discriminated against, ignored, ridiculed and denied equal rights (Zastrow et al., 2019). Researchers believe that people living with disabilities, cerebral palsy and other disabilities are affected by stigma from the society. Every person deserves to be treated with respect and a right to live harmoniously in the society like any other human beings. Marumamogae (2012), concurring with the latter statement, believes that discrimination against people with disabilities is one of the worst social stigmas that the society has not been able to overcome. She adds that

women, men, and children with disabilities are often amongst the most marginalized in all societies and face unique challenges in the enjoyment of their human rights

Medical problems

There are many cases reported on the poor medical treatment that children with cerebral palsy receive in the public medical institutions in South Africa. Most reported medical problems extend in pregnant women who get bad medical treatment which later results to children born with cerebral palsy. Medical intervention starts with continuous assessment, diagnosis and   diagnostic conclusions and prognosis. Social work intervention relies on the diagnosis made by medical professionals. Zastrow et al. (2019) distinguished amongst the following medical problems namely, hearing, visual, epilepsy and concurrent disabilities.

Behavioural problems

Children with disabilities, by the nature of their disabilities, present with various problems which may affect other areas of their functioning. Where there is speech defect, communication becomes a problem and this can affect their social skills. *Learning* may also prove to be a *challenge* in some instances (Ross et al., 2010).

Exclusion and lack of access for disabled people generally

According to Ross et al. (2010) disability remains one of the most neglected and forgotten development conditions. There are many places and areas where people living with disabilities do not have easy access to compared to non-disabled people. Some institutions and organisations do not have easy access for people living with disabilities like wheel chair ramps and escalators. The blind do not have access to Braille system and feel excluded. People with disabilities in the institutions of higher learning encounter numerous challenges too, but some universities like Mafikeng campus of the North West University has tried to bridge the gap as they have a special disability unit which addresses all forms of disabilities in its campus.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study relied on two theories namely *Systems theory* and *strengths perspective*. Systems theory guided the study to understand everyday functioning of the child with cerebral palsy. The study also focused on the strengths that the family had in accepting and coping with the

disability as well as what strengths and coping mechanisms the family of a child with CP are employing to keep the family strong and functioning.

METHODOLOGY

The research is qualitative in nature as it provides an opportunity for participants to express the social and psychological challenges and experiences of living with a child with cerebral palsy. This approach has been defined as phenomenological by Fouche (2002) as it is aimed at understanding and interpretation of participants' meaning that subjects give in their everyday live. This study was exploratory and gave the researchers an opportunity to interpret data, with the intension of providing an in depth understanding of the experiences by linking various data obtained. *Purposive sampling* was utilized as it forms part of the non-probability sampling procedure. Rubin and Babbie (2010) further say purposive sampling involves the selection of a sample for observation that is known to have the potential of providing the most suitable information for the study.

It involves the selection of sample for observation that is known to have the potential of providing the most comprehensive understanding of the subject studied in accordance with Curran and Runswick (2013). The recruitment of participants was done through the local clinic as well as from the social work load in the hospital. These organizations were approached with both the proposal approved by the university structures like the Higher Degrees office as well as the ethical approval. Permission was granted and the researchers were helped through the list of children with CP provided. The sample size of 25 respondents was drawn of the parents and caregivers of children with cerebral palsy from residing in the district selected, Moses Kotane Sub-district. Moses Kotane District is one of the five local municipalities of the Bojanala Platinum Disctrict municipality with 107 villages, 31 wards and bordering two formal towns. A total number of 10 participants were selected from the 25 samples as the 14 remaining were not attending or receiving medical care. These participants are children who attend CP lessons in Moses Kotane Hospital in Ledig Village. Thus, they were outside the ambit of the health centre. Semi-structured interview schedule was set up as data collection tool. This method of data collection helped the researcher into the sessions, with a set of predetermined questions on face to face basis. This enabled the researcher to ask follow-up questions which varied among the respondents in seeking in depth experiences, views and perceptions of the participants. This method of data collection also enabled, on the other hand, the participants to relate to their experiences and their thoughts and to answer to the research question. The university granted ethical clearance to conduct this study.

Data analysis

Section A of the study presents the demographical information and the profile of the participants who formed part of the study. Section B provides a discussion of the research findings that the study achieved. The findings are given according to the main themes and formulated sub-themes. Quotes from the interview sessions (in italics) and verbatim, were used to substantiate the findings of the study, and also to give more meaning and understanding on the challenges faced by children with cerebral palsy and their families. Questions for the three (3) professionals, namely the two social workers and two occupational therapists are addressed in the fourth theme in the results section, and is concluded by the role that the social workers play with regard to children with cerebral palsy.

Biographical information

The study had a vast diversity in demographics of the 10 participants who took part in the study (Appendix Table 1). Participants comprised biological parents and caregivers of children with CP who are the main focus of the study. Two (2) social workers and one occupational therapist who work in Moses Kotane Hospital were also interviewed. From the total number of 10 children who are the main focus of the study, 7 were boys and 3 were girls. The majority (9) of them were black and one (1) was coloured. Four (4) of them came from Setswana speaking families, two (2) came from Sotho speaking families, three (3) came from Zulu speaking families whilst one (1) came from Afrikaans speaking family.

Biographic analysis

The data in this section is of the CP children in question as shared by the parents and care-givers (Appendix Table 2):

**Age*:* Parents and care-givers of children between 1 and 11 years were selected. It was observed that the parents to the older children have accepted their children's condition as they seemed to be coping better with the situation. It may be because they have been living with their children for a very long time and have found ways of dealing with the disability. Only parents and care-givers of children in this age bracket were interviewed.

Race: Children, parents and care-givers of participants (nine over ten) came from the same racial backgrounds. All of them were black, besides one participant who was coloured. Even though they are black, they do not belong to the same tribe, and therefore do not speak the same language. They speak Isizulu, Sesotho, Afrikaans, and the majority speaks Setswana. Their differences did not create any language barrier, because they could all hear the translation of questionnaires in Setswana language.

Gender: Moses Kotane Hospital as a focus area of the study has a high volume of males born and diagnosed with cerebral palsy, and it may be the reason why the study had a high number of males who participated in the study as compared to females.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section comprises the findings and interpretations or discussions based on the results from the empirical investigation with the parents and caregivers of children with cerebral palsy in Moses Kotane Hospital in the Bojanala District. Ten (10) parents and care-givers, identified as representatives were interviewed. A semi-structured interview schedule was prepared to gather data and some responses are represented in italics (Appendix 3). There was no schedule for the health professionals, that is, social workers and occupational therapist but a brief during the recruitment of possible participants. The thought on their workmanship is derived from this encounter. Four themes and sub-themes (from two to six respectively) were identified and are discussed

Table 1. Identified themes and sub-themes.

Themes	Sub-themes
Psychological challenges experienced by children with cerebral palsy and their families	Feelings and experiences of children with CP, parents and carers Coping mechanisms with CP Labelling and its effects
Social and emotional effects of cerebral palsy on the children and their families.	Stigma: Unemployment Educational challenges Sense of belonging Social security and support structure Availability of resources
Programs in place to address problems and needs of children with cerebral palsy	Physiotherapy /occupational therapy Community outreach programmes
Social Work services to children with cerebral palsy in Moses Kotane Hospital.	Counselling Outreach programmes The impact provided by the social work services in Moses Kotane Hospital to children with cerebral palsy and their families.

below. Direct quotes from the interviews that were held with the participants' representatives were used as reflected in these themes (Table 1).

Theme 1: Psychological challenges experienced by children with CP and their families

Participants in this study stated that they were negatively affected and disturbed because of the conditions of their children. Participants shared how they were saddened when thinking of the future of their children. What came to the fore was their thoughts and emotions, their children's happiness and worry that they will neither have families of their own nor do anything for themselves. It can be deduced that the condition of their children has affected participants psychologically. Some of the responses are summarized in the following manner:

Feelings and experiences

The following responses were based on the question on how the birth of a child with CP affected parents and what their reaction was to this realization.

P2: *"I had mixed feelings when I started to realize that I have a child with CP. I was sad and angry. I once imagined that life is unfair and that God does not like me. On the other hand, I at times say to myself; whatever that is happening is the will of God and I should accept, even though it is hard at times to cope with the condition".*
P1*: "At times I cry when I look at my child. I sometimes feel like I have done something wrong or offended God*

which is why he ensured that I have a child like this. I cannot talk to her, when I do, she does not respond.
P3*: "I wanted a child who I could be able to pride myself with, I wanted a child who I could walk the streets of my community without any fear of shame or embarrassment. At first I wanted nothing to do with the child, but for some time nothing went well with my life, and I have no choice but to love this child. He is my child, yes, I learned to love him, but he is definitely not what I asked for from God. I am always home based, because of him".*
P5*: At first it was hard for me to accept that I have a child with disability. I was planning to give the babe for adoption after I was told by the medical personnel that I have a child with CP. It is hard for me to have another child, because I always have a feeling that haunts me. I am even afraid to have another child. The fear I always have, is what if I give birth to a child with CP again, what will I do with two kids with disability if I cannot manage with one. At times I feel like my child is a burden. I love my child, but I cannot deny the fact that he is a burden".*

Most of the participants declared that stress is one of the feelings that will never disappear as long as one has child with disability and particularly cerebral palsy in life. This was confirmed by one of the participant about stress:
P4: *"I do not feel comfortable being approached by guys for love. I often turn them down, because I know that should we agree on starting a relationship, I will not have time to give it attention because my child takes all the time I have. It is my wish to find a guy who can love me with my child, because most of the guys I dated did not take well the fact that I have a child with disability".*

This comment displays the parent's feelings which some

of them had no chance to talk about. It was like a platform for expressing inner feelings toward the situation faced. The response was also based on the fact that a single parent with a child with CP finds it difficult to engage in any romantic relationships as assumptions and stigma gain the upper hand. However, researchers did not observe any feelings or hear talk of giving up. Participants use their strengths to cope with adversity and survive.

Labelling and its effect on children with CP and their family

The attitude of the community and the derogative names assigned to CP children is seen as labelling by the researchers. The researchers hold the view that labelling causes harm or pain to one's emotions and leaves them hurt and looking down on themselves. Parents and care-givers explained that their children are called names by the way they look or who they are and have the following to say about this aspect:

P6: "*I remember my child was called (seritsa) and I was addressed as (mmage seritsa), which means a cripple, someone who cannot do anything by himself. Even though the child is disabled, it does not permit a right for anyone to call a person like that. Everyone has a right to a name, and deserves to be called with his or her name".*

 P9: "*You know I really know what you are talking about when you talk about labelling. The name that the community used to call my child with rings a bell when you talk about it. I do not even want to say the name, because it makes me sad and angry. You know at times I used to feel like life is unfair, simply because when a mother is raising a child with disability alone, there are many good and courageous names that she can be called for the job well done; this will make her to continue to have the strength and courage to keep doing good. Instead of people doing that, they rather call you names that belittle you and that will make you feel discouraged at times".*

Coping mechanisms of participants

From the participants' point of view and the live experience of the researcher, children with CP find it hard to communicate their needs. They cannot express their felt needs, and therefore most of the times, they cry. At times they do not get attention whenever it is needed. Some of the children who participated in the study can talk but one cannot understand or make sense of what they say. The researcher asked the representatives of the children of participants how they know what the child needs or wants when trying to communicate:

P8: *I try by all means to pay attention to whatever sound the child makes, in order to understand what he is trying to say to me or the other person. After hearing the sounds, I would try to come with something to the child and try to understand if he was asking for that particular thing. If he shows a sad or bored face, I know it is not what he wants. Truly speaking it is frustrating to the child if you do not follow what he is trying to say or what he wants. Even if he is crying, he does not cry like normal, I would see tears coming from his eyes then I would notice he is not happy.*

P1: *"My daughter is 7 years now, I have been looking after her on daily basis, but even today I still find it hard to understand her methods of communications. She cries like any other babe when she needs something and does not get it, or when you give her the opposite of what she want, she cries like nobody's business. At times you would think she want a certain thing and give it to her, she would just stop crying and take it, but you see that it is not what she wanted, but because it is a child she would just accept it".*

P3: *"My son is more severe on physical parts, but he can and hear understand when you talk to him. He can respond, but words coming from his mouth are not clear. He is 9 years; I have learned to understand how he communicates. To other people it is difficult to understand what he says when he talks. When someone keeps asking him to repeat what he said, because of not getting the message clear, he gets angry and throws whatever he sees around him to that person. He has temper issues. I took him for sessions with the psychologist, in Moses Kotane Hospital but there is no change".*

These participants were coping well under the circumstances, which show their resilience. This aspect ties up with the above-mentioned especially with regard to stress. Resiliency is seen by Greene and Conrad (2012) as the ability of an individual, family, community or organization to recover from adversity and resume functioning when suffering serious trouble, confusion and hardship.

Theme 2: Social challenges experienced by participants

Stigma: Stigma is one of the leading factors amongst most of our communities. Stigma is regarded as a pervasive social force that has powerful; consequences for those who are stigmatized and society itself (Patel et al., 2010). They believe that stigma acts to decrease life opportunities among those that it affects by reducing among other things social contacts. Same as it is viewed by the authors above, participants said that the community has a very negative image about them, their

children, and also their families, stigmatizing them.

Participants' views

P 2: "*In my community especially people of the same street I live and some in my neighbourhood used to call my mother a witch. It was well known then in my community that my mother is a witch. The time people find out that I gave birth to a child with disability, they started saying that I am paying for my mother's sins. They regard my child as a punishment. To them my son is paying for the sins committed by my mother.*"

P4*: At first it was frustrating to believe that the community regards my son as a punishment. I am no longer participative in some of the activities or rather the ceremonies in my community such as weddings, and funerals because when I try to assist, I get side lined at times, because people do not feel safe and comfortable to eat the food prepared through my assistance*".

"*In my community some of the words I hear about my daughter are not said to me directly. I hear them from my friends and other people I associate with around the community. They accuse me of having slept with multiple partners, which is why I gave birth to a child with disability. At first these words used to hurt me, but I have learned to come to terms with them.*

I decided not to care anymore as to who says what about me, my family and more especially my child. People use to stare through the windows when I walked with my child. I believe the aim was to confirm whether it is true I have a child with disability or not".

"*My child is wheel chair bound. Wherever I go I am with him. He cannot talk, he cannot do anything. I am not working, I am self-employed. I make enough profit out of the business that I run. People who are running the same business that I do in my community do not progress faster than I do*".

Researchers are aware that stemming from these responses, it is clear that communities and neighbours are not always supportive or knowledgeable about CP hence the assumptions, stigma, labelling and derogative names these children have to endure. Zastrow et al. (2019) state that a family is a system which finds itself in a broader community with other systems, which the family of a CP child is intertwined with. However, some households are confronted by unsupportive neighbourhood (McGoldric et al., 2011).

Unemployment and education

Unemployment is another significant factor that most of the parents of children with CP are faced with. Those who are not biological parents but caregivers of children cannot regard looking after the child as employment because they are not earning anything from the work they do. The participants said it is hard for them to go look for work, because they have no one to look after the child, should they work. Many families in South Africa, and the participants in this study, rely on the child support grant and the disability grant for the child as the main source of income.

All the children who were selected in the study do not attend school. The parents and care-givers conceded that education is very important. Parents and care-givers in this study shared the same   feelings about special schools. Some stated that they have not made an effort to look for appropriate schools for their children, citing different reasons as indicated below:

P6*: "I have never thought of taking my child to a special school. I am afraid that I am going to give teachers a challenge with my child*".
P8*: "My friend had a child with disability. Her child's condition was severe as that of mine. She took the child to a special school but nothing was changing. The teachers also did not treat her well as compared to those who were not severely disabled. They would leave him for a long time without asking the helper to change her nappies. When I think of taking my child to a special school, I always think of what happened to my friend's child and seriously*".

McGoldrick et al. (2011) bemoan the fact that single parents or household are beset with poverty, limited access to resources especially health care, inadequate housing which researchers agree with and as it does not help household with unemployed single parent households. Working mothers generally would live their offspring to find employment to sustain her family. The emotional bond with the child will be lost and it is what Papalia and Martorell (2015) call 'maternal deprivation'.

Sense of belonging

A sense of belonging is the feeling of connectedness with or involvement in a social system or environment of which a person feels an integral part. Abraham Maslow described a sense of belonging as a basic human psychosocial need that involves feelings of both value and fit (Curran and Runswick, 2013). Researchers agree that kinship is essential; thus, families are defined by an emotional bond and are interconnected to other sub-sytems to form a whole.

When asked if the birth of their children have brought changes in their lives, participants admitted that there have been changes in their lives following the birth of the child who was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy. Some

mentioned that they have lost touch with the society, friends and neighbours as they had other responsibilities and could no longer socialize the same way they did before the child became member of their families. Others said that they were afraid to visit places like churches as most of these places are neither accommodative nor conducive to the child's condition.

Theme 3: Social security and support structure

On the aspect of social security, participants identified poverty as one of the main challenges. Participants have admitted that they receive child support grant and disability grant but that this is not sufficient to accommodate the family's needs. Participants further mentioned that the grant is not always utilized for the things it is intended to cover, which is most important, to care for the child's needs. It was shared by the participants that these children under their care do not to have enough clothes or foodstuffs. Most of the children cared for by participants encountered problems with the food that are prepared as some cannot swallow some of the food. They have special meal and the family incurs expenses due to the child's daily health needs. Most of the children need to be taken for routine check-up at the clinic, and sometimes at the hospital.

Participants admitted that raising a child with disability as a single parent is not easy. Experiences of participants were quoted as the follows:

P8: *"I separated from my husband who could not come to terms with the disability of our child and was under pressure from his relative". This is a clear prove that many families tend to blame the mother of the child if it happens that she gives birth to a disabled child".* Only two parents declared their husbands to be supportive and caring to their children. Accordingly, a second source of influence in a child's life stems from the father's role as a source of emotional and instrumental support to the other people, principally mothers, involved in the direct care of the child, according to Stanton (2012). The provision of emotional support from the father is continuously important to enable the child to grow knowing the warmth, love and the support of the father in life.

P9*: "Everything was fine before and when I was still pregnant. I have another child who is the first born, between me and my ex-boyfriend, also the father to the second child who has disability. After giving birth to the second born who has cerebral palsy, things started getting tough at home. "*I *am still married to my husband, but we are not staying together. After he finds out that we have a child with disability, he started being distant".*

The feelings that participants shared, and the responses they gave to the questions, give credibility to

the plight that children with CP face, including their families. Families provide intimate social environment to other family members which includes nurturing and caring (Zastrow et al., 2019). Where a father is present in a family and provides both material and emotional support, it becomes bearable for parents as well as care-givers to care optimally for the child with CP. Absence of fathers in South Africa is a common phenomenon.

Availability of resources

Most participants believe that there are services and resources for children with disabilities in South Africa, but lamented the fact that they do not have access. This has been proved by McGoldrick et al. (2011) how poor, single families struggle to have access to necessary resources. But the participants believe and agree that most of them do not reach those people who are living in rural areas like themselves. The participants said the government is doing good to deliver these services in urban areas and townships, but there are no such resources in rural areas. Participants believe the conditions of their children would have been better if they had full time physiotherapist and occupational therapist in their clinics. Due to lack of resources, participants are able to take their children for medical treatment only once in a month. They emphasised the need for day care centres for children with special needs, so that they can take them there to socialize with other children with similar disabilities. They believe availability of such institutions will enable them as parents and care-givers to look for jobs, knowing that their children's safety is secure.

Theme 4: The impact provided by the social work services

Social workers in a hospital setting help patients and their families understand particular illnesses, work through the emotions of a diagnosis, and provide counselling about the decisions that need to be made (NASW, 2011). Social workers working in Moses Kotane Hospital also ensure that they help the parents of children with cerebral palsy to understand CP and also to learn to accept the child's condition. This was shared when the researcher was inquiring about the number and frequent visits of children with CP. Social workers admitted that their role is not easy but they make sure that they handle the situation effectively. When intervening social workers said they do the following:

"*We help patients to deal with the emotions of a diagnosis, and give counselling. Experience has taught us thatourservices areveryimportanttothepatient, particularly to parents of children with CP. After having counselling*

sessions, most of them start to accept the child's condition, though it is always not easy for them to accept the condition and at time the child itself. CP is a life changing condition to each and every family. We therefore help them address their social, psychological and financial needs, so to accommodate the child's special needs which are related to the condition itself. "We make this possible through screening and evaluation of the patients' families during the initial meeting of the referral. We make a psychosocial assessment of the child, and also the parents".

Social workers in the hospital further alluded that "they believe that finding out of the diagnosis of CP comes as a shock to most parents and to the family in general. They further said the diagnosis can be traumatic to other parents and families, and therefore, when necessary they offer in depth counselling to avoid trauma from happening. They said to give them emotional support, hope and to make them accept and recognize that despite the child's physical condition, he or she deserves the love and support from the family. They partner with private and public institutions to ensure that the parents and families receive continued care and support and refer to other institution for further management and support. The following is the reflection of what the social worker's role entails when dealing with children with CP.

The role of social Workers

Social workers should try to learn and understand how the condition occurs; they may also offer continuous support to the family and the individual. They must develop strategies of how to help the family by explaining all relevant medical terms, tests and any assessment done on the child and also try to engage other families with similar problem as well as other methods of intervention like group work. Teaching the family to manage a budget that will include unforeseen medical bills is a role the social worker may play and help the family deal with ostracism and stigma. Community awareness campaigns are not only limited to conditions like cancer and HIV, but disability and cerebral palsy too. Empowerment and education is important as a tool for the social worker to help a family with a child with cerebral palsy. The social worker can help the family learn skills how to regulate the behavior displayed by CP children and alleviate stress levels as a result.

Outreach service: Occupational therapy

Occupational therapists aim to assist children with cerebral palsy with normalisation of their muscle tone, maintaining range in the muscle of the upper limb, development of play, functional and fine motor skills

(Therapies for Kids, 2016). Occupational therapists at Moses Kotane Hospital, pointed out that it takes perseverance and commitment to continue participating on the cerebral palsy sessions that are held within the hospital. Cerebral Palsy Guide (2016) is of the opinion that occupational therapists helps children with CP develop or recover the skills needed to lead independent lives. Paediatric occupational therapy focuses on improving the child's ability to play and learn, encouraging development and independence. Occupational can help to improve physical, cognitive and social abilities, as well as fine motor skills and posture (Cerebral Palsy Guide, 2016). All these children are the beneficiaries of disability grant, but not all of them are budgeted the money to travel every twice a month to the hospital for cerebral palsy lessons. The money is used to look after the whole family. Occupational therapists do community outreach programmes. This is done in collaboration with multi-disciplinary team to ensure maximum treatment and support for these children. Children attending cerebral palsy sessions regularly are recognized by physical developments in their body. Most of them are able to do basic bodily functions such as holding things for themselves and being able to play with others.

Conclusion

Early detection and diagnosis of CP in children is necessary to prepare the parents and any group involved in child care. This will help health care workers like social workers to give the necessary support and information to parents and care-givers through counselling, empowerment and general support. In this way, the social worker can play a role of an enabler, broker, educator and initiator through counselling, information sharing and practical assistance required in the early diagnosis. Herbst and Reitsma (2016) state that family counselling is important for the development of stronger communication between individual family members, especially in traumatic situations as the shock of having a child with disability and cerebral palsy can be traumatic for particularly young parents, or overwhelming to single parents. This results in healthier family dynamics that are able to successfully negotiate the challenges that either one family member may be experiencing that is impacting on the other members, or that of the family as a whole, is facing. This will cushion myriad feelings that families may have and in support from social workers be referred to other resources. These resources may include help with grant application, linking with medical resources like amongst other therapy like occupational or physical, as well as admission to special schools. Dealing with stigma and exclusion can be handled thus. With the child admitted in a special school or some relevant resource,

parents can seek employment and so augment the social/disability grant and combat poverty. The researchers conclude that continued research, services and programmes will benefit children with disabilities and cerebral palsy their families and the communities.

The researchers came to another conclusion that indeed children, aged between one and eleven years, both male and female with cerebral palsy, as well as their families are marginalised and excluded from many of the society's resources.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The researchers hereby declare that there is no conflict of interests.

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Appendix

Appendix Table 1. Biographic data of participants.

Demographic factor	Sub-category	Number
	1-3	03
Age (years)	4-7	05
	8-11	02
Total		10
Race	Black	09
	White	01
Total		10
Gender	Males	07
	Females	03
Total		10
	Zulu	03
	Pedi	0
	Sotho	02
Home Language	Tswana	04
	English	0
	Afrikaans	01
Total		10
	Christian	10
Religion	Muslim	0
	Hindu	0
Total		10

Appendix Table 2. Information of parents and care-givers as representatives.

Representative	Profile
Representative 1	The respondent stays in rural areas where she occupies a 4 roomed shack. She is single and has 2 children, one is attending school and the other one is not. She is unemployed, she was employed at a local clinic as a cleaner, but had to leave her job to take care of her child. The father to the child is not supportive to them, either financially or emotionally. She relies on her mother and her siblings for support. Disability grant of the child is also the main source of income within the family. She said that her religion was very useful, as it was a source of comfort and a pillar that gave her strength during difficult times. She indicated that she believe God is the creator and one has to accept whatever that is created by God.
Representative 2	Respondent number 2 stays in a rural area in a 6 roomed brick house. She is married and blessed with 4 children. 2 of them are of school going age, and the one is working and the last born has CP. She is an Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) employee, and also a day to day carer of the child. The father to children does not support them financially and emotionally. They are separated but not divorced. She has a partner; he is the one who support them financially and emotionally. Her main source of income is her salary, the child's disability grant and the little she get from the partner.
Representative 3	Respondent number 3 stays in a rural area in a 6 roomed brick house. She is married and has 3 children. She is unemployed and stays home full-time. Being at home full-time enables her to continue to take care of the disabled child. The father to the child does not support them financially and emotionally. The husband is a pastor and he is always supportive. The main source of income is the husband's salary, the child's disability grant, and the money they get from their children. Church is one of the things that she relies on for support and courage.

Table 2. Contd.

Representative 4	Respondent number 4 stays in a rural area in a brick house. She is single and has 1 child aged 4 years. She is unemployed and it enables her to continue to care for her child. The father to the child does not support them financially and emotionally. She gets support from her mother, father and her siblings. She stays full-time with her parents at their home. The child's disability grant is also a source of income within the family. She indicated that religion was very useful as it came as a source of comfort during difficult times. Church still plays a vital role even today.
Representative 5	Representative number 5 here in a rural area in a 6 roomed brick house. She is single and has no child. She is a day to day carer of her younger brother who has CP. The mother to the child is working as a cleaner at a local clinic and does not have time to look after the child due to work commitments. The family is supportive towards the child. The father is a pensioner; he is supportive emotionally and financially. He still has money he got of his pension funds. The family members are not regular church attendants, but regard church as important and powerful to their lives.
Representative 6	Representative number 6 stays in a 4 roomed mud-house. She stays with her mother and her 3 children. The father is not emotionally and financially supportive. She relies on the child support grants, and the disability grant of the child who has CP. She is a full-time church attendant and regard church as a source of comfort during hard times.
Representative 7	Representative number 7 stays in a rural area in a brick house. She was married and got divorced to the father of her children. She is unemployed and blessed with 4 children. The father to the children is supportive financially due to maintenance of his 2 children, and continuously visits them. The other source of income within the family is the child's disability grant and the salary of 2 children who are working at the mines.
Representative 8	Representative number 8 stays in an informal settlement in a 6 roomed shack. She is unemployed and single. She has 5 children, and depends on their child support grant and 1 disability grant of her child who has CP. She is not a Christian and said she does not attend church as she does not believe in God. All her children have different fathers, and they are all not supportive emotionally and financially.
Representative 9	Representative number 9 stays in a rural area in a brick house. She is single and has 2 children. They are school going age, but the one who has CP is not at school. She stays full-time at home, and is a full-time career of her child. Both her children have different fathers and all of them are not supportive emotionally and financially. She relies on the child support grant and the disability grant for survival. She also has a small business, selling vegetables to have a sustainable income.
Representative 10	Representative number 10 is unemployed and has only one child. She is not the biological mother to the child with CP, but is a day to day carer of the child. The mother to the child is working as a clerk at a government department and does not have time to look after the child due to work commitments. The mother to the child is married and is blessed with 4 children. Both the husband and the wife are support to the child, the carer and the entire family, emotionally and financially. They regard the role of church in their life as significant. She said church moulds their behaviour and is their source of strength.

Appendix 3. Semi-structured interviews questionnaire

- Can you tell me about your life and your experiences before you gave birth to a child with CP?
- At what stage did you figure out that you are carrying a child with CP?
- How did you feel after been told?
- Did the medical personnel explain to you what CP entails?
- How did the immediate family members take the news?
- How does the community feel about the child, and the family?
- Do you ever get negative treatment from the community?
- How does the treatment make you and the family feel?
- How do you know what the child needs?
- What challenges are you facing since you gave birth to a child with CP?
- Where is the father to the child?
- Has he been supportive ever since the child's birth?
- How is the relationship between the father and the child?
- Did you ever feel life is unfair? If so why?
- Where you stressed after finding out the child's condition?
- How has having a child with CP changed your sleeping pattern?
- Do you receive assistance from any persons or institution? If so, who?

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